Larkin’s so-called provincialism finds limited expression in the poems of *The Less Deceived*. Most of these poems are concerned with the question of time. The material comforts which the welfare state had ensure for its citizens could hardly minimise their sense of passing time. Memory becomes a source of agony because it brings before man his proneness to illusions and his unremitting acts of self-deception. This preoccupation with time finds a most consummate expression in “Church Going”. The Larkin’s character in “Church Going” became a prototype of the thoughtful postwar Englishman skeptical of the welfare state and its dubious promises in political, religious
and artistic matters. This skepticism which Larkin experienced in the fifties is more forcefully expressed in the poems of his next volume, *The Whitsun Weddings* which was published in 1964 and which instead of marking a departure from *The Less Deceived* is in fact an extension of it. Be that as it may, the poems here represent the full fruition of Larkin’s poetic talent. While the poems of *The Less Deceived* do bring out Larkin’s moderated hopes and aspiration, the postwar Britain as Larkin’s poetic world is clearly shaped out only in latter volume. While he was composing these poems England was fast recovering from the war. It was the period when the postwar prosperity accelerated the movement into mass culture which was leading to the emergence of a society immersed in consumer goods and a sense of the contemporary, but not at all certain how to bear the burden of its considerable past. This conflict between the present and the past is clearly expressed in “MCMXIV” which deals with the sense of loss. Looking back to the beginning of the century when Georgian England still delighted in its idyllic beauty and its poet still confidently pouring out lyric effusions in their songs and poems, the poet suddenly becomes aware of the present and cries out in sheer agony:

never such innocence,  
Never before or since  
As changed itself to the past  
Without a word the men  
Leaving the gardens tidy,  
The thousands of marriages  
Lasting a little while longer;  
Never such innocence again.¹

The mood of pathos which the passing of time has inculcated in the poet changes into one of ironic pity in a poem like ‘Here’. Rural England gone for good and
those who bewail the loss of pastoral ease and coseyness must accept the ultimate truth
that the pastoral will be among the cut-price stores. “A Study of Reading Habits”
similarly pokes fun equally at romanticism, sensationalism and realism. “Toads
Revisited” and “Naturally the Foundation Will Pay Your Expenses” are satirical poems
that attack the work ethic and academic gamesmanship:

Walking around in the park
Should feel better than work
The lake, the sunshine,
The grass to lie on
Blurred playground noises
Beyond black stockinged noises-
Not a bad place to be.²

If in “Toads” Larkin had satirized romantic courage and had expressed his
prefernece for his situation of the ‘toad-work’, in the later poem he expresses a mood of
celebration over his situation as a librarian:

No, give me my in-tray,
My loaf-haired secretary,
My shall-I-keep-the-call-in-Sir,
What else can I answer,
When the lights come on at four
At the end of another hour?
Give me your arms, old toad;
Help me down Cemetery Road.³

The theme of mass-culture finds expression in such poems as “Essential
Beauty”, “Faith Healing”, “Sunny Prestalyn”, “Ambulances” and “The Large Cool
Store”. “The Large Cool Store” gives a whole catalogue of the items in a departmental store, and ends on a negative note when he describes the Modes for Night stands in the store. “Sunny Prestalyn” describes in a satirical tone an advertising poster of a girl in swimsuit. The poster represents a dream-world of untruths but this dream-world appears so attractive in the beginning that people are taken in by it but illusion does not last long and when reality dawns upon people they can only laugh at themselves. “Essential Beauty”, a poem about stylish billboards, has as its theme the same tension between fantasy and reality. This tension has aggravated due to the proliferation of consumerist culture. Advertisements

... dominate outdoors. Rather they rise
Serenely to proclaim pure crust, pure foam,
Pure coldness to our live imperfect eyes
That stare beyond this world, where nothing’s made
As new or washed quite clean, seeking the home
All such inhabit. There, dark raftered pups
Are filled with white-clothed ones from tennis-clubs,
And the boy pucking his heart out in the Gents
Just missed them, as the pensioner paid
A half penny more for Granny Grave clothes Tea
To taste old age ......4

The largely negative and dismissive attitude of these poems is found in some other poems also. “The Importance of Elsewhere” and “Nothing to be said” are such poems. In the former the poet finds himself away from home in a place where he
can live free from the tyranny of familiar things. But this freedom does not last for long and the poet longs for his home and the daily routine:

Living in England has no such excuse:
There are my customs and establishments
It would me much more serious to refuse
Here no elsewhere underwrites my existence.5

“Nothing to be said” has an undercurrent of pathos because in mill towns on dark mornings life is slowly dying because relationships are breaking down. The industrial culture has taken a heavy toll of these relationships. The poet illustrates the ways of slow dying in the following lines:

The day spent hunting pig
Or holding a garden party
Hours giving evidence
Or birth, advance
On death, equally slowly
And saying so to some
Means nothing; others it leaves
Nothing to be said.6

In “Mr. Bleany” the speaker talks about a man who rented the room in which the speaker decided to reside. Mr. Bleany, like Ted Hughes’ retired colonel is a man of lower middle class- a class from which most of the Movement poets hail. Mr. Bleany was a moderate person but not unhappy for that reason. His possessions included every-day use-materials, bed, upright chair, sixty watt bulb, no hook behind the door, no room for books and bags. The poet can make out a full portrait of Mr. Bleany from the items in his lodgning:
I know his habits—what time he came down,
His preference for sauce to gravy, why
He kept on pugging at the four aways......?  

He left nothing beside him except a television set which he asked his mistress to sell. After renting the room the poet compares his own fate with that of Mr. Bleany as being quite similar. And this he does because he knows that Mr. Bleany lived a full life according to his own rules. The poet has admiration for him and if Bleany is a self-portrait of Larkin he could not have chosen a better persona:

But if he stood and watched the frigid wind
Tousling the clouds, lay on the fasty bed
Telling himself that this was home, and grinned,
And shivered, without shaking off the dread
That how we live measures our own nature,
And at his age having no more to show
Than one hired box should make him pretty sure
He warranted no better, I don’t know.  

After all Mr. Bleany is a creature of mass culture and mass-culture has its own standard of a man. Bleany fitted into that standard and that was his success. He did not have any illusions about life, any sublime expectations. He knew his limitations and was not unduly worried over them. Cleany seems to be a distant relative of Profrock, but he is neither a caricature nor a tragic figure. He does not have any spiritual hunger nor is he aware of anything seriously wanting in him.

“Naturally the Foundation will Bear Your Expenses” is again a satirical poem which hoodwinks others by posing that whatever he does is for the advancement of
truth and knowledge but in point of fact he is an unabashed careerist. The speaker of the poem is contemplating his situation setting in his plane. He is going on a lecture tour. He is angry at the crowd which is attending a memorial service for those who had died in the second world war. His contempt for the dead shows his utter callousness to human sufferings. The service appears to him to be worthless again:

I used to make me throw up,
These mawkish nursery games
O when will England grow up?
But I outsoar the Thames
And dwindle off down Auster
To great professor Lal
(He once met Morgan Forster)
My contact and my pall.  

This poem is once again a part of the consumerist culture system which sells knowledge and sends delegates abroad to spread the myth of consumerism.

“Self’s the Man” is a poem about the contrast between marriage and bachelorhood. Though initially the poet grants that a married man is less selfish than a bachelor because instead of constantly thinking of himself he has to think about and provide for his family but as the poem progresses it becomes plain that the married man’s life is much poorer than that of a bachelor because the family responsibilities hardly leave him any time to devote to himself:

He has no time at all
With nippers to wheel round the houses
And the hall to paint in his old trousers
And the letter to her mother
Saying won’t you come for the summer.\textsuperscript{10}

The obvious self-denial which the married man has to practise is not something which he willingly does. His unselfishness is a misnomer, he has no time even for his friends and relatives. Thus in ultimate analysis the married man is as badly placed as the bachelor, if not worse:

\begin{verbatim}
And if it was such a mistake
he still did it for his sake,
Playing his own game
So he and I are the same,
Only I am a better hand
And knowing what I can stand
Without them sending a van
Or I suppose I can.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{verbatim}

Thus even a slight sense of affirmation or positive hope is quickly suppressed by the poet, so engrossed he is in life’s negativities. Even in so personal a poem as “For Sidney Becht” the mood of affirmation is not allowed to last long. The music enchants the speaker and he bursts out in lyrical effusion to record his joy at the sounding of the notes. The particular the speaker is listening to narrows and rises and “shakes/like New Orleans reflected in water”. The power of music fills the listerners with love which is ironically described by the speaker as the waking of “appropriate falsehood”.

\begin{verbatim}
Or me your voice falls as they say love should
Like an enormous yes. My crescent city
Is where your speech alone is understood
And greeted as the natural noise of good,
\end{verbatim}
Scattering long-haired grief and scored pity.\textsuperscript{12}

P.R. King remarks on the essential ambiguity of the above lines: ...
... the choice of ‘scattering’ and ‘scored’ creates a submerged ambiguity its suggestion that, although the music has the power to overcome grief and express pity, it nevertheless also expresses the suffering which is the source of blues music and is therefore scattered in the notes that are scored for the player .... It is as if the affirmative mood must not be allowed to escape the realities of life.\textsuperscript{13}

This conscious avoidance of the act of affirmation is reflected in a large number of poems, “Days” is a poem in which same unwillingness to strike a positive note is present. “Days” is a small ten-line poem about the theme of time. The poem begins in a casual matter of fact manner, solving the riddle of time:

Days are where we live,
They come, they wake us
Time and time over.
They are to be happy in.
Where can we live but days?\textsuperscript{14}

The regularity of the passing of time and the heavy ironics stress on ‘wake’ suggested in the first two lines has an opposite impact on the speaker. We are destined to live in time and not transcendent it and most of our miseries arise on account of this. Days wake us in the sense that they make us aware of the approaching end of life. The solution of the riddle of time with which the poem had begun turns out to be a fake one. The real solution is too homofying to be elaborated:

Ah, solving that question
Brings the priest and the doctor
In their long coats
Running over the fields.\textsuperscript{15}

The priest and the doctor, the theologian and the physician have one similarity that both wear white coats. But apart from this playful similarity, there is another, and that is both are summoned at the time of death—one to extract the dying man’s confession and the other to sign the death certificate.

“A Study of Reading Habits” is apparently an autobiographical poem in which the poet recalls his youth when he would try to find solutions to human problems in books. The solutions given by books were merely deceptions because to imagine a hypothetical situation and to flaunt a solution is one thing and live that situation and face reality quite another. One is a fantasy and the other a fact and they cannot be reconciled. The poet has discovered the truth for himself and would like to share it with his readers:

\begin{quote}
Don’t read much now: the dude
Who lets the girl down before
The hero arrives, the chaps
Who’s yellow and keeps the store,
Seem far too familiar. Get slewed:
Books are a load of crap.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Books have always been held as the truest friends of man, as the custodians of maturest wisdom. Here in this poem the poet deflates this myth.

“Take One Home for the Kiddies” is small lyric in the form of a child’s request to its mother. The child asks the mother to fetch for it some new toys, little knowing that the child itself is a toy in the hands of time. The second and last stanza expresses this ironic truth:

\begin{quote}
Living toys are something novel
\end{quote}
But soon it wears off somehow.
Fetch the shoe-box, fetch the shovel
How, we’re playing funerals now.¹⁷

Coming as these words do from the mouth of a child, they acquire an unmistakable pathos. The sense of helplessness at the immunence of time and the implication that the game of funerals is the only real game make this short poem a unique piece in the sense that Philip Larkin had written few poems of tender pathos. “First Sight” is similar in tone though much more elaborate. The earth’s immeasurable surprise is expressed through the image of lambs who are learning to walk in snow:

As they wait beside the ewe
Her fleeces wetly caned, there hies
Hidden round them, waiting too
Earth’s immeasurable surprise
They could not grasp it if they knew
What so soon will wake and groan
Utterly unlike the snow.¹⁸

The irony of the situation is brought out by associating the lambs with the snow, both being symbols of innocence and purity. But innocence is also a form of ignorance and snow hides within itself death-heralding possibilities. The innocence of the lambs will not move or melt the snow. The lambs will ‘wake’ soon to the reality of life and will get disillusioned. Learning the realities of life the hard way is the theme of “Send no Money” where one asking to be taught the way things go, the speaker is told as follows:

There is no green in your eye:
Sit here, and watch the hail
Of accurance clobber life out
To a shape no one sees.\textsuperscript{19}

The speaker was grateful to his teacher and sat down to wait for the advice
to come true. And what he saw was this:
  \begin{quote}
  Half life is over now,
  And I meet full face on dark mornings
  The bestial visor, bent in
  By the blows of what happened to happen.\textsuperscript{20}
  \end{quote}

And the conclusion that the speaker draws from this is:
What does it prove ? Sad all.
In this way I spent my youth,
Tracing the trite untransferable
Truss-advertisement, truth.\textsuperscript{21}

Advertisement and truth are irreconcilable and any one who confuses the
two and takes one for the other will be similarly disillusioned.

But there are poems in \textit{The Whitsun Weddings} which suggest however
obliquely that possibilities of strength are not entirely lost. “Love Song in Age” is about
an old woman, a widow who rediscovers by chance the romantic sheet music of her
youth. She is momentarily enchanted by those songs, but this enchantment does not stay
and the woman realizes that such passing fantasy can be indulged in only temporarily.
But however momentary, the poem does achieve an emotional richness hard to be met
with elsewhere in Larkin. The widow was amazed to look at her youth where she
  \begin{quote}
  Stood
  Relaxing how each frank submissive chord
  Had ushered in
Word after sprawling hyphenated word
And the unfailing sense of being young
Spread out like a spirng-woken tree, wherein
That hidden freshness sung,
That certainty of time laid up in store
As when she played their first.\textsuperscript{22}

Even now in old age and widowhood those songs are still promising to solve and satisfy/And set unchangeably in order. It is only with sadness that the lady realizes the futility of these promises:

So
To pile them back, to cry,
Was had without lamely admitting how
It had not done so then, and could not now.\textsuperscript{23}

Larkin’s lover in “Talking in Bed” is an individual who is afraid of love. According to him, love is one’s self deception because it is too powerless to bear all the weight of one’s imagination which brightly enkindled during the courting. The trouble of love is not that it does not exist but does not match to the idea which we often have about it. When the lover comes close to his beloved it seems to be very honest but through the silent passing of time, it becomes impossible for them to continue this closeness. The real situation, in this poem, is described through the images of nature:

..... the winds incomplete unrest
Build and dispresas clouds about the sky,
And dark towns heap up on the horizon.
None of this cares for us.\textsuperscript{24}
The uneasiness of natural objects proves the problem of settlement of the couple. The final lines of the poem indicate the honesty of the speaker. The ending of the poem is memorable as it catches the mood of the poem as a whole in a few words:

At this unique distance from isolation
It becomes still more difficult to find
Words at once true and kind
Or not untrue and not unkind. 25

“An Arundel Tornb” is also about love. It has been said that the poem presents “a sensible valuation of love” in the poem where Larkin finds in the sculptors detail of clasped hands on the tomb of an early and countess that emblem of love in all its forms, profane as well as sacred, which transcends the ephanera of life that they, and we, consistently overvalue.” 26 Michael Schmidt has observed that Larkin’s poem may recall Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn” not only in the static subject with suggestivel dynamic subject matter, but also in the development of the closing stanza.” Schmidt further says that Keats’ final lines have the artifact witnessing to a former age and embodying in its execution values which art can perpetuate.... Larkin shows the romantic or Keatsian view to be, in his terms, a distoration of the truth.” 27

The poem’s resemblance with “Ode on a Grecian Urn” is only very superficial because it lacks that intense dramatic conflict between transience of life and the permanence of art which forms the core of Keats’ poem. Keats’ affirmation of Truth and Beauty embodied in art follows from that intense drama and consequently has an incantatory effect on the reader’s mind. Larkin’s poem is fullof prosaic details. The tomb
surprises him by its plainness though with a little focused attention he does notice the
human contrivance against the onslaught of time. Here the poet does not have the
consolation that art will get away from the tyranny of time:

Rigidly they
Persisted, linked through lengths and breadths
Of time, Snow fell, undated. Light
Each summer thronged the glass. A bright
Litter of birdcalls strewed the same
Bone-riddled ground. And up the paths
The endless altered people came,
Washing at their identity. 28

The frequent use of full-stops and commas in every stanza suggests that the
sight of the tomb fighting against time has not given any wonder or surprise to the poet.
He has maintained his cool and is coolly observing the whole situation. The tomb
represents only an attitude, and anachronism in an unarmorial age which has no patience
for such romantic residues. The architect who designed and built the tomb had invested it
with romantic associations, but

Time has transfigured them into
Untruth. The stone fidelity
They hardly meant has come to be
Their final blazon, and to prove
Our almost-instinct almost true:
What will survive of us is love. 29

The affirmation of the power of love with which the poem ends hardly
brings any consolation to the skeptical poet as well as the skeptical reader. In fact, the
concluding line “what will survive of us is love”, coming as it does from a deeply ironical background does not convince us. Larkin does not confer that immortality or even a suggestion of that immortality which is so clearly marked in Keats’ poem. Truth whether of life or art is relative and cannot transcend the ravages of time. Even so this affirmation of the power of love does hold out a ray of hope for the poet who has been witnessing the collapse of human relationships under the weight of mass-culture and industrial consumerism.

“Faith-Healing” is one of those poems of the volume which do suggest some possibility of meaning in this life, although as always, the suggestion is deliberately couched in an ambiguous language. An American evangelist, “upright in rimless glasses, silver hair, dark suit, white collar” is persuading people to listen to him who has brought cheering news for them. As soon people go near him he goes in a prayer “directing God about this eye, that knee. But the evangelist is not able to retain their interest in his prayers for long. Most people leave the place. Those who stay remain stiff, though they do feel like responding to the kind words of the evangelist:

..... but some stay stiff, twitching and land
With deep horse tears, as if a kind of dumb
And idiot child within them still survives
To reawake at kindness, thinking a voice
A least calls them alone, that hands have come
To lift and lighten.....

But their miseries are too many and too real to be removed by such occasional kindness. The congregation discovers that “all is wrong”. In everyone there
sleeps a sense of life tired according to love. Love has lost its meaning for them, and religious teaching without love will have no impact:

To some it means the difference they could make
By loving others but across most it sweeps
As all they might have done had they been loved.
That nothing cures. An immense slackening ache.
Spreads slowly through them-that, and the voice above
Saying dear child and all time has disproofed.31

Religion has been institutionalized, love has disappeared, and the problems of human existence have grown in dimension and ferocity. But even if negatively, the poem does suggest that if love and fellow-feeling could be revived in their purity and disinterestedness the world would be much more beautiful. The affirmation, however tentative and ambiguous, is an important element.

A similar response is to be found in ‘Dockery and Son’. The poem has been commended by critics as one of his finest. Thus one critic praises it not only for its descriptive details but also because the poem “has the simple fascination of an honestly reported life-even suggesting the moment to mement flow of consciousness. It possesses also a humble appeal of personality, a tone as impressingly intimate as the touch of a hand on one’s arm.” 32 P.R. King calls it a central poem for understanding Larkin’s mixture of honesty and self-doubt which is so much a part of his best poem. 33 J.R. Watson praises the poem for providing a conception of time and space having value.34 The poem begins in a confident manner. The occasion of the poem is the poet’s visit to his college where he is told that his friend Dockery’s son is studying there. This news sets
off the poet’s miditations on how individuals are shaped and controlled by circumstances beyond their control:

‘Dockery was junior to you
Won’t he?’ Said the Dean. ‘His son’s here now’.
Death-suited, visitant, I nod. And do
You keep in touch with- ‘Or remember how
Black-gowned, unbreakfasted, and still half-tight
We used to stand before that desk, to give
‘Our version’ of ‘these incidents last night’?.

The memory of the past fills the speaker with temporary joy. His mind suddenly is thrown back to the days when the miseries of life could not dampen the high spirits of youth, a time which was full of promises and when life had appeared so rosy. Overtaken by a mood of elation and sadness the speaker decides to visit his old room but finds it ‘locked’. There is a pun on ‘locked’ because it suggests not only the locked room but the locking of a whole way of life which can only be observed from distance but never participated in. The dazzlingly shining lawn of the college, the chiming of the familiar bell only increase his sense of uneasiness and he returns home, though feeling ‘ignored’. The place and its other associations vanish from his view and Dockery appears before his mind’s eyes. The poet is puzzled by the fact that Dockery’s son is studying where Dockery himself had studied though no much time has elapsed since then. The speaker had studied there in ‘43, during the Second World-War and Dockery shared his room with Cartwright who was subsequently killed in the war. The speaker returns to
himself who has remained single, without any children or wife. He compares himself with Dockery as he had earlier done with Bleany (“Mr. Bleany” and Arnold “Self’s the Man”):

To have no son, no wife
No house or land still seemed quite natural.\(^{36}\)

His bachelorhood seems natural to him and for the time being he feels relieved that he had no such encumberances in life. Dockery in the past was so much like him but he notices the difference which shocks him:

Only a numbness registered the shock
Of finding out how much had gone of life
How widely from the others.\(^{37}\)

The difference was not only that Dockery had married and willingly accepted domestic responsibilities while the poet had remained single, but rather how

Convinced he was, he should be added to
Why did he think adding meant increase
To me it was dilution.\(^{38}\)

Dockery’s choice could not be the poet’s choice but choice has to be made in life. We choose either willingly, with knowledge of what we are choosing and the consequences that will follow from this choice or we are forced to make a choice. In either case the freedom of choice is not available to me. What was a positive choice for Dockery appears to be a doubtful one for the poet. To solve this dichotomy the poet delves deep into the sources of the choice and what he finds there make him more bleak about the human condition:

where do these
Innate assumptions come from? Not from what
We think truest or most want to do:
Those warp tight-shut, like doors, they are mere a style
Our live bring with them; habit from a while
Suddenly they harden into all we have got
And how we got it.³⁹

Thus no choice is conscious choice. Habits harden and determine the pattern of our lives. Therefore if Dockery ‘chose’ domesticity and the poet bachelorhood neither can be held responsible for the choice. The conclusion though terrible is inevitable:

For Dockery a son, for me nothing,
Nothing with a son’s harsh patronage.
Life if first boredom, then fear.
Whether or not we use it, it goes
Leaves what something hidden from us chose
And age, and then the only end of age.⁴⁰

Though the poem rules out all choices as illusions and seems to call on readers that they cannot resist the force of habits, it does have a positive core in the sense that it does not blame man for making a choice. Man is a victim whether he chooses increase or illusion. But the poet does have a feeling that Dockery’s life at least had some fulfilment in a wife and son, whereas his own was a complete blank. Life is devoid of heroic and the only sensible course before man is to surrender to circumstances. Problems arise only when choices are flaunted. Boredom, fear, age, the passing of age: all these are inevitables but they are sweeping generalisations of the nature of life. Life is lived in between these inevitables. “Dockery and Son” is a typical Movement poem in that it
describes the ordinary and the common place. This ordinariness is reinforced by the ordered, regulated verse lines, a cool, unmeditative almost wry tone throughout the poem. There is truth in the remark that the poem is “valuable rather for its creation of a distinct and powerful sense of personality brooding over the facts of his experience than for its sweeping generalizations.”

Larkin’s *The Less Deceived* and *The Whitsun Weddings* are interspersed with narrative poems which may be called, to borrow Allan Brownjohn’s title for this essay on Larkin, ‘Novels into Poems’. “My Bleany” and “Dockery and Son”, “Arundel Tomb”, “Church Going” and “The Whitsun Weddings” are some of such poems. The last named one is the title-poem of the volume which we have been discussing. it is also one of Larkin’s finest poems and with “Church Going” his most anthologised one. There can be no better summary of the narrative than the one given in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* which is being paraphrased in what follows here. The occasion for the poem was a train journey on a Whitsun Saturday afternoon. This journey passes through the countryside into the urban surroundings of London. Side by side with this actual journey there is an emotional journey also which is set off by the sight of newlyweds being picked up at each station and the poet links his own bachelorhood with the profound changes that will occur in future in the lives of these newlyweds. For the moment he forgets his habit of withdrawl and views the newlyweds with tender sympathy. Though travelling in the same train he places himself at a distance to be able to objectively scrutinize and meditate on married life.
“The Whitsun Weddings” in its central situation will recall a number of Larkin’s poems in which a bachelor is given the role of pontificator over married life. It is not a little odious in itself and tends to suggest the reader that as an outsider the bachelor cannot do full justice to an experience to which he has been alien. But the charm of such poems is that they do not assume any kind of didacticism or generalised sweep; they describe and evaluate the experiences of marriage and family life within a larger framework of the essential nature of the human condition.

Like “Church Going”, “An Arundel Tomb”, “Faith-Healing” and “Dockery and Son”, “The Whitsun Weddings” is a serious poem. The poem begins with personal experience and gradually moves to generalised meditations investing the poem with a universality and larger human significance. The poem opens on a note of sedateness with the movement of the verse deliberately slowed by the use of diphthongs or long vowels. The experience of the landscape from a fast moving train is similar as we may find in Spender’s “The Express” though the central effect of the poem is entirely different. The countryside scene from the train presents a panoramic picture of rural England:

All afternoon through the tall heat that slept
For miles inland,
A slow and stopping curve southwards we kept
Wide farms went by, short shadowed cattle, and
Cannals with floatings of industrial froth;
A hothouse flashed, iniquely; hedges dipped
And rose; and now and then a swell of grass
Displaced the reek of buttoned carriage cloth
Until the next town, new and nondescript,
Approached with acres of dismantled cars.  

With these details minutely caught from the train the first movement of the poem ends. So far there is no suggestion of anything that might give us a peep into the real purpose of this landscape painting. But this landscape has a relevance in the poem that there is a telling contrast between rural and urban England. When the newlyweds started boarding the train ‘In parodies of fashion, heels and veils. All posed irresolutely’ they seemed to be ‘on the end of an event’ and ‘waving goodbye. To something that survived it. The event which had ended was their singleness and they were waving goodbye to a life which would not be theirs. It is at this point that irony enters into the poem. From the details the poet concludes that the wedding-days were coming to an end, and therefore

All down the line
Fresh couples climbed aboard; the rest stood round;
The last confetti and advice were thrown,
And, as we moved, each face seemed to define
just what it saw departing; children frowned
At something dull; fathers had never known
Success so huge and wholly farcical:
The women shared
The sacred like a happy funeral;
While girls, gripping their handbags together, stared
At a religious wounding.  

The sight of parents in a fix and speechless, the women divulging the secrets of happy domesticity to the newlyweds and the children frowning at the dull
surroundings impels the poet to look more closely at the crowd and the new landscape that is emerging with the movement of the train. This landscape is the suburban London:

shuffling govs of steam
New Fields were buidling-plots, and poplars cast.
Long shadows over major roads, and for
Some fifty minutes, that in time would seem
Just long enough to settle hats and say
I nearly died.44

The suburban landscape with steam, building-plots and roads shadowed by tall poplars gradually prepare the reader for a change of mood from that of frolic and festivity. The newlyweds however, seem to be intoxicated by dreams of joy and fulfilment, unaware of the harsh realities which would be unfolded for them very soon.

The train moves through the standing Pullmans and walls of blackened moss and when the journey was almost over and the travelling coincidence’ came to an end, the poet’s mind was gripped by the phenomenon of change from bachelorhood to marriage. In fact, the idea of change in the lives of the couples is contained in the central metaphor of the poem-journey:

We slowed again,
And as the tightened brakes took hold, there swelled
A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower
Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain.45

These closing lines have an air of serenity which might be interpreted in two opposed ways. The train stops with a jerk and the passangers are jolted by a sense of falling. This fall may be from paradisal bachelorhood something which Larkin has
suggestd in a number of poems. The fall may also suggest, as P.R. King has said, “falling upon a life of new hope and happiness”. The last image of an arrow shower set out of sight and “somewhere” turning into rain has also this ambiguity. While rain suggests fertility and domestic bless, the uncertainty of “somewhere” tends to puncture this hope. But in the final analysis, what really stands out in the poem is the poet’s understanding and compassionate attitude towards the couples. He has remained detached in his observations but somewhere in his heart there is genuine sympathy and goodwill for them. He does not openly say so but that he does not deflate the possibilities of meaning is enough indication of his, if not outright approval, then, at least, willingness to leave the matter best not pontificated on. He does not openly bless the couples but he does to close the possibility of fulfilment. One would readily assent in the following observation of P.R. King:

This poem may be read as dealing with English society as a whole through its panorama of scenes and the couples who suggest the recurring life of a whole community, together with the traditional journey image as a symbol for life itself. In this way it becomes almost a muted prayer for the contiously revitalizing power of change in society--a forward impetus and hope for fulfilment, even if such fulfilment remains ‘out of sigh’. It is perhaps as positive a view as is possible for a poet who finds such difficulty in believing in the fruition of dreams and ideals.46

With the publication of _The Whitsun Weddings_ Larkin came to be acknowledged as the foremost British poet of the post-war period. This reputation owed partly at least to his sense of place in this poems dealing with the rural and urban
landscape of the post war Britain which was fast recovering from the ravages of the war. But partly and perhaps more importantly he came to be identified with the contemporary British sensibility which learnt to be moderate in its hope, less violent in its energies and more realistic in its ideals and visions. It must be said to the credit of Larkin that despite his overtly pessimistic poems he celebrated the traditional English communal life and had respect for its decaying institutions and responsive to the demands and compromises that a mass-culture automatically entails. “Church Going”, “An Arundale Tomb”, “Mr. Bleany”, “Dockery and Son” and above all “The Whitsun Weddings” are poems dealing with various aspects of British life in the post-war years. The reading public was not slow to recognize an authentic British voice in Larkin. The BBC organized a special programme in 1972 “Larkin at 50”. He asked to edit The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse in 1973. All this was an indication that Larkin had been identified with the main-stream tradition of English poetry. Larkin was rightly regarded as a poet embodying the true English spirit with its heavy slant towards urban culture, its desire to establish as close a rapport as possible with the reading public and its desire to please as well as instruct, and certain kind of homeliness by emphasising the values of English social life.

All this should, however, not suggest that Larkin was being reborn as a poet of affirmation and hope. In fact, most poems of High Windows which appeared in 1974 continue the earlier habit of deflating romantic idealism and pointing to the near emptiness of human hopes and desires. John Bayley has pointed out how the poems of
High Windows reveal such qualities of the poet’s mind as “visitation of emptiness”, the vibration of absence in the imagination”, and the “considered feelings about death, disappointment and extinction.”

It will not be amiss therefore to glance at some of the poems of High Windows if only to show how the typical movement mood of the diminishing vision of reality and inability or refusal to affirm has continued till the very end in Lakrin’s poetry. Another observation of Bayley with which he concludes his compersion of Larkin and Housman will not be out of place here:

The early poets of the Romantic movement feel back on moral symbolism; ... Housman and Larkin too are romantics who became parnasian in their own styles. Larkin’s version of ‘Hel Gate’ [a poem by Housman] is ‘Aubade’... or ‘The Life with a Hole in it’ and even big set-piece late poems like ‘The Building’ and ‘The Old Fools, masterly but also elaborate exercises in comic-parodic demonstration. It is significant that poets emphasise their inability to change, and their lack of any wish to do so... while at the same time becoming more obviously themselves, in ways which can subtly betray the spontaneous earlier inwardness of their poetry.

However, it must be rememembered that the romanticism of Larkin, or for that matter, of Housman lies only in their exploitation of personal experiences of failures and frustration. They by no means give any message of hope or meaning; and even when there is an occasion for such hope and meaning as in “An Arundel Tomb” or “The Whitsun Weddings”, the tone is so muted and the diction so ambiguous that the reader fails to get at the message. The poems of High Windows differ from the earlier ones in
one very significant aspect, and that is that the awareness of time has become acuter in
them and the sense of approaching death reminds the poet much more painfully of
experiences he has missed and of the impossibility of having those experiences in the
evern-dwindling time that he now has at his disposal. Thus in “How Distant” the poet
only wistfully confers that the departure of youngmen down valley or watching the green
share or the desire of cattlemen and carpenters to get away from married villages, which
he used to contemplate in his youth with sardonic irony have lost their meaning for the
poet. As an aging person he has been cut off from the world of the youth. The poem does
give authentic pictures of some of the typical moments of the communal life in England
but is concludes on deeply pensive note:

This is being young,
Assumptin of the startled century
Like new store clothes,
The huge decisions printed out by feet
Inventing where they tread
the random windows conjuring a street.\(^{49}\)

Love and company have been deliberately kept out by Larkin from his
poems. He scorns love because it generates many illusions, being itself an illusion, and
company as in “Reason for Attendance” is something which he cannot admit because it
disturbs the poet’s lonely brooding. But in a later poem “Verse de Societe” he shakes off
that old scorn and joins the party and the reason why he does so is:

Only the young can be alone freely. The time is shorter now for
company and sitting by lamp more often brings not peace but other
things.\(^{50}\)
The young joins society not because he has grown to love it; he scorns it as intensely as he did earlier, but in those earlier times loneliness bestowed upon him some peace, but now that he is aging and the time is shorter he does not find peace in loneliness. But whether he would find peace in the party is left vague; he joins the party for negative reasons and not for positive reasons. This is more trenchently brought out in “The Card-Players” where he draws pen-portraits of those who are playing cards in “this lamplit cave” in an effort to shut out the outer world. Pissing, drinking, snoring and even singing of songs of love is all going on simultaneously. It is a very ironic picture of peace in a party where each one is busy doing what one wants and what the poem reveals is the ‘bestial peace’. “The Dedicated” embodies that same sense of emptiness and futility which characterise all human activity from cutting the grass to lighting candles in the church. There is only momentary contentment in these activities:

And if they have leave
To pray, it is for contentment
If the feet of the dove
Perch on the scythes handle,
Perch once, and then depart
Their knowledge. After they wait
Only the colder advent
The quenching of candles.\(^5\)

And the aging poet is waiting for the quenching of candles but instead of mocking those who engage themselves in various kinds of activity, there is in the poem a touch of compassion and understanding for them.
“The Old Fools” is devastating poem on aging in which the poet expresses his horror and astonishment at old age. First he blasts the myth that old age is the period of maturity, of wisdom and sagacity. While all this might be true the physical aspect of decay is too horrifying to allow us to concentrate on the so-called beauties of old age or ‘second childhood’ as it is usually referred to. But there is another thing which the poet mocks at. Most old people regret the follies of their youth and wishfully think that they could have changed the world if they tried to:

... if they chose,
They could alter things back to when they danced all night,
Or went to their wedding, or sloped arms some September?.

Remembered folly stings but it stings for wrong reasons. The universe moves in an impersonal manner, man cannot interfere with its ways. All our endeavour to bring to bloom the million-pettalled flower ends in failure but we realize it only when the power of choosing is gone. however, the old people continue to nurse illusions about their future when there is no future: “Ash hair, toad hands, prune face dried into lines-How can they ignore it?” And then follows a somewhat skeptical portrayal of old age in the third stanza:

Perhaps being old is having lighted rooms
Inside your head, and people in them, acting
People you know, yet can’t quite name; each looms
Like deep loss restored, from known doors turning,
Setting down a lamp, smiling from a stair, extracting
A known book from the shelves; or something only
The rooms themselves, chairs and a fire burning,
The blown bush at the window, or the sun’s
Faint friendliness on the wall some lonely
Rain-ceased midsummer evening. That is where they live:
Not here and now, but where all happened once.53

But no one can take refuge in the past and ignore the realities of the present. In fact, both past and present are parts of time which is always a tyrant. The old men have only their past to fall back upon. The irony is that they cannot relive their past and so far the future is concerned it is devoid of any promises of fulfilment:

This is why they give
An air of baffled absence, trying to be there
yet being here.54

They live in sort of limbo, in an absence which has the illusion of being a presence. The old diminish slowly, and uncertainly, not knowing how far or close the end is. What is peak for us for them the rising ground:

Can they never tell
What is dragging them back, and how it will end?
Not at night?
Not when the stranger come? Never, throughout
The whole hideous inverted childhood? Well,

We shall find out.55

The poem builds a tension between “we” and “they” and while “they” is for the old fools whom does the “we” stand for? “We” is obviously the universal voice which not only observes the human condition but also participates in it. The first stanza expressed disgust because what is so obviously a universal experience has escaped the attention of the old people. The question ‘why aren’t they screaming?’ arises not only out
of disgust but puzzlement. Swift in the eighteenth century had said that man needs to be reminded rather than informed. But Swift’s man lived in the age of enlightenment; he knew the human condition and whenever he tends to be oblivious of it, the satirists were ready with their double-edged satires to hurt and shock him into the awareness of his condition. The old fools of Larkin belong to the twentieth century when so much material progress has been made which seems to have created a false and illusory picture of the human condition. It is natural therefore that the speaking voice of the poem pluralizes itself so as to lend more weight and urgency to the message.

The first two stanzas betray the speaking voice as being detached, cold and callous. If the first stanza ends with the puzzling question, “why aren’t they screaming?” the second stanza ends on the note of bafflement, “How can they ignore it?” With “Perhaps” begins the third stanza, implying that ignorance or indifference is not conffinned only to the old fools and they must be viewed with a little more sympathy. They are not to blame for how they behave. There are present illusions in the world and nature which tend to blur of our perception of the realities of life. The language in the third and fourth stanzas is slightly less coarse and less terse. The lyrical image of a million petaled flower in the second stanza only high-lights the barrenness of aging life because bloom cannot last long. But in the last two stanzas there occurs a change of mood in the speaker because he adopts a more understanding and sympathetic gesture towards ‘the old fools’. This change is partly on account of the speakers awareness that he will share the lot which he is criticizing now. This is brought out by the ‘we’ in the last line of the poem.
But the assuring ‘we shall find out’ brings no assurance and in fact is not meant to give any assurance. As the speaker of the poem the poet is driven to the conclusion that what he is contemplating so objectively will one day be his own lot. But this conclusion should not be taken as defeat. True knowledge about the nature of life will save the poet from nursing illusions and dreams. Immortal surely he cannot become, but wiser he definitely is.

A similar self awareness is expressed in ‘Sad Steps’. The title of the poem is derived from Sir Philip Sidney’s Sonnet no 31 in his Astophel and Stella in which he uses the pale, wanning moon as a lover’s image. Larkin’s poem written in triplets has a very different kind of atmosphere though the moon is pale and wanning there also. The poem is started by the moon’s cleanliness in the wind-picked sky, which makes the moon an object of laughter. The cleanliness of the moon is swiftly coming to an end because already it is four O’clock. He refers to the moon as the lozenge of love and Medallion of art in an ironic tone because such associations of the moon have become outdated and stir in the poet’s mind, the wolves of memory. The moon is for the poet, a reminder of the strength and pain of being young. But that stage is long past for him. His romantic youth has gone away and the poet in his late is no longer prey to those illusions and passions which used to rise in his heart in those days. For him his youth cannot come again. But there is no dearth of young men and women for whom the charm of the moon is still undiminished and this is disturbing to the poet. He feels uneasy at the thought that though
he has been cured of romantic folly yet there are many who are still nursing those illusions. It can be called a poem of acceptance of death.

“High windows”, the title poem of volume, also has an ambiguous conclusion. The poem begins with a picture of conjugal bliss which for money, specially for the aged, is another name of paradise. Those still young can enjoy it but those grown old can only look back to their past and in a futile attempt to task fulfilment can recapitulate those memories. In moments of physical bliss one forgets about God, sin or priests and people go down the long stride to happiness endlessly. Was the poet now old, was cast in the same mould? He would neither accept nor deny. He would, however, leave the young as they are, enclosed in their rooms with high windows where:

The sun-comprehending glass,
And beyond it, the deep blue air, that shows
Nothing, and is nowhere, and is endless.\(^{56}\)

The poem seems to celebrate the community of life and the poet’s attitude is for once not ironic. The poet, though himself deprived of that life, is sympathetic towards it.

“The Explosion” is another poem in which the tone is meditative and not flippant or ironic. The poet is observing the scene of explosion and records the details with sympathy and understanding. Anthony Thwait and John Mole have called the poem an unusual venture for Larkin because here the poet has employed a metre never used by him before or since. An explosion has taken place, creating a big pilhead. The survivors, mostly widowed women come out to mourn for their kinsmen. Though in moruning
themselves, they show tenderness towards the lark’s eggs that they discover there and put them under the grass. Then they utter out a prayer:

The dead go on before us, they
Are sitting in God’s house in comfort,
We shall see them face to face.57

Although people have died in tragic circumstances but they have nevertheless been released from life which is a series of painful and disappointing experiences. This prayer has a sublimating effect on the widows of the victims. They see their husbands grown larger than life in death and thus establish communion with their dead husbands:

and for a second
Wives saw men of the explosion
Larger than life they managed
Gold as on a coin, or walking
Somehow from the sun towards them
One showing the eggs unbroken.58

The communion last only a second but this transfigures the widows consciousness. The fact that the explosion has not been able to destroy all life has a consoling effect on them.

A similar experience is embodied in another poem “Show Saturday” in which the poet portrays the picture of community life. It is a poem which gives a very different Larkin. Among the description of abundant fertility, there are such pictures of orderliness as the following one where the poet gives a whole catalogue of objects in the exhibition tent:
blanch leeks like church candles, six poets of
Broad beans (one splint open), dark shining leaved
cabbages-rows
Of single supreme versions, followed (on laced
Paper mats) by dairy and kitchen: four brown eggs,
four white eggs.
Four plain scones, four dropped scones, pure
excellences that enclose
A precision of skills.\textsuperscript{59}

This abundance described with a novelist’s concern for details and with
almost a Keatsian sensuousness is further reinforced when there follows the description
of the visitors:

The men with hunters, dog-breeding wool-defined women,
Children all saddle-swank, mug faced middle aged wives
Claring at jellies, husbands on leave from garden
Watchful as weasless, car-turning curt haired sons.\textsuperscript{60}

The show is memorable as long as it lasts. The show is organised to bid
farewell to summer, the season of impregnation, which will be followd by winter and
autumn, seasons of silent growing and ripening. While winter will ravage the landscape
and autumn will put out the ripening fruits, the memory of the summer, deeply impled
on consciousness, will sustain humanity. Of course, the show cannot go on eternally and
must come to an end, yet it will be kept safely treasoned in memory and will continue to
remind of the joys once experienced and, may be, to be experienced in future:
Let it stay hidden there like strength, below
Sale-bills and swindling; something people do,
Not noticing how time’s rolling smithy-smoke
Shadows much greater gestures; something they share
That breaks ancestrally each year wits
Regenerate union. Let it always be there.\(^6\)

Such moments of compassion and affirmation are in Lakrin’s poetry. “The Whitsun Weddings” had ended on a sympathetic note. “Church Going”, despite the ironic voice pervading the whole poem, had ended on a note of hope that the church would continue to have visitors and it will not disappear from the community life. “Show Saturday” reminds of the same mood. Maturity has conferred upon the poet a peculiar serenity an almost eloquent forgiveness with which to contemplate the human scene. “The Trees”, is again a poem that celebrates the regenerative power of life though it does not entirely forget the fact of death. When the trees come into leaf and flower, something is almost being said. And what is almost being said is that the period will last so little and therefore their green is a kind of grief. The fact that life, community life, the life of nature moves in a cycle where death has its appointed hour, gives the poet hope that if death has its hour, so has life:

Is it that they are born again
And we grow old?\(^6\)

The cycle of human life corresponds with that of nature. Fertility is followed by death but then death is followed by fertility. The last stanza embodies this new vision of, if not the victory of life over death, then at least, the power of life to coexist with death:

Yet still the unresting thresh
In fulgrown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.63

Thus despite the awareness, Keatsien once again, in the ephemerality of natural and human objects, the poet seems to assent to the regenerative power of the trees.

“The Building” is the most ambitious poem of High Windows as also it is the longest. Larkin has included one long poem in each of his major volumes-- “Church Going” in the Less Deceived, “The Whitsun Weddings” in the volume of that name and “The Building” in High Windows. All these poems commemorate either a community experience or a community institution. These are ‘public’ poems. All the three poems are touched with religious imagery and are written in a meditative-reflective style though interspersed with humourous or overtly ironic suggestion, but ending in positive manner. However, compared to the earlier two poems, “The Building” gives out bleaker message though couched in a mild language.

The poem opens with the description of the building, the details suggestions that it is either a public recreation centre or an airport lounge. The fact that the building is a hospital comes out only by the last word of the first stanza. There are porters but not taxis, there is a frightening swell, there are paperback books ragged magazines, tea-cups giving the impression that the place is something like a transit outport. However, there is something that belies the impression. The persons crowding the place are in outdoor clothes and carry shopping bags but their faces are “restless and resigned”. The
The juxtaposition of these two words suggests a paradox, and this paradox gives out the horrifying truth when the last line of the stanza says:

Every few minutes comes a kind of nurse ...
This disclosure is followed by more supporting details:
............... comes a kind of nurse
To fetch someone away: the rest refit
Cups back to saucers, cough, or glance below
Seats for dropped gloves or cards.64

The persons sitting and waiting there are described as follows:

Human, caught
On ground curiously neutral, homes and names
Suddenly in abeyance; some are young,
Some old, but most at that vague age that claims
The end of choice, the last of hope; ....65

The hospital is a leveller; all distructions of age and status are put in jeopardy here. They are all united in a “vagus” age: they all have reached the end of hope. The poet says “the last of hope” and not the end of hope but this is just our sheer sympathy for the mortally sick people. The hospital is an ambiguous place, a place of regaining health as also a place of death and this double focus is maintaine throughout the poem.

In the third stanza the opening line reinforces this double focus of the poem when the poet says that the hospital is a place where people go “to confess” that something is wrong. The religious association’s of which are set off by ‘confess’ confers an ambience on the building which is a place of death. There is a further paradox. Usually
places of confession (churches) are crowded on off days, but it is a working day and there is huge crowd waiting at the hospital. The idea of hugeness is reinforced by the “many” floors of the building, its tallness and the huge amount which is spent to maintain it. If one were to compare this building with the old, dilapidated, disused church of ‘Church Going’, one would realize that the hospital is modern man’s church, always crowded (and not just on Sundays), well-maintained, tall and furnished.

As the patients cross one another while going to their respective floors, their eyes go to each other. Suffering bind them together in sympathy. Without uttering out a single word the patients communicate with each through their gestures:

On the way
Someone’s wheeled past, in washed-to-rags ward clothes;
They see him too. They are quiet.66

And the reason why they are quiet is that they share a common lot. But there is another, more pertinent reason which is brought out by these lines:
For past these doors are rooms, and rooms past those,
And more rooms yet, each one further off
And harder to return from; and who knows
Which he will see, and when?.67

Outside the hospital building the business of the world is being carried on as if the hospital, a place of confession, of death, of secret sympathy with suffering fellows, did not exist at all:

Then, past the gate,
Traffic; a locked church; short terraced streets
Where kids chalk games, and girls with hair-dos fetch
Their separates from the cleanliness.68

The loves and chances of the outer world are beyond the reach of the patients in the hospital. But the hospital is a reality and the world a dream.
A touching dream to which we all are lulled
But wake from separately, in it, conceits
And self protecting ignorance congeal
To carry life.69

Standing in the midst of this conceit and ignorance, the hospital is a house of truth, where illusions cannot last. The hospital shakes off one’s illusions and reveals the ‘crude facets’ of the human condition. The waiting patients are described as ‘congregations’ once again evoking religious associations. The congregation is representative of humanity-women, men, old, young. They all wait in suspense. The last stanza expresses the bleak vision of the poet:

All know they are going to die.
Not yet, perhaps not here, but in the end,
And somewhere like this. That is what it means,
This clean-sliced cliff; a struggle to transcend
The thought of dying, for unless its powers
Outbuild cathedrals nothing contraverses
The coming dark, though crowds each evening try
With wasteful, weak, propiliatory flowers.70

The vision is decidely bleak but so it has been in many other poems of Larkin. The difference is that while in other poems the poet has used mainly a satirical voice to expose the human folly of living in dreams, “The Building” is absolutely free from satirical touches. The poet enumerates the details of the place and persons with
meticulous care but this is done to bring out the underlying pathos. In the earlier poems, emphasis fell on the role of man in his tragedy; here man is presented as a helpless victim, etnaciously clinging to his dreams although at heart convinced of their futility. It is a very different Larkin that we meet here. If the earlier satirical poems betrayed a streak of arrognace and superiority on the part of the poet because he spoke in a voice suggesting that he was above the vice he was attacking, this poem reveals the poet as joining his victims and sharing their misery and expressing his fraternity with them.

We would call the poem positive; the poem is concerned with revealing a truth, a knowledge. This truth, this knowledge, though terrible, has the stamp of authenticity because it has arisen from not merely detached observation but pesonal involvement. The poet is one of the white congregation and this enables him to achieve an intimacy and authenticity which few, if any, of his poems have. Another thing which stands out in the poem is its careful juxtaposing of the images of life with those of death. The juxtaposition is further achieved by the poet’s refusal to name the building which is only a buidling as other buildings are but which is at the same so different. Though the place is marked as the one where the stream of life seems to have stopped, the poet does not pooh-pooh those who desperately cling to life. Though not a church, people come here to confess that something has gone wrong. The building must outbuild cathedrals because cathedrals are going (the pun on ‘Going’ in ‘Church Going’, The hospital is a serious place on the serious earth and has to accomplish a serious task. It cannot avoid the invitable but it must help the process of life to go on as long as it can. The inevitability of
death is accepted but this does not diminish the force of life. “The Building” has connotative images, quite a few religious and the whole poem looks like one elaborate ritual-the ritual which needs congregations, propitiatory flowers. There is a calm serenity in the poem befitting its ritualistic nature.

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