CHAPTER V

VOICES: TEXTUAL EVIDENCES

A letter addressed to J. B. Sutton in 1945 brings to surface Larkin’s contradictions in his attitude to life. Larkin, while reading the “sensitive letter” of his friend in a sunny morning, felt fine and exclaimed: “By God, yes this is the life I must write about.” He, however, after a day’s work felt diametrically opposite and lamented: “I feel depressed and barren.”¹ What is implied in this context is that neither the first reaction as revealed in the letter nor the second one is conclusive; both are inconclusively important as pointers to the “multi-centeredness” which confers on life a kind of objectivity challenging the authority of a single voice or point of view. Larkin’s warmly spontaneous admiration for D.H. Lawrence’s poem “Snake”, which has been acknowledged as an example for focusing on the clash of multiple voices, may be accepted as a proof of his inclination in the early stage of his career towards recognizing the importance of conflicting voices representing diversity in various contexts.²

Larkin’s “I Remember, I Remember” (1954 TLD) has resonances from the writings of the Romantics like William Blake, William Wordsworth, Thomas Hood, Dylan Thomas and others. Larkin’s poem may be considered as a space in which the poet or the poetic persona or the speaker gives reply to the Romantics in terms of ironic disagreement through the polyphonic play of voices. A close reading of the poem makes it obvious that the readers are intended to recollect a “sentimentally
nostalgic" poem of childhood "Past and Present" by Thomas Hood, when Larkin makes brilliant use of the inaugural line of Hood's poem as the title of his own poem: "I remember, I remember, / The house where I was born." The surge of emotion in Hood's poem which is corollary of innocent happiness of childhood days, "Apparell'd in celestial light", is contrasted by the agonized feeling of gradual detachment from "Heaven" in mature age. Larkin's poem not only challenges through argument Hood's romantic concept of childhood: it also mocks "Lawrentian and Dylan Thomas-ish ideas of childhood. The arguments and counter-arguments in "I Remember, I Remember" for and against romanticizing childhood are highlighted through the contesting voices represented by the speaker and his friend in course of a train journey.

"Coming up England by a different line", the speaker feels surprised to recognize all of a sudden through the window of the compartment the railway station Coventry at which the train has halted. The sight of the place where the speaker was born and passed his childhood days stirs his emotion and he bursts into exclamation: " 'Why Coventry!' I exclaimed, 'I was born here.' " In a flush of nostalgia he "cranes out of a window", "for a sign" outside with which he can emotionally locate himself in his birthplace; but he fails miserably and comically as well:

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I leant far out, and squinted for a sign
That this was still the town that had been 'mine'
So long, but found I wasn't even clear
Which side was which. From where those cycle-crates
Were standing, had we annually departed
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For all those family hols? ... A whistle went:

Things moved. I sat back, staring at my boots.

‘Was that’, my friend smiled, ‘where you “have your roots”?’

No, only where my childhood was unspent,

I wanted to retort, just where I started:

(CP, 81)

The romantic mode of expression by the speaker, however, surfaces clearly a “crack” in the structure of reflection as the sentimentalism in the speaker is replaced by drab realism leading him to realize ironically that the so-called romantic attachment in the days of childhood to Coventry has no impact at all on him now. The “crack” is widened and gains cumulative strength, when the speaker replies to his friend’s question about the “place” or the birthplace which is supposed to evoke in the speaker feelings loaded with nostalgia:

‘Was that’ my friend smiled, ‘where you “have your roots”?’

No, only where my childhood were unspent,

(CP, 81)

The romantic core here is ruthlessly tempered by the disillusioned realism in the sense that the speaker feels released from the mist of sentiment glorified by the romantics. Larkin’s poem incorporates in the structure of its text the process of carnivalization: the traditionally accepted popular romantic notion of childhood is subverted or undercut by ironic strokes.
The voice of stern realism in Larkin's poem refusing to attach any sentimental significance to childhood, which remains “unspent”, finds its echo in one of Larkin's earlier work Jill (1946), his first novel. John Kemp, the oxford student-hero of the novel, in the middle of the Second World War rushes from Oxford to Huddlesford where he has his “roots”, when he receives the information that Huddlesford has been bombed. The sight of the ruins of his home town “provokes” in him a strange feeling of isolation from all his childhood: “It was as if he has been told: all the past is cancelled: all the suffering connected with that town, all your childhood, is wiped out.” Both the hero in Jill and the poetic persona in “I Remember, I Remember” attain maturity when they grow adults and dismiss their childhood as forgettably uneventful.

The fourth, fifth, sixth and part of the seventh stanzas of “I Remember, I Remember”, are satirical digs at Dylan Thomas' poem “Fern Hill” and the autobiographical novel Sons and Lovers by D. H. Lawrence, giving mystical accounts of the writers' days of childhood and adolescence (“Blinding theologies of flowers and fruits” etc.).

The refusal to attach any sentimental importance to childhood in “I Remember, I Remember” is invariably the consequence of the disillusioned realism emerging out of the stern post-War social context. The language of the poem naturally is prosaically plain “without being flat.” “The rhyming of ‘unspent’ with ‘invent’ ”, Salem K. Hassan observes, “establishes firmly the idea of ... childhood as being uneventful.” The finely tuned phrases like “‘Really myself’ ” in the fifth stanza and “
'Oh well, / I suppose’ ” in the final stanza are already in circulation in literary texts and the conversation of the ordinary people as well, and consequently highlight strongly the elements of ordinariness of childhood. The undercurrent of hyperbole in the expressions like “Blinding theologies of flowers and fruits” in the fourth stanza and the sharply ironic reference to the “splendid family” in the same stanza are intended to expose the hollowness of childhood.

The conversational poem “I Remember, I Remember” which draws its strength from the dialogic interactions of the contesting voices has not ended “resolved”. The voice that emerges out of the friend in the final stanza strikes a note of scepticism and contradicts in an implicitly abusing tone the speaker’s total refusal to confer importance on Coventry, the place associated with his childhood. The voice of reaffirmation in the speaker strikes back:

‘Oh well’,

I suppose it’s not the place’s fault’, I said.

‘Nothing, like something, happens anywhere.’

(CP, 82)

The proverbial last line, “Nothing like something, happens anywhere”, suggests that the ordinariness is the accepted fate of life as a whole in the post-War social scenario, and, so, the days of childhood are not exceptional, and they must be dismissed as the most ordinarily uneventful episode. This suggestion as given by the speaker as final is not final or closed; a note of ambiguity is struck obliquely here. If childhood is nothing or inevitably ordinary to the core, it should have ceased to exist in course of conversation or discussion in any social context. But as the ordinariness in childhood
figures in discussion or deliberation, as shown in the poem, the days of the tender age are not so entirely unimportant as to be cancelled. A “crack” in the voice declining to attach any mature significance to childhood gives rise to another voice contesting the former one, partly, though not entirely. The aforementioned concluding lines of the poem as quoted may be interpreted in a new direction. The anger of the speaker towards the uneventful childhood is largely subdued; it becomes apparent when he does not sharply react to his friend’s sarcastic charge: “‘You look as if you wished the place in Hell’”; instead, the speaker mellows in his attempt to make his friend accept his point of view by using persuasive phrases like “Oh well” and “I suppose”. Andrew Swarbrick is brilliant in defining the voice of dilemma in the speaker: “Whilst rejecting the stock romantic clichés, he nevertheless wishes that childhood might be closer to what Hood’s sentimental poem describes.”

The polyphonic voices clashing with each other and jostling for privilege also recur in “Wedding-Wind” (1946 *ITGOL, XX, TLD*), a dramatic monologue, which describes the mystical joy of a young Victorian girl on the first days of her marriage and her attempt to correlate it to the “constant high wind” blowing all her “wedding day”. Larkin’s poem has resonance from Keats’ poem “The Eve of St Agnes”. The “Wedding-Wind”, as John Bayley believes in his essay “Larkin and the Romantic Tradition”, uses the ‘elfin storm from fairy land’ which blew for lovers in Keats’ poem. The speaker or the newly married woman feels in the morning following the wedding night “the emotional freedom to explore” romantically “a profound sense of sexual fulfilment and joy” which reminds the readers of “a romantic Lawrentian universe”. The young woman imagines the wind as a symbol “bodying forth” her joy
and is deeply touched by the feeling that her joy holding her actions together is just
"like a thread" carrying beads together: "Can it be borne, the bodying-forth by wind /
Of joy my actions turn on, like a thread / Carrying beads?" The generation of
emotional intensity in her, achieved through the felicity of marriage has distanced her
from the monotonous and unceremonial life and subsequently leads her to wonder
whether she would be able to go back to the very ordinary life symbolized by "sleep":
"Shall I be let to sleep / Now this perpetual morning shares my bed?" The religious
connotation or more precisely speaking the "biblical cadence" in the concluding lines
of the poem, has added a new dimension to the happiness of the girl:

Can even death dry up
These new delighted lakes, conclude
Our kneeling as cattle by all-generous waters?

(CP, 11)

The term "kneeling" superbly suggests gratitude the husband and the wife express to
God for allowing them to enjoy for the first time each other's immeasurably warm
and rich company both physically and emotionally. The speaker adds universal
significance to her spiritually enriched realization when she feels that both her
husband and she herself find reflection of their endless happiness in cattle drinking
water of a lake that will never dry up. The "new delighted lakes" in reality are the
floods created by overflowing rivers, spreading their "all generous-waters" for all
creatures. The lakes at symbolic level stand for the springs of delight or happiness the
couple achieve through flood of intensely emotional as well as physical intimacy at
the turn of a radically new chapter of their life. All generous "waters" "symbolise love
as inexhaustibly offering the source of all life". 9 Moreover, water, which bears
religious implications, is often acknowledged as a symbol of sexual activity in dreams; and, considering the background of the poem, water may be interpreted as a vigorous force for sexual desire.

The “sacramental reverence for the rite of consummation”\textsuperscript{10} releasing the floodgate of sexual and emotional pleasure and happiness in the girl is countered by the voice of sadness in her. The incessantly blowing high wind on the wedding night making the horses “restless”, forces the husband to leave his bride alone for attending the animals in the farm:

\begin{quote}
And a stable door was banging, again and again,
That he must go and shut it, leaving me
Stupid in candlelight, hearing rain,
Seeing my face in the twisted candlestick,
Yet seeing nothing. When he came back
He said the horses were restless, and I was sad
That any man or beast that night should lack
The happiness I had.
\end{quote}

\textit{(CP, 11)}

The girl feeling stupid in candlelight and her distorted face in the twisted candlestick construct an image which is “slightly macabre and conveys something sinister about her sudden loneliness.”\textsuperscript{11} The juxtaposition of happiness and sorrowfulness in the feelings of the girl is the natural consequence of her attitude to life which demands happiness simultaneously both for her and “any man or beast”: “I was sad / That any man or beast that night should lack / The happiness I had.”
The “divided consciousness” or duality in emotional state of the girl is a corollary of the fact that her happiness is tempered by sadness in a world where man’s attitude to life is characterized by ambivalence. The voice of ambiguity in the girl becomes obvious towards the concluding part of the poem when she puts series of questions challenging the validity of her newly-acquired “perpetual” “happiness”:

Can it be borne, this bodying-forth by wind
Of joy my actions turn on, like a thread
Carrying beads? Shall I be let to sleep
Now this perpetual morning shares my bed?
Can even death dry up
These new delighted lakes conclude
Our kneeling as cattle by all-generous waters?

(CP, 11)

Moreover, the wind which appears to share the emotional joy and happiness of the girl grows restlessly active in the morning after the wedding night: “All is the wind / Hunting through clouds and forests, thrashing / My apron and the hanging cloths on the line.” The wind which behaves like a character turns to be a real threatening force to the so-called unending happiness to the girl. The use of the words “hunting” and “thrashing” in this context clarifies terror embedded in the apparently friendly “wedding wind.” The wind may symbolically be interpreted as a social condition which is simultaneously friendly and antagonistic. That is why the voices in the poem capture subtly the profoundly perceived feelings of the girl on ambiguous scale – her joy and at the same time her “fear and vulnerability” or her apprehension
of “death.” The “perception of dual perspectives” and the coexistence of the happy and painful worlds are artistically articulated through the voices which meet each other and clash, but never go for a settlement in favour of a “resolved” experiences in the contexts – emotional and social as well.

Another remarkable wedding poem “The Whitsun Weddings” (1958 TWW) further consolidates the poets’ true artistic mode: the juxtaposition of conflicting voices as appeared in the poetic persona in his attitude to marriage, one of the most important institutions sanctioned socially and religiously as well. The poem has its root in the “incredible experience” Larkin felt both on social and emotional scales in course of a train journey from Hull to London on Whit Saturday, 1955: “A very slow train that stops at every station and I hadn’t realized that, of course, this was the train that all the wedding couples would go on and go to London for their honeymoon[,] it was an eye-opener to me.”

The happening in the railway compartment and on the platforms of the stations where the train halts and the sights as viewed from the window of the moving train are important for creating divergent moods and reflections in the supposedly bachelor speaker of “The Whitsun Weddings”, which in the considered opinion of Andrew Motion is extraordinarily a poem of “Novelish spread.” Isolated inside the compartment, the speaker goes on watching uninvolved the familiar English landscapes of the summer days and evils of the industrial prosperity:

We ran

Behind the backs of houses, crossed a street
Of blinding windscreens, smelt the fish-dock; thence
The river's level drifting breadth began,
Where sky and Lincolnshire and water meet.

(CP, 114)

The speaker continues giving with the novelistic accuracy his observation of the "fleeting detail" "through the tall heat that slept / For miles inland": wide farms, short-shadowed cattle, canals with floatings of industrial froth, a hothouse flashing uniquely, acres of dismantled cars etc. True, the speaker's attention is directed to the "fleeting sequence of images framed by a window", but his sense remains almost unexcited; he keeps looking beyond the carriage window with a view to passing time in a situation marked by excessive heat. What is, however, significant to note in this context is that the intellectual resources and the acute sensibility of the speaker come into prominence in the description of the sight outside.

The voice of the speaker in the first and second stanzas of the poem comes out of its shell of detachment and starts growing gradually alert and responsive from the third stanza onwards, when he feels interested in the scene around him in the railway compartment and on the platforms:

At first, I didn't notice what a noise
The wedding made
Each station that we stopped at: sun destroys
The interest of what's happening in the shade,

(CP, 114)
The colourful, warm and noisy human drama performed by the wedding party on the comfortably shaded platforms offers him respite from reading book and watching the landscapes from the window of the running train and gives him the impression for the first time that his journey has its significance. The people assembling on the railway platforms to see off the newly wedded couples for honeymoon trip to London belong to working class or "at least lower middle class." The speaker goes on scanning these people from the point of view of a person who is socially and intellectually superior to them. The voice now emerging out of the speaker is not definitely patronizing; the speaker is critical, satiric or, more precisely speaking, ironic in his evaluation of the wedding party. This observation, as Blake Morrison has perceived it, may be "a postcard-like caricature": 17

Once we started, though;

We passed them, grinning and pomaded, girls

In parodies of fashion, heels and veils,

(CP, 114)

The speaker's sharp attention is directed towards the men who use hair cream with a desperate attempt to look bright and the girls who wear "parodies of fashion", as this is what they can afford. The speaker is, however, quick to guess the significance of the "waving goodbye" by the girls to the married couples, signalling the conclusion of a chapter of their life and the commencement of the new. This shows the speaker's interest, though faintly now, in the seriousness of marriage as a ritual or, more profoundly speaking, an institution. The speaker grows "next time" "more" curious in
his observation, which according to Roger Day, is characterized by "deadly accuracy".18

Struck, I leant

More promptly out next time, more curiously,
And saw it all again in different terms:
The fathers with broad belts under their suits
And seamy foreheads; mothers loud and fat;
An uncle shouting smut, and then the perms,
The nylon gloves and jewellery-substitutes,
The lemons, mauves, and olive-ochres that

Marked off the girls unreally from the rest.

(CP, 115)

The girls exhibiting the parodies of fashion, the fathers with their comically seamy foreheads, a tipsy uncle cracking smutty jokes, bulky mothers loudly articulating their success in arranging the marriage of their daughters and again the girls gaudy in their "cheap finery"—definitely smack of vulgarity and offend against the refined test of the speaker, generating in him a voice of disagreement, or, in other words, a satiric voice.

The shift in the voice of the speaker may be discerned when he starts paying attention seriously inside the compartment. A "dozen" newly married couples give him the impression that they are sharing the journey with him towards a particular destination. This feeling generates in the speaker a sort of emotional bondage with the
newly-wed couples and subsequently generates in him a voice which is mellow in its attitude to his new companions. The speaker's sense of sympathetic involvement is brilliantly suggested in his application of the first person plural instead of the first person singular: "We hurried towards London, shuffling gouts of steam." The ritual of wedding has brought a metamorphosis in their life in all respects or philosophically speaking, in time and space; they are now going through the process of transition between the past and future – "and none /Thought of the others they would never meet / Or how their lives would all contain this hour." As the train moves closer to London, the speaker is rapt in vision anticipating the sea change in the life of the just-married couples in the days to come through procreation which is positively welcome as a means achieved through wedding to people the world:

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.

(CP, 116)

The speaker's symbolism comes into full play when he uses phrase "an arrow-shower" reminding the readers of Cupid's darts. The phrase in the present context suggests rain or fertility which is termed by the speaker as "the power" bringing happiness and fulfilment to the trainloads of newly-married couples in the changed situation of their life. Andrew Motion reports that Larkin "told Jean Hartley, the arrows fired by the English bowman in Laurence Olivier's film of Henry V which gave him the idea for the last verse." The concept of fertility, however, has been
insinuated metaphorically in the preceding stanza: “I thought of London spread out in the sun, / Its postal districts packed like squares of wheat.” David Lodge has remarked that it is in the last stanza that Larkin’s poem “suddenly, powerfully” “transcends the merely empirical, almost sociological observation of its earlier stanzas” and confirms “the unpredictable but fertile possibilities the future holds” for the just-married couples.

The voice of assurance patronizing the trainload of couples as reflected in the speaker cannot be accepted as final, as a note of ambivalence or a sign of fissure appears even in the voice supposedly embedded in the solidity of optimism in favour of the speaker’s co-passengers. “A sense of falling” towards the end of the poem is obviously double-edged in its implication. Literally it means falling forward of the passengers as the train suddenly slows down its speed with the approach of the destination. It may also suggest the fall of the just-married couples from their present state of excitement into unpredictably uncertain future. The concept is reinforced by the phrase “sent out of sight” which metaphorically indicates that the couples in future may be thrown into such an uncertain stage of life which cannot be anticipated. This sense of apprehension is implanted in the word “somewhere” as used by the speaker. The critical analysis of “The Whitsun Weddings” in terms of dialogic discourse is a pointer to the fact that the strategy of the poem lies not in construction of “self” but of “selves” of the speaker interacting with each other.
“An Arundel Tomb” is occasioned by Larkin’s visit accompanied by Monica Jones to Chichester cathedral in 1956.\textsuperscript{21} Ambiguities, paradoxes and ironies or, in other words, the voices at war with each other without reaching a decisive result, figure in “An Arundel Tomb” \textit{(TWW, 1956)}, which is popularly considered to be a poem celebrating the triumph of conjugal love particularly for its proverbial final line: “What will survive of us is love.” The poem registers the conflicting contemplations and arguments of the poetic persona or the observer or the visitor towards unnamed medieval couple of the Arundel family, a knight and his lady love, carved in pre-baroque style on their stony tomb in Chichester cathedral:

\begin{quote}
Side by side, their faces blurred,
The earl and the countess lie in stone,
Their proper habits vaguely shown
As jointed armour, stiffened pleat,
And that faint hint of the absurd –
The little dogs under their feet.
\end{quote}

\textit{(CP, 110)}

The plainness of the pre-baroque style in which the couple have been moulded in stone is hardly attractive. Moreover, the distinguishing features of the couple as individuals have been eroded proving the ravages inflicted by time on the tomb. But what attracts the attention of the visitor all of a sudden is the closeness of the couple – the husband’s hand holding his wife’s: “His hand withdrawn, holding her hand.” This very closeness suggesting timeless fidelity of love is challenged by the use of word “lie” in the following line: “They would not think to lie so long.” The word “lie” has
the effect of pun or of double meanings signifying the deep-rooted difference between what is literally said and what is actually meant, and, thus, a note of paradox may be heard in the voices of the speaker. The impression caused by the use of the term “lie” that the knight and his wife had developed a warmly intimate relation with each other is apparent and hence a “lie”. The faithfulness of the couple is merely a concept in art; the knight and the lady in real life might have stood far away from idealized love. The visitor “realizes that the effigies ‘lie in stone’ – that their faithfulness is a deception – and also admits that for them to be shown holding hands at all is nothing more than ‘A sculptor’s sweet commissioned grace’.” 22

The visitor’s insight into the memorial which brings to focus his sharply argumentative bent of mind is obviously a result of offering an exciting discourse on voices which collide with one another demanding reader’s attention for each voice equally and independently. The couple, as the visitor has realized, could not anticipate how the rapidly flowing time would bring a sea change to their statue and the life around them:

They would not guess how early in
Their supine stationary voyage
The air would change to soundless damage
Turn the old tenantry away;

(CP, 110)
The individual identity, for which the feudal couple had felt enormous pride, is now a helpless victim of massive erosion. Moreover, their glorious days of authority over land are gone. "The endless altered people" in the succeeding ages consequently feel no compulsion to pay homage to the couple engraved in stone; instead, they "treat them merely as a source of casual spectacle." The phrase "stationary voyage" is an example of paradox which runs through the poem and is used as an effective tool for accepting and negating simultaneously. While the word 'stationary' denotes immobility of the effigies or their crumbling into ruin "soundlessly" with the passage of time, the voyage signifies their uninterrupted march into moving time suggesting the force of regeneration in the world of nature. The earl and his wife in stone majestically focus the paradoxical nature of time. True, they are continuously in a state of decadence or change or, more precisely speaking, time's ravage, but at the same time they continue to be "linked through lengths and breadths/Of time." The effigies dynamically experience the movement of history through their time to ours highlighting the uninterrupted process of creation despite all odds:

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,

(CP, 110)
These images bring out the voices of contradiction in the visitor and "vividly conveys the sense of time's passage as something creative as well as destructive."²⁴ "Snow fell, undated" suggests the uninterrupted snowfalls which ignore time's interference and, thus "escape the chronicling of time."²⁵ Light thronging the glass of the cathedral each summer is suggestive of heat, which is the source of life, while the "bone-riddled" ground stands for cold or death. Again, the expression, "bright / litter of birdcalls strewed" over the same ground of the graveyard literally means a flock of bright and young birds animating the ground with their delightful chirping; while symbolically it suggests the unending creative energy of nature. Salem K. Hassan offers his excellently illuminating comment on the use of the words by the visitor: "Heavily stressed as each word is, together they indicate the fleetness of time, as well as the assertion of continuing time having escaped the notice of the dead couple lying in their grave."²⁶ The very juxtaposition of cold and heat, death and life runs constantly all through the poem.

The final stanza of "An Arundel Tomb" is not final as it has not offered any closed resolution to the visitor's reflections on the tomb. The memorial which is a "scrap of history" may seem useless in an "unarmorial age"; yet it represents something valuable. Bakhtinian ambivalence may be noted majestically in the concluding stanza:

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

(CP, 111)

The visitor to the medieval memorial argues as to what should be the positive quality of the earl holding his countess’ hand, though their faces get blurred by the ravages of time as inflicted upon the tomb. Their “fidelity” as engraved upon the stone can hardly be accepted as their “final blazon;” their closeness as already mentioned may be interpreted as “A sculptor’s sweet commissioned grace” and hence “Untruth.” The knight and his wife figured closely in stone, however, evoke an emotional attitude to life, which is theoretically considered to give solace and meaning to life against all odds and supposed to challenge the threat of time: “What will survive of us is love.” The attitude as encapsulated in the concluding line of the poem is not conclusive but hangs heavily on paradox, which is pinpointed by the repetition of the word “almost” in the previous line. Love or to be faithful to each other emotionally is recognized ideally as a condition for survival; this ideal, however, constantly comes in clash with reality or existing conditions in real life. The term “almost” which is doubly used is a pointer to the fact that love as an instinct or emotional force cannot protect life completely from troubles, it is open to the threats of real life. The word “almost” again does not completely negate the importance of love as an emotional force for offering life inspiration to fight against the disturbances which constitute the formidable part in mundane existence. In other words, “An Arundel Tomb” hangs on conflicting ideas or paradoxes as revealed by the contesting voices in the texture of the poem; it stands between truth and untruth, ideal and real, fidelity and infidelity.
The juxtaposition of the contending ideas balances the structure of the poem - "neither half of the balance is allowed to dominate" or tilt to avoid collapse.

The polyphonic voices in "An Arundel Tomb" is embedded in the social context of modern life where nothing is fixed or closed; everything in our world which has experienced a sea change in all the spheres of life and knowledge following the events like the Great War is in a state of flux. Love in modern social life is not considered in terms of an absolute; it is accepted as an emotional force and at the same time the necessity of it in life is called into question; both the conflicting realizations attest to the inconclusiveness of modern life.

"Talking in Bed" (TWW 1958) is a discourse on the irony of conjugal relation in the context of complexly inconclusive social life in the modern world and may be interpreted in terms of dialogism as the poetic persona has "extraordinary artistic capacity for seeing everything in coexistence and interaction." The voices that emerge out of the poetic persona, while throwing light on the relation of a couple in a state of supposedly uncovered intimacy, are obviously not flat as they are not confined only to point out the bleakness of relation. The opening lines of the poem is extraordinarily Larkinesque concealing right at the outset the ironic thrust:

Talking in bed ought to be easiest
Lying together goes back so far,
An emblem of two people being honest.

(CP, 129)
The first stanza is supposed to outline ideologically the essence of the relationship of a couple when they are left exclusively to each other in bed being segregated from the usual intrusions from outside. The couple in such a unique situation that demands honesty or openness should not wear masks which they like other people are forced to use for various purposes in the hours of struggle for survival in the complex urban milieu of modern civilization. That is why the man and the woman “lying together” are expected to construct an intimately private world in which they can easily as well as openly interact with each other on any issue they like to discuss or, in other words, speak out their hearts spontaneously to prove themselves true to each other.

The interactions of the clashing voices of the poetic persona in the poem, however, have ironic implications. One voice approving the idealized confessional state of mind of the couple in a uniquely special situation comes in contrast with another voice which is embedded in the stern realism. The irony of the poem is rooted in the concept that there is a huge discrepancy between what is ideal and what is real. The images, which have both grace and power, are suggestive of the incomplete restlessness or of the lack of equipoise in souls of the couple contributing to their state of speechlessness:

Yet more and more time passes silently.
Outside, the wind’s incomplete unrest
Builds and disperses clouds about the sky,

And dark towns heap up on the horizon.
None of this cares for us. Nothing shows why
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.

(CP, 129)

The images largely taken from nature are indicative of the mental state of the lovers in bed together. "It is as if the lovers’ ears are attuned to ‘Outside,’ not to each other, listening only to the wind whose ‘incomplete unrest’ mirrors their own condition of unsettled incompleteness." The wind inconclusive in its agitation builds and scatters clouds about the sky and is symbolic of the ceaseless shifting feelings of the couple for one another. The dark towns heaping up on the horizons and drawing the attention of the lovers remind them of the darkness or the insurmountable isolation growing in their minds. However, the voice endorsing an ideal relation of the lovers in an ideal situation is incapable of accepting the difficulty the lovers face in communicating with each other words soul to soul – words "true and kind, / Or not untrue and not unkind."

What is important to note consequentially in this context is that the competing voices in the poem recognize the "coexistence and interaction" of the two contradictory conditions in the lovers in an tentative or provisional or indeterminate way. This attests to the predicament of men and women who are implanted in the vortex of uncertainty in modern life. The phrase "Nothing shows why" etc. is arguably significant in defining the duality of existence in the couple’s life. It is
naturally implied that the men and women in Larkin’s poems are simultaneously untrue and unkind and true and kind to each other. They remain untrue and unkind because they fail to communicate at all with each other honestly in a given state of intimacy, which shields their privacy from the intrusion of the external world. Their cultivated reticence is a pointer to the truth that their act of lying is hinted at as they are not speaking out the truth of their relation. They are again true and kind to each other in the sense that they do not intend to hurt each other by disclosing their unpleasant inability to build up a warmly idealized relation. Salem K. Hassan’s observation in this context draws special attention: “This Kafkaesque obsession with loneliness and difficulty of communication is a psychological notation indicative of a doomed relationship in which silence is the measure of honesty and and words are only half-truths.” The words “lying” in the first stanza carrying the connotation of pun or of double meaning is of central importance in the poem. The lovers are lying doubly; they are intimately close in their bed and at the same time they remain false to each other maintaining distance in terms of true relationship. Both the states of existence are equally important to them; they cannot disclaim one at the cost of other. The very coexistence and interaction between the two basically opposing states in the lovers construct inevitably their destiny in the post-War modern life. Salem K. Hassan shares David Timm’s view on Larkin’s exceptionally masterly use of metre for bringing to prominence the conflict: “The state of conflict, both within the man’s mind and the world of nature, has been transmitted to us through irregular lines composed of the iambic meter and its variations.”
The poetic personae in a number of Larkin’s poems discern in love and marriage unhappiness and boredom. The speaker in “Best Society” (1951? CP) upholds “singleness” and rejects the necessity of partner in life. He dramatically asserts his point of view:

Viciously, then, I lock my door.
The gas-fire breathes. The wind outside
Ushers in evening rain. Once more
Uncontradicting solitude
Supports me on is giant palm;
And like a sea-anemone
Or simple snail, there cautiously
Unfolds, emerges, what I am.

(CP, 56–57)

The poem anticipates largely in terms of argument and diction “Vers de Soicété.” (1971 HW), a poem, produced twenty years later. Marriage, as the speaker in “To My Wife” (1951 CP) realizes, is unpromising:

Now you become my boredom and my failure,
Another way of suffering, a risk,
A heavier-than-air hypostasis.

(CP, 54)
In “Marriages” (1951 CP) the need “for a partner” is mocked at and the value of singleness is endorsed. “Best Society,” “To My Wife” and “Marriages” may be viewed as poems where arguments are principally directed against love and marriage. These poems and other poems on the theme of love and marriage attest to the fact that the theme is viewed from different angles which are both contradictory and inconclusive.

The concluding line of “Dockery and Son” (TWW 1963), “And age, and then the only end of age,” strikes the note of grave finale of life which is universally unavoidable for all and can by no means be disputed. The poem, however, is more than a mere acceptance of the bleak truth of life which has been terribly but memorably articulated through the image of a ship in the closing lines of Larkin’s earlier poem “Next, please” (XX TLD, 1951): “Only one ship is seeking us, a black-/Sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back / A huge and birdless silence. In her wake /No waters breed or break.” One wonders whether Larkin here was influenced by his literary idol D. H. Lawrence whose “Ship of Death” is a great poem on this theme. “Dockery and Son” is arguably not a simple poem of closed view or meaning in the context of the vital issues of life raised for discussion by the conflicting voices of the speaker in the poem. The poem is complexly and ironically open as it focuses the essential indeterminacy of meanings or views which is superbly accomplished by the argumentative voices both explicit and implicit.

The occasion of “Dockery and Son” is the speaker revisiting the old college of his youth. The motive behind such a visit has not been spelled out in the poem; it may, however, be strongly presumed that an indomitable nostalgia in the speaker has
prompted him to visit the institution so that he can walk down the memory lane and build up a bridge between the past and the present. The visit in reality turns out to be a clash between two voices of the speaker – the first voice is supposed to be romantically inclined towards the past; while the other is categorically opposed to the first one and defines that the past as frustrating as well as threatening. The sentimental yearning for the former college days gets shockingly interrupted when the speaker comes to know that Dockery, one of his contemporaries, has connection with the college, as his son is now a student here:

'Dockery was junior to you,
Wasn’t he?’ said the Dean. ‘His son’s here now.’

Death-suited, visitant, I nod.

(CP, 152)

The information given by the Dean ironically carries for the speaker double implications which stand opposed to each other. The son, the speaker feels, serves for Dockery as a link between past and present. The speaker who remains by choice a bachelor is gloomily forced to admit his inability to construct such bridge between the days gone and the days continuing. The locked door reaffirms his complete detachment from the past and consequently defines his status as an outsider:

I try the door of where I used to live:

Locked. The lawn spreads dazzlingly wide.

(CP, 152)
The locked door to the old room, Roger Day has justly observed, stands as “a potent image of the irrecoverable past.” The phrase “Death-suited, visitant” the speaker uses to describe himself is of central importance in the poem. Roger Day is extraordinary in interpreting the multidimensional connotations of the phrase defining the speaker:

The phrase suggests three different meanings: 1 that he is wearing a dark suit as for a funeral occasion; 2 that he is a ghost returning (‘visitant’ = revenant); 3 that ‘death suits him’. The appropriateness of the last suggestion becomes apparent when the poem reaches its conclusion.

The phrase in the present context, however, suggests ambiguously that the speaker appears to be a ghost to his past. The complexly constructed concept of dual entity works in the speaker: he is dead to his past and alive in the present.

Ironically enough, the voice admitting firmly as well as terribly the speaker’s exclusion from the past is challenged forcefully by another voice defending his attachment to the past. True, the speaker who feels a complete isolation from his past hurriedly leaves his college: “I catch my train, ignored. / Canal and clouds and colleges subside /Slowly from the view,” but the past does not cease from his world of thought. Dockery is invariably associated with the speaker’s past spent in the college. The fact that he remains totally detached from Dockery is made unambiguously clear when he comes to know for the first time from the Dean that
Dockery has attained fatherhood. The information is so upsetting for the speaker that he grows agitated emotionally with a view to making a comparative study between Dockery, the father and himself, a bachelor. What is remarkably significant in this context to note is that Dockery, an apparition of the past, reappears to provoke the speaker into serious contemplation:

But Dockery, good Lord,

Anyone up today must have been born
In'43, when I was twenty-one
If he was younger, did he get this son
At nineteen, twenty?

(CP, 152).

The hermeneutic indeterminacy is strategically determined by the juxtaposition of contradictory words: “locked” and “wide” and “known” and “ignored”:

It try the door of where I used to live:

Locked. The lawn spreads dazzlingly wide.

A known bell chimes. I catch my train, ignored.

(CP, 152)

The loneliness of the speaker has supposedly not disturbed him considerably till his return visit to the college. Dockery coming out of the grave of the past subjects the speaker’s voice of complacency to critical scrutiny. Consequently voices loaded
with arguments and counterarguments emerge out of the speaker with the specific object of evaluating impartially his decision of remaining single in life with reference to other people's decisions which are opposite in most cases. Of these people Dockery obviously figures most importantly as he has now shaken the carefully cultivated apparent emotional tranquillity of the ageing bachelor. The feelings of embittered loneliness and restlessness within the speaker are symbolically and physically suggested in a manner that is pre-eminently Larkinsque:

... Yawning, I suppose
I fell asleep, waking at the fumes
And furnace-glares of Sheffield, where I changed,
And ate an awful pie, and walked along
The platform to its end to see the ranged
Joining and parting lines reflect a strong
Unhindered moon.

(CP, 152)

The sight of fume and furnace-glares, eating of an awful pie, and walking along the platform to its end are in reality suggestive of the agitation that is boiling in the speaker's mind. He remains preoccupied with the evaluation of the direction of his life which is presumably the outcome of his determined decision. The mechanical system of the railway track in which the lines join and part, the speaker feels, stands metaphorically for the divergent directions of life separating him from Dockery. The irony that lies in the suggested argument of this context is that the carefully decided
directions of Dockery and the speaker, despite their basic differences, are “as predetermined as devoid of choice, as the trains which run along these tracks.” 35 The ambiguity is again strongly implanted in the image of the “Unhindered moon” reflecting brilliantly on the rail-lines. The moon that appears “strong / Unhindered” and shines majestically on the lines keeps an unreachable distance in the sky enjoying independence, reminding the human beings of their miserable limitation. Salem K. Hassan excellently interprets the predetermined submission of moon to the forces superior to it: “Though the moon may look very high and free, its movement, like our lives, is predetermined as it goes round the earth, and consequently the sun, in a fixed orbit.”36

The Bakhtinian interplay of polyphonic voices, which brings to focus the continuous questioning of opinions, constitutes invariably the strength of “Dockery and Son.” The speaker or the poetic persona feels it necessary to settle the issue of agitation in mind generated by his present state of life:

To have no son, no wife,

No house or land still seemed quite natural.

(CP, 152)

The word “seemed” as used here is of central importance in the sense that it hangs between what appears and what is real in a balanced way and strikes ambivalence denoting semantic indeterminacy. The reality as it emerges out of the context proves
that the heat of agitation in the speaker has not been cooled down into a state of tranquil settlement; instead, he is struck with a shocking numbness:

Only a numbness registered the shock
Of finding out how much had gone of life,
How widely from the others. Dockery, now:
Only nineteen, he must have taken stock
Of what he wanted, and been capable
Of ... No, that's not the difference:

(CP, 152-153)

The voice trying desperately to defend the bachelor status of the speaker collides with the voice showing inclination to disbelieve the solidity of remaining unmarried. That is why the speaker with the intention of subsiding unwelcome reality stops abruptly as indicated in the last line quoted, and decides not to go for a conclusion on the consequences of Dockery's decision taken at the age of nineteen. Andrew Swarbrick comments:

Is it because it would make Dockery seem too determined, too courageous in comparison to the speaker? Certainly, we might think that the speaker begins to load the argument in his own favour when he decides, with an over-zealous semantic scrupulousness, that being 'added to' means 'dilution' rather than 'increase'.
The speaker’s mind turns into a battleground where the voices – one admitting implicitly the necessity of a family life and other contradicting it forcefully – combat each other endlessly.

Ceaseless war for attention by multiple voices is admitted to be natural as the conflicting dialogues generated continuously by them in human beings ensure freedom of thought without miserably surrendering to the pressure imposed by any partial view. The speaker in “Dockery and Son”, however, grows desperate towards the end to hide the dialogic truth of life and evolves an almost nihilistic approach to life by defining all our choices and decisions as hardened habit which inescapably makes us terribly confined to an absolutely negative state of helplessness and powerlessness dragging us inevitably to our predetermined destiny or death:

Life is first boredom, then fear.
Whether or not we use it, it goes,
And leaves what something hidden from us chose,
And age, and then the only end of age.

(CP, 153)

The arguments, however persuasive they may be on the strength of abstractions, are dangerously partial and precariously prejudiced, as they are not supported empirically by way of citing examples from real life. The speaker has not allowed Dockery at all to ventilate his opinion of family life based exclusively on his personal experience. So, how could he justify his argument that ‘Dockery’s fatherhood’ and his ‘lonely bachelorhood’ show differences only on superficial levels
disguising carefully their same unhappy conditions? The truth that comes out of the speaker's artificially cultivated persuasion with a stamp of philosophic finality is that he is intent on being monologic rather than dialogic to hush up voices of debate. The speaker, thus, ironically enough, recognizes implicitly the existence of the divergent voices – not "tight-shut" but open on the significant issues of life.

Larkin's "Church Going" (1954 TLD) is indisputably another extraordinary poem in which multiple voices emerging out of the poetic persona are engaged in an unending battle on the issues embedded in the religious contexts of the post-War social life in which the faith in Christianity has shown signs of sharp decline following the fundamental shift in socio-economic realities. The title of the poem is sparkingly ambiguous in its excellent use of pun. The word of central importance in the title is "going"; the poem is doubly concerned with the speaker going into a church and also the church as a religious institution going, i.e. disappearing. "Church Going" which, according to Blake Morrison, incorporates into its texture "the best principles of the Movement programme"38 is unique for its communication of the poet's pragmatic understanding of the social situations in the post-War modern life: "The Movement writers knew that Church had once brought people together, and they tended to regret (a play on words which Larkin exploits) instead of regular church going, church was now going."39 Betjeman in his poem "The Town Clerk's Views" apprehends that the commercial culture of modern age may destroy the traditional sanctity of the old church.
The speaker who appears to be indifferent and detached in his attitude to religion feels embarrassed when he stops before a church. The voices of contradictions coexisting in the speaker may be detected right at the very outset of the poem. The question that strikes naturally is why the cyclist-speaker who is supposed to be a non-believer in God makes a sudden break in his journey at the sight of a church which, he imagines, has fallen into disuse. The poetic persona who remains "bored" and "uninformed" is seized within by tensions in terms of decision as to whether he should go into the church or not. His entry into the church is, however, conditional: "Once I am sure there's nothing going on / I step inside, letting the door thud shut". What is striking in this connection is that the clashing voices of indifference and inquisitiveness coexist in the speaker adding complexly ambiguous dimension to his perception. The sceptic speaker who strongly enough burns with the desire of visiting the church steps inside it when he feels confirmed that no service is going on and the church is left empty. He does so deliberately to avoid his feelings of awkwardness in public. The cinematic description of the interior of the church is suggestive of the contradictory fact that the speaker, despite his pronounced lack of interest in church as a religious institution, feels tempted to describe its interior enthusiastically: "Another church: matting, seats, and stone, / And little books" etc. What is of central importance here is the use of the adjective "another" which indicates ironically that the poetic persona is not at all ignorant of the churches. The speaker's attitude to church registers a note of ambivalence; he is deliberately casual and awkwardly serious in reference to God. Initially, the speaker is struck by "a tense, musty, unignorable silence" prevailing dominantly inside the church. Andrew Swarbrick has pointed out how the speaker makes in this context a "joke" which is characterized by tediousness: "Brewed God knows how long"("God presumably does
Anyway, the word “unignorable” is loaded with the ironic suggestion in
the sense that the seemingly agnostic speaker can by no means ignore the importance
of church in his domain of thought. The speaker in a state of bewilderment shows his
respect clumsily as he removes his cycle-clips: “Hatless, I take off / My cycle-clips in
awkward reverence.” The juxtaposition of “reverence” with “awkward” is strongly
demonstrative of the conflicting voices in the persona who is agitated within by
divided selves in terms of unresolved reflections. The restlessness in the visitor
continues and reaffirms the duality in him:

Mounting the lectern, I pursue a few
Hectoring large-scale verses, and pronounce
‘Here endeth’ much more loudly than I’d meant.
The echoes snigger briefly. Back at the door
I sign the book, donate an Irish sixpence,

(CP, 97)

The way he reads out loudly the holy verses beyond his intention and gets himself
startled by the echoes, signs the book and donates is indicative of the voices in him
contesting each other showing in him nervousness and desperation as well. The voice
in the speaker constructed out of the extremes deepens his dilemma urging him
intently to fathom out his motives in unambiguous terms for making a sudden stop at
the church:

Reflect the place was not worth stopping for.
Yet stop I did: in fact I often do,
And always end much at a loss like this,

(CP, 97)

What is important here is that the voices in the speaker are engaged in dialogue with each other; one voice raises a question and other replies to it; or in other words, one voice agrees to a certain issue, while the other expresses its disagreement. This dialogic process never ends or reaches a truth fixed forever. What is of utmost significance, as perceived in the case of the visitor to the church, is that human beings in specific social situations may arrive at truth with all its diversity through the interactions of the multiple voices of striking differences.

The speaker's awkward feelings for stopping at the church are argumentatively answered and the question-answer methodology has been sufficiently and brilliantly exploited for fruitful dialogic interactions between the divergent voices. The shift in the visitor's attitude to church as a religious organization is marked categorically when plural "we" replaces singular "I". Moreover, the diction, as used by the poetic persona, exhibits initially the mark of colloquialism ("God knows," "I don't" etc); now it accommodates a more elevated language ("accoutred", "gravitating" etc.). The visitor who has so far been apparently casual and detached grows serious in defining through query the future of the cathedrals in social life, when they will cease to exist from religious point view:

Wondering what to look for, wondering too,
When churches fall completely out of use
What we shall turn them into, if we shall keep
A few cathedrals chronically on show,
Their parchment, plate and pyx in locked cases,
And let the rest rent-free to rain and sheep.
Shall we avoid them as unlucky places?

(CP, 97)

The speaker's speculation may be termed as metaphysical in the sense that it is based on the combination of levity and seriousness. While he feels seriously concerned for the fate of the church after it falls fully into disuse for men, he at the same time imagines ironically how the rain-water turns the dilapidated campus of the church into a wild pastureland for sheep reducing its sanctity. Grim humour concealed in the expression "rent-free to rain and sheep" is suggestive of the apprehension that the cattle may strangely enjoy freedom to replace man from the activities of the church. The note of contradiction is registered again when the speaker who is supposed to plead for ignorance in church matters is nonetheless exposed to know adequately about "parchment, plate and pyx". This very dichotomy between appearance and reality as communicated by the voices in the speaker generates ambivalence which articulates the hermeneutic indeterminacy in the poem. The adjective "unlucky" ("Shall we avoid them as unlucky places?") has been carefully chosen to undermine ironically the sanctity which was once supposed to be the prime glory of the churches.

After belief is gone, the speaker speculates, the churches may be converted into centres for superstitious cults with "dubious women" coming after dark to "make their children touch a particular stone; / Pick simples for a cancer; or on some /
Advised night see walking a dead one?" The term “dubious” is doubly significant; it is applicable both to the women and the churches. “But superstition”, the visitor argues, “like belief, must die.” A voice of concern in him raises another pertinent question:

And what remains when disbelief has gone?

Grass, weedy pavement, brambles, buttress, sky,

(\textit{CP}, 98)

The churches, thus, may physically and spiritually go from bad to worse. He ponders over ironically as to who might be the last visitor to the church with the fire of faith in him: “the very last, to seek / This place for what it was.” He prepares a list which shows a combination of comicality and contemptuousness:

One of the crew

That tap and jot and know what rood-lofts were?

Some ruin-bibber, randy for antique,

Or Christmas-addict, counting on a whiff

Of gown-and-bands and organ-pipes and myrrh?

Or will he be my representative,

(\textit{CP}, 98)

The seriousness in the structure of the speaker’s contemplation is grotesquely subverted by the odd “combination” referred to. One of the persons figured in the list as a last visitor to the church is the “ruin-bibber, randy for antique.” A bibber literally
means one who is predominantly interested in imbibing alcohol; and the "ruin-bibber;" hence, stands for patronizing ruins enthusiastically. Another compound expression "Christmas-addict" evokes simultaneously grim humour and contempt as sanctity of Christmas celebration is not supported by true religious zeal but overturned by addiction for the ceremony. It has been reduced to cakes and cards. The imagined last visitors comically and at the same time, seriously, serve to demonstrate the fact that the people in general facing the drab social realities of the post-War modern life have lost faith in church as a religious organization which was once considered to be a harbour in the hours of crisis. The briefly but ironically portrayed "crew", "ruin-bibber" and "Christmas-addict" add carnivalesque effect to the poem as the speaker's voice of seriousness is subverted by the combined voices of frivolousness and comicality of these characters. These supposed last visitors to the church with their ludicrous pattern of behaviour and reduced social respectability seem to question, or, more precisely speaking, challenge the validity of the existence of church as a commanding religious institution in the nuclear-ravaged social life, exposed to massive disintegration.

The speaker's voice of uncertainty in nominating the last visitor to the dying church is comforted by the voice of resolution when he feels confident on the ground that he alone can negotiate sensibly with the problem of "church going," though he declares with apparent contradiction that he remains "bored, uninformed." He (as well as his "representative") feels attracted towards the church and starts attributing due honour to it particularly because he has experienced the "suburb scrub", "the dishevelled conditions of contemporary life." It is in this context the voices of sanity and wisdom urge the poetic persona to value church seriously not as an organ
of religion but as a secular institution which represents the important stages, or, metaphorically speaking, "clothes" all the "compulsions" in human life - "marriage, and birth, / And death." Church, the speaker feels intensely, can never be obsolete, and, so, will continue to exist "strictly" as a "secular" institution "in which the fear of death and the loss of religious belief are counteracted by an ineradicable faith in human and individual potential." Now he recognizes the importance of stepping inside the church: "It pleases me to stand in silence here":

A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognised, and robed as destinies,
And that much never can be obsolete,
Since someone will forever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,
And gravitating with it to this ground,
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,
If only that so many dead lie round.

(CP, 98)

It would, however, not be fair to term "Church Going" as a poem of closed views. In spite of accepting the church as a religious institution dying in a given social situation, the speaker can neither debunk it nor disown its existence in human life. The stern reality is that the church continues to exist. The speaker has never
advocated the emergence of a separate institution which would altogether be new in its physical structure as well as activities. The proposed secular church is expected to associate itself influentially and solemnly with the three basically crucial stages of human life—birth, marriage and death—the rites of passage. The note of ambivalence which may be noticed in this context is that this is the basic function the traditionally established churches perform with the basic difference that it is done in accordance with the religious injunctions. In fact, “Church Going” may be considered as a site in which the heterogeneous voices in the speaker interact and clash with each other in a carefully balanced manner on the issues related to the fate of the church. The poem in other words strikes inevitably a balance “between an undemonstrative agnosticism on the one hand, and a susceptibility to the continuities of Christianity on the other.”

Andrew Motion has rightly pointed out the ambivalence in “Church Going” when he characterizes the poem as a “much larger secular-religious companion piece” of “Water”.

“Water” (1954 TWW), superbly constructed in the symbolist mode, is a short poem in which the dialogicity is extraordinarily achieved by giving required focus to hermeneutic indeterminacy. The varying voices defending religion and secularism, realism and romanticism, which essentially grow out of the projected poetic persona, enter into combat with each other. The object of such a battle for each voice is to register indisputably the mastery over other voice or voices. The intention, however, runs risk, as ironically enough no voice can ultimately come out victorious, offering judiciously the impression that all the voices remain equally important to strike a balanced view on water.
The very opening lines of the poem, "If I were called in / To construct a religion / I should make use of water," recognize unequivocally the importance of water which stands for the poetic persona a centrally considered image in religion. The lines in the first, second and third stanzas of Larkin’s poem interpreting symbolically the use of water in religion, Salem K. Hassan arguably opines, recall the English educationist and author Christopher Benson (1862-1925).46 The first two lines again evoke the speaker’s equivocal response to religions which have so far been acknowledged as traditional. The expression, “If I were called in / To construct a religion,” gives emphasis on the truth that he is specifically not attached to any traditional religion emotionally and spiritually. The occurrence of such attachment is a remote possibility. What is important to note in this connection is that the speaker holds a sceptical view to the traditionally accepted religions of the world. Notwithstanding his implied distrust of the acknowledged religions, the speaker feels no hesitation in showing his deeply felt respect to water which he considers to be a central image in all religions evoking certain connotations associated with the rituals of purifications such as baptism in Christianity. Now, if the speaker has to construct a religion of his own, he would definitely “make use of water”:

Going to church
Would entail a fording
To dry, different clothes;

My liturgy would employ
Images of sousing,
A furious devout drench,

(CP 93)

Water is doubly significant to the poetic persona as it is both a reality and an image associated with religion. Water is a “tangible” reality when its use is made mandatory in rituals of the church suggesting cleansing, for example, in baptism. Water, which is solemnly perceptible by touch during the performance of rituals, is also profoundly felt or interpreted emotionally or spiritually indicating man’s elevation to a newer and purer state of existence. The poetic persona in “Water,” however, does not explicitly attach to his newly constructed religion the spiritual significance of water associated with traditional religions. True, he has taken the concept of using water in his own religion from the religions already acknowledged by people; but he has added to this concept a new dimension which is simultaneously human and secular in character and elaborated in the final stanza with lyrical grace. Anyway, the church rituals require “fording”, “a literal wading through water entailing change of clothes.” The congregation in the speaker’s new church will definitely after “fording” put on “dry, different clothes.” The keyword here is “different” which characterizes the “clothes”. The expression “different clothes” metaphorically suggests not the homogeneous but heterogeneous group of people in terms of their belief in traditional religions. The factor that unifies the congregation of devotees of various traditional religions into the newly constructed religion of the speaker is water. It employs into practice the liturgy which evokes enthusiastically “Images of soosing, / A furious devout drench.” In short, water will bring a sea change to the people embracing the new religion by opening up for them a wider horizon where they can elevate them into a humanly radiant, vibrant and purer existence. However, a “crack” discernible in the voice of
assertion of the speaker, constitutes in him another voice – the voice of irony. The irony that underlies the whole poem is that the speaker’s idea of water as encapsulated symbolically in his newly constructed religion is not at all new as water has already several connections with Christianity and other religions.

A new voice of romantic imagination, proclaiming the infinite creativity of the sun-kissed water keeping at distance its mundane and orthodox religious associations, emerges gloriously out of the speaker in the final stanza:

And I should raise in the east
A glass of water
Where any-angled light
Would congregate endlessly.

(CP, 93)

The east where the sun rises gloriously stands warmly for the life of creativity. A glass of water which is raised in the east by the speaker- priest is intensified by the warmth of sun-rays congregating endlessly from all directions towards it. A simple mundane glass is thus transformed by the creative romantic imagination into the concept of reawakening that elevates life from all its drosses into such a state of endlessness where the fenced existence collapses and “all knowledge of time and its constraints, and of self and its shortcomings, is set aside.”48 “Water” is arguably not a simple poem of monologic end or of closed meaning; it is invariably and complexly dialogic presenting the coexistence of the opposing voices of religion and secularism, reality and romanticism in a mode characterized definitely by inconclusiveness in the
sense that all voices are equally important for a wide understanding of the endlessly comprehensive issues related to our existence.

Another remarkable poem of striking dialogicity demonstrating the combative voices against the background of the “post-Christian era” is obviously “The Building” (1972 HW) which is deeply influenced by the poet’s personal experience of visiting a hospital, Hull Royal Infirmary. “The Building,” Larkin explained in a letter to C. B. Cox on August 3, 1972, “was (as you might expect) ‘inspired’ by a visit to the hospital here about a crick in the neck”.49 “The Building” like many other poems by Larkin (“The Whitsum Weddings,” for example) is a novelistic poem in the sense that its theme which may be stated as man’s crisis in the face of death in an age not consoled by traditional faith is definitely embedded in the experiences of life and defined with minute details and interpreted inconclusively by multivocal polyphony, which according to Bakhtin, is essentially the medium employed in novel.

Right at the outset of the poem “The Building” the poetic persona registers ambiguity when he makes a novel endeavour to hide the literal reality associated with a hospital by never mentioning the word “hospital.” What he does instead is to evoke certain impressions caused by a prolonged visit to a sophisticated “medical establishment”50 of modern age. The method of describing obliquely the hospital and its associates becomes perceptible when the word hospital goes past the level of literal meaning and stands metaphorically “Higher than the handsomest hotel” and its reception is “Like an airport lounge.” Moreover, the ambulances which are invariably associated with the hospitals for bringing the patients struggling for life are not
described directly; instead, they are mentioned in a circuitous way with the help of a negative: "what keep drawing up / At the entrance are not taxis." But the duality in the voices of the speaker by no means remains suppressed; the voice in the speaker making a subtle attempt to conceal the grim reality about the hospital is countered by another voice drawing attention of the readers suggestively to the frightening reality of the place: "and in the hall / As well as creepers hangs a frightening smell." A "frightening smell" is the smell of death which can be perceived in a hospital. While a voice in the speaker, which describes the hospital as higher than the "handsomest" hotel and its reception as an airport lounge, gives emphasis on comfort provided to the patients, young or old, waiting for death in a modern hospital, another voice defines the building as a "frightening" place for the final phase of man's life. Thus "sustained ironies" dominate dramatically throughout the poem pointing out the hiatus between what should be ideal and what is real generating tension in the divergent voices.

The juxtaposition of the two extremes in the speaker of "The Building" suggestive of his divided selves is truly Larkinesque as this principle of coexistence of the opposites has been magnificently exploited by Larkin in his poems in a substantial number. The paperbacks, magazines etc. offered by the hospital management in the waiting hall to the patients who have come here for clinical check-up are meant for giving them comfort and making them feel easy as well:

There are paperbacks, and tea at so much a cup,
Like an airport lounge, but those who tamely sit
On rows of steel chairs turning the ripped mags
Haven’t come far.

The description by the speaker is loaded with conflicting implications pointing out a fissure in the voice which speaks for the comforts of the patients waiting in the reception of the hospital. Passengers waiting in the airport lounge for the arrival of air-traffic usually grow emotionally excited for travel in the air which takes them off from the mundane limitations into the blue promising boundless thrill and joy. But the patients in the furnished waiting hall of the hospital look apparently still in their posture as they are glued to their steel chairs turning the “ripped” magazines. The focus of attention here is the adjective “ripped” which is indicative of the violent anxiety almost crippling the patients mentally in apprehension of their clinically tested future.

The voice of the poetic persona having insight into the mental framework of the patients in the given situation finds no fault with the faces “restless and resigned.” Their physical agitation, as the voice perceives, surfaces their deeply-rooted concern about the future, when “Every few minutes comes a kind of nurse / To fetch someone away” towards mysteriously terrible destination:

The rest refit

Cups back to saucers, cough, or glance below

Seats for dropped gloves or cards.

(CP, 191)
The phrase of central significance implying gracefully hope, though not fully but partially, in an atmosphere of overwhelming tension is “a kind of nurse.” True, mystery thickens as the person taking someone away is not defined categorically as a “nurse”, but “a kind of nurse”. The reference to the term “nurse,” however, in this context is indicative of a sense of commitment in a medical person in terms of service towards those who have fallen sick. This suggestion is the outcome of a “crack” in the voice that admits the unbearable mental sufferings of the patients. In fact, the concept that the modern medical establishments are gradually but steadily emerging as secular institutions to replace churches in the domain of service for the persons afflicted with ailments is hinted metaphorically in the poem by a voice in the poetic persona or the speaker. Anyway, the utter helplessness of the ailing persons gathered in the hospital is generalized with social as well as emotional connotations:

Human’s 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; and all

Here to confess that something has gone wrong.
It must be error of a serious sort.
For see how many floors it needs, how tall
It’s grown by now, and how much money goes
In trying to correct it.

(CP3 191)
The sight of the human beings caught in the predicament cutting across the differences of age generates the voice of sincere sympathy in the speaker. The feeling of slipping into the darkness is challenged implicitly by the use of the word “confess,” which stands detached from the religious implications in an age where church is “going.” The confession on part of the patients that they have been afflicted with diseases causing unthought of “wrong” with their life is nowadays made, either with a hope of recovery or of having some relief, to the doctors who have assumed the role of the priests in the massive hospitals which are supposed to be modern churches, secular in character. This concept, however, is not expounded but suggested in the concluding parts of the poem.

Another voice of the speaker, sceptic of the positive role presumed to be played by the hospital, defines metaphorically its building as a prison, full of rooms, where variety of people, sharing invariably something common about them – their ailment, are taken by turn for medical check-up etc.:

For past these doors are rooms, and rooms past those,

And more rooms yet, each one further off

And harder to return from;

(\textit{CP}, 192)

An altogether new voice of lyrical grace makes its presence felt out of the gloom and frustration, when the speaker looks beyond the building and accepts emotionally the
necessity of free and normal rhythms of life: “short terraced streets / Where kids chalk games, and girls with hair-dos fetch / Their separates from the cleaners.” The new voice bursting into lyrical intensity gives emphasis on “love” in making life positively meaningful in the face of sickness and death, which stand for man a formidable prison-house:

- O world,

Your loves, your chances, are beyond the stretch

Of any hand from here!

(CP, 192)

Andrew Motion is exceptionally brilliant when, in course of analysing the poem, he points out the predicament of modern man in given social situation where the church with its ideology of service to man in distress is dying. Christianity, as defined by the poetic persona in another poem of Larkin “Aubade”, is now “vast moth-eaten musical brocade / Created to pretend we never die.” Religion, which is now closed to man, therefore, “can do nothing to bring the world’s ‘loves’ and ‘chances’ within reach, and cannot provide comfort, as it once did, in the face of death.”52 The building ironically enough gives comfort to the sick and the dying people as well without any religious ritual. The voice in the speaker duly honours the growing powers of the hospital over the “congregations” of the patients assembled here, and at the same time, admits that this institution of the modern era has turned potential enough to “Outbuild cathedrals.” The term “congregations,” which is obviously used in secular sense here, nevertheless bears ironically religious implications.
True, the medical establishments of modern age cannot perform miracle by disowning or withholding "everlastingly" death; but what they can achieve gloriously by means of excellent medical technology is to ensure for the patients hope for comfort, at least, for some time. Thus the medical institutions can definitely delay the arrival of death and a built-in time-bound preparation is consequently evolved in the "congregations" of patients to meet death courageously only in "suitable circumstances":

This is what it means,
This clean-sliced cliff; a struggle to transcend
The thought of dying,

(CP, 193)

"The coming of dark" cannot be stopped for ever, but it can be kept at bay for the time being by the hospitals. This is really an achievement, which can by means be ignored. The voice in the speaker upholding the service of the hospital registers a note of ambivalence in the sense that the hospital which "rejects the support of the church," inherits theoretically the "legitimacy of hope"53 from the church.

The structure of arguments in "The Building" stands majestically on the strength of ambiguity. The debate in the poem concentrated on the hospital's function and the ailing persons' reaction to it is carried on effectively even towards the flower metaphor offering the impression that double-voicedness is essentially welcome for the expansion of human knowledge. The people who offer flowers to the patients wishing sincerely their recovery are aware of the ambiguity involved in their flowery
offering: “though crowds each evening try / With wasteful, weak, propitiatory flowers.” The flowers offered to the patients waiting for death are “wasteful, weak “ or in other words, subject to decay, and, hence, according to Andrew Motion, prove “pathetically” their inadequacy in the “struggle to transcend / The thought of dying.” True, the flowers are demonstrative of the weakness inherent in man at the symbolic level; but they at the same time stand as emblems of human sympathy and love, which inspire the people afflicted with deadly diseases to face moments of extinction patiently as well as heroically.

“Reasons for Attendance” (1953 TLD) is a poem constructed in ironic mode registering the “deeper duplicity” in the voices of the poetic persona in terms of “rival claims of self and society, sexual loneliness and sexual attachment.” The poem may arguably be viewed as multi-angled reactions communicated through heterogeneous voices on a particular social event. It has sensibly stirred the feelings of an elderly artist. He keeps usually cultivated isolation from the normal social ethos or commitments in a community. The speaker or the artist stops suddenly, as he feels attracted for a moment towards the lighted glass of a dance hall:

The trumpet’s voice, loud and authoritative,

Draws me a moment to the lighted glass

To watch the dancers – all under twenty-five –

Shifting intently, face to flushed face,

Solemnly on the bent of happiness.

(CP, 80)
The voice recognizing the visual attraction in the speaker now gives way to another voice intent on examining whether the speaker himself is swayed within by the solemnity of the ritual involved in the dance generating fire of excitement and, consequently, flood of happiness in the participants. The ritual, as the poetic persona perceives precisely, is the sexual urge burning in the dancers for achieving the fulfilment of "happiness" by coming closer physically. True, the sexually attractive physique of the girls or "The wonderful feel of the girls" inside the brightly glassed dance hall has made the speaker standing outside feel the heat at best for a short while. The very next moment the voice momentarily indulged by figment of imagination in sexual happiness is challenged by another voice which is locked in arguments and counterarguments on the achievement of happiness both individually and collectively as well:

Why be out here?

But then, why be in there? Sex, yes, but what

Is sex? Surely, to think the lion's share

Of happiness is found by couples ——

(CP,80)

The way the speaker hunting desperately for reasons in defence of waiting outside the dance hall and also of not stepping inside to join the young men and women in the rhythm of dance is demonstrative of the restlessness and the ambivalence as well in him. The three question marks and the repetition of the phrase "why be" ("out" and "in") expressing doubt bring to the surface the speaker's oscillation in
contemplation. He gets so confused for the time being that he cannot endorse by any plausible reason his standing outside the dance hall. If the poetic persona fails to defend rationally his staying outside the hall, ironically enough he seems equally out of reason to be inside the very room where “smoke and sweat” signify a lot. He, however, recognizes “the lion’s share of happiness” in sex which acts as stimulus in the young couples on the rhythm of dance made “authoritative” by the “trumpet’s voice.” Therefore, dance which is a social activity may be justified as one of the reasons prompting the young people of opposite sex to participate actively in it. But this way of looking into dance by the majority of the people, as perceived by one voice in the speaker, is contested by another voice: “ – sheer / Inaccuracy, as far as I’m concerned.” By contrast, he is drawn to the dance otherwise; the urge for individual fulfilment of art in him demands his rapt attention to the aesthetic pleasure of music associated with dance, a distinctive form of art. A bell sounding in the dance, according to the individual appreciation of the speaker, is an image of art; and this very music turns out to be a substitute source of happiness for the speaker, explaining his basic departure from the “merged communality of the dance hall”: 57

What calls me is that lifted, rough-tongued bell
(Art, if you like) whose individual sound
Insists I too am individual.
It speaks I hear; others may hear as well,

But not for me, nor I for them; and so
With happiness. (CP, 80)
The expression "I too am individual" may be considered as an echo of "what I am" as revealed in "Best Society", an earlier poem by Larkin. The repetition of the word "individual" (both as an adjective and a noun) gives special prominence to the concept that happiness matters individually; it is experienced not by any single means. That is why, if the tolling of bell results in happiness for the speaker, other people may consider its effect in different ways determined by their varying individual responses to life:

Therefore I stay outside,

Believing this; and they maul to and fro,

Believing that; and both are satisfied,

If no one has misjudged himself. Or lied.

(CP, 80)

The ironic twist as made prominent in the final line of the poem produces a note of ambiguity in the voice of the speaker intent on settling the debate on happiness. The belief that both the speaker and the dancers are happy in their own ways betrays doubt in the last line where its validity is made conditional. The poetic persona and the young couples involved in dance are supposed to embrace happiness provided they have properly judged themselves or have by no means had recourse to falsehood. The contradictions as discerned in the resolution of the poem strike required balance on the source of happiness. True, the speaker like other artists welcomes loneliness in the pursuit of happiness in art. But it does not obviously prove
that sex, which has a social appeal in general, makes no impact on the artists. The speaker-artist grows desperate to conceal his urge for sex by glorifying his search for pleasure in art. He is not fundamentally convinced of his concept of individuality that advocates the isolation of the artist from the natural ethos accepted by the community as a whole. The final line ironically rewrites the resolution stressing the fact that happiness is a complex concept which accommodates in a balanced way all the apparently conceived contradictory components.

"Poetry of Departures" (1954 TLD) is another remarkable poem in which irony makes its presence felt majestically by demonstrating the voices engaged in inconclusive battle to explore an alternative in terms of an ideal life-style. The poem, as the voices have interpreted it in conversational tone, is constructed sharply on contrast showing man’s dilemma in choosing between a life of extraordinary freedom in adventure and the routine-bound conventional life characterized by monotony.

The poem begins with the voice of the speaker attaching importance to the sensational news of a man who has thrown away boldly everything belonging to his worldly life to embrace the life of a recluse:

Some times you hear, fifth hand,
As epitaph:
*He chucked up everything*
*And just cleared off,*
And always the voice will sound
Certain you approve
The audacious, purifying,
Elemental move.

(CP,85)

The news, which appears to be significant in the context of banality of life, strikes at the very outset a note of contradiction in the sense that it comes “fifth hand.” The phrase “fifth hand” is a pointer to the fact that the information has in it the elements of a rumour, which is basically remote from truth. The word of central importance in terms of ironic intensity is undoubtedly “epitaph” which bears strongly the implication that the man who has opted for renouncing his responsibilities and obligations as well may be considered as dead from the social point of view. Thus a voice of objections warns the voice of admiration in the assessment of the man who has stirred the imagination of the people in general as an individual of romantic sensibility. The “polysyllabic adjectives” in the observation – “this audacious, purifying, / Elemental move” apparently evoking unbridled admiration for the man in the news are meant for giving recognition to him. The qualities as encapsulated in these adjectives generally become true to the people in dream-world where impossibles are possible. These adjectives, therefore, construct “the ironic hyperbole” in which the suspicion of the speaker towards the highly ornamental eulogy made for the man is betrayed. The colloquial or “natural throwaway” language in the third and fourth lines of the opening stanza of the poem also serves the required purpose of deflating the extremely romanticized concept of life which stands altogether detached from real life in a society.
The paradoxical inclination in the structure of the reflections of the poetic persona as indicated by his divided selves continues in the second stanza where the secure happiness confined to “sweet home” is challenged by an urge for an altogether new life-style characterized by conventionally unthinkable freedom into adventures. The speaker who is now opposed to the traditional life in perfect order releases his strongly-felt aversion both for “home” and the regular performances of stereotyped duties which ensure in home the mobilization of resources required for generation of comforts and happiness: “I detest my room, / Its specially-chosen junk, / The good books, the good bed, / And my life, in perfect order.” The debunking of home and book is incisively ironic. Home is acknowledged as a time-tested place which provides man comfort and happiness within against all add"s and protects him from the fury of hostile forces without. Books are man’s companions in joy and sorrow and often carry him out of the drudgery of life into the domain of imagination where he breathes in absolute freedom. The news of the man as given in the first stanza of the poem is almost a rumour (“Sometimes you hear, fifth hand”) and, hence, cannot be a credible source of inspiration stirring up the speaker to revolt totally against the tenor of life. True, the ennui springing out of the monotony of life often disturbs the emotional balance of a man urging him to come out of the given situation in any unconventional fashion he likes so that he may be refreshed at least for the time being. Therefore, the speaker’s debunking of the conditions prevailing normally in life may be termed as his overreactions to the down-to-earth life style. The juxtaposition of the opposites “junk” and “perfect order” builds up the ironic tension in the speaker establishing the truth that suspicion is implanted in his ‘overreaction’. The build-up of ironic tension out of the clash between the two extremes surely aims at striking a balance which is indispensable to the formation of a positive life-style.
The ironically hyperbolic strain remains uninterrupted in the third stanza where the focus shifts from the renunciation of the worldly attachment into the excitement generated by the sensational scenes or dialogues (as recorded in italics in the poem) in romantically juvenile fiction or films in search of adventures:

*He walked out on the whole crowd*

Leaves me flushed and stirred,

Like *Then she undid her dress*

Or *Take that you bastard;*

*(CP, 85)*

True, the speaker feels on the heat of excitement which is produced by the thrilling "scene" or "dialogues;" but he realizes distinctly that these cannot be performed in real life as they exist only in the world of fantasy. Nevertheless, they exercise a kind of positive impact on the poetic persona in the sense that the possibility of escape from the monotony of daily life into the domain of imagination offers him in a limited way some idea to make life bearable, if not adventurous:

Surely I can, if he did?

And that helps me stay

Sober and industrious.

*(CP, 85)*
The two words “sober” and “industrious” are of prime importance as they bring to the surface the basic contradiction in the arguments of the speaker in favour of departure from the life in “perfect order.” The term “sober” serves to stress the necessity of a well-balanced life; while “industrious” emphatically reminds the speaker of the significance of work in such a life. The word “industrious” ironically enough gives the timely reminder to the poetic persona that the salvation of man in the world of drab realism may be achieved only through work properly done. Larkin in an interview with the Observer accepts “hard work”\textsuperscript{58} as an essential virtue in life. The importance of work in life characterized by sufferings and frustration and “dread of dying” is echoed in “Toads Revisited” and “Aubade”.

The concluding stanza of “Poetry of Departures” explores another alternative possibility of departure from the clutches of the conventionally designed domestic life which is fundamentally confined both to the performed work and to the pursuit of comforts and happiness as commonly secured in “sweet home” and the articles contained in it: “Yes, swagger the nut-strewn roads / Crouch in the fo'c'sle/ Stubbly with goodness, if /It weren't so artificial.” The two “wonderfully comic images” of adventurous escape, however, cannot offer solution. The lifestyle of a “tramp or a gypsy, a sailor, and so on” cannot genuinely be an alternative for the “artificial” life lived by the poetic persona. Andrew Swarbrick has observed: “Both these images belong to a childish imagination and so they contain an implied criticism of their ‘hero’ figures which Larkin identifies as their ‘artificial’ quality.”\textsuperscript{59} The artificiality of the hero figures is locked in a clash with the ideally constructed state where “loneliness clarifies” and existence remains “unfenced”, “Facing the sun, untalkative,
out of reach” (“Here”). Gavin Ewart draws the attention of the readers to both humour and irony involved in the reflection of the speaker while he interprets the significance of the word “főcsle”:

The 'főcsle' (forecastle) is the foreword part of a ship – a word often found in romantic novels about stowaways. The stowaway is ‘stubbly with goodness’ because he is unshaven – a contrast with the clean-shave, hypocritical white-collar worker; both humour and irony are at work here.

What is of immense significance in this context is that the voice of wisdom in the speaker acknowledges that the attempt made in actual modern life in search of solitude in the domain of creative art by writing books or manufacturing the ceramic works of beauty is also plagued by artificiality:

Such a deliberate step backwards
To create an object:
Books, china; a life
Reprehensibly perfect.

( CP, 85-86)

The step towards creative art is bound to be a regression as it evokes scepticism in its mission. The life of a gypsy or a sailor in the imaginative stories of adventure and the life of an artist in the real world are identified in the sense that both lives are far from truth, and hence, dissatisfying. The phrase “Reprehensibly perfect” has an ironic twist
within; the juxtaposition of these two words opposed at the semantic level is a pointer to the fact that there lies paradox in the speaker’s yearning for a romantic life of solitude far from the work-loaded, humdrum, quotidian existence. “The Poetry of Departures” may be considered as a space where the voice of the speaker dreaming of a poetic or romantic world of solitude coexists paradoxically with the voice implanted in the real world of work and order.

Work which is appreciated genuinely as a “social commitment” once again constitutes the nucleus of ambivalence in “Toads” (1954), another poem of The Less Deceived. “Toads” typifies the very Larkinesque trait of building up the structure of ambiguity by demonstrating the indecisive battle of arguments in the divided poetic persona. The poetry which comes closer to “Poetry of Departures” on the issues related to work gives focus on the contrasting voices of the speaker – one defending the conservatively social ritual defined as work and another, “rebellious” and “anti-authoritarian” advocating release from drudgery associated essentially with work, particularly the regular work of a salaried worker.

The central image permeating the poem is toad which metaphorically suggests something detestable or disgusting. The compulsory routine of work is like a toad squatting oppressively on the life of the speaker generating in him feelings of loathsomeness which he wants intently to escape: “Why should I let the toad work / Squat on my life? / Can’t I use my wit as a pitchfork / And drive the brute off?” The argument for exploiting wit as a means to remove the toad of work is ironic and comic as well. Wit, if it is not pressed into service at least occasionally, demands hard labour which may bring fatigue. The argument produces comic effect too when the speaker
in a state of desperation compares wit to pitchfork to give the impression that wit may be used as something mechanical. Thus the speaker debunks wit to achieve his personal goal ignoring implicitly in this context its resources of creative construction which is important for progress in the society. The use of wit as a pitchfork, Calvin Bedient feels, has the potentiality of being "the best comic conceit in modern poetry."62

The voice of disgust and anger does not cease in the second stanza where the resentment of the speaker is intensified by a mood of bitterness:

Six days of the week it soils
With its sickening poison –
Just for paying a few bills!
That’s out of proportion.

(CP, 89)

The voice here ventilates the speaker’s grievance that he is helplessly entrapped in the daily grind of work uninterrupted for six days simply to meet some expenses incurred for some basic social and biological necessities. The voice which raises the point of discontent is challenged by another voice pointing out a chink in the logic of dissatisfaction, and, thus, the second voice gives reply to what is brought forward for consideration in the form of debate by the first voice. The imagery of the toad defiling the six days of the weak of the speaker with its "sickening poison" is terribly demonstrative of the acute anger and annoyance in him as he suffers from the deadly
burden of daily drudgery. The imagery at the same time comically exaggerates the explosive reactions of the speaker to the unpleasant weariness implanted in the daily assignments, which can by no means be avoided. The truth is that the daily work, if judged reasonably, cannot absolutely be blamed as helplessly tedious.

The three stanzas that follow do not show any sign of restraint in articulating the speaker’s bitterness towards the daily grind of work. The voice, which is charged with the feeling of exasperation, is in the quest of a strategy to avoid tedium involved in work performed regularly:

Lots of folk live on their wits:
   Lecturers, lispers,
   Losels, loblolly-men, louts –
   They don’t end as paupers;

(CP, 89)

The reliance on wit to shake off the unbearable load of drudgery and disgust involved in prolonged work and to ensure simultaneously the required financial support is paradoxical in the sense that the role of wit in the present context is questioned by the voice which demands a thorough scrutiny of the argument presented and defended by the preceding voice. The trait that invariably emerges out of the threadbare analysis of Larkin’s poems is that the arguments raised there are contested in most of the cases fiercely by counterarguments in exclusively dialogic fashion. Losel, which is a very archaic word, means a worthless person, a profligate, a rake or a “ne’er-do-well.” Loblolly-man is a nautical slang meaning surgeon’s attendant at sea. He earns his
living by carrying out the orders of others which are obviously unpleasant for him. These two words which are now obsolete are used for intensifying the ironic effect. A lisper is a man who earns money by adopting affected voices. A lout is an awkward fellow, a bumpkin. Lecturers are supposed to be important part of the activities in the society based on wit, but the juxtaposition of the lecturers with these worthless and awkward fellows like lispers, losels, loblolly-man and louts ironically provokes a sceptical view on the function of wit in terms of social honesty and dignity. This very juxtaposition of the so-called high and low people as judged ordinarily by social scale has a carnivalesque effect and gives the impression that lecturers who are supposed to epitomize wit in the society are debunked or challenged by the people of grass-root level in the social structure. The honesty of the lecturers or the academic people who earn their living by exploiting intellectual resources is also ironically questioned in another poem "Naturally the Foundation will Bear Your Expenses" (1961 TWW).

Anyway, the abundance of alliteration of "Lecturers, lispers / Losels, loblolly-men, louts" is a pointer to the fact that the speaker is comically making a list of the people at random to justify his point of view. All these arguments and counterarguments in which the divided selves of the poetic persona are locked produce cumulatively the effects of comic irony.

The speaker in the fourth stanza appears to approve the life-style of a large number of people depending not on the rigorously performed daily work but solely on "windfalls" or luck. The people who "live up lanes / With fire in a bucket" may either be beggars or vendors. They are not much concerned for their small income; they, on the contrary, seem to enjoy the thrill of uncertainty lying in the very pattern of their
job. Paradoxically enough the poetic persona does not sound reasonably convincing in his approval of these “Lots of folk,” who are casual in their approach to life, and, hence can by no means be accepted as model alternative for people plagued by heavy load of regular serious work. The fact is made sharply clear here by the use of argument that the voice in the speaker according approval to these people is countered by another voice. The people of “lower depths” with all the uncertainty associated with their poverty are not unhappy: “They seem to like it.” The comic irony which is regarded as one of the most effective literary devices to strike hermeneutic indeterminacy sweeps the fourth stanza of “Toads.”

The dialogic indecisiveness remains uninterruptedly in the fifth stanza where the speaker grows desperate to vindicate his view of the people mentioned in the previous stanza that they do not starve for not working hard regularly: “No one actually starves.” The word “starves” is italicized to give the impression that the speaker remains firm in his conclusion. But the irony, which becomes explicit in this context, is that the speaker fails to conceal the voice of conflict in him. Though he defends the poverty-stricken people for achieving liberation from the daily grind of work, he is ambiguously outspoken in expressing his strongly felt repugnance towards those people for living an ugly life: “Their nippers have got bare feet, / Their unspeakable wives/ Are skinny as whippets.” Andrew Swarbrick is justified in recognizing the ambivalence in the speaker: “The speaker tries to envy them but he fails to disguise his disapproval; at bottom, his endurance of the daily grind in fact gives him a moral superiority.”63
The dialogicity turns towards a new dimension in the remaining four stanzas where the competing voices exhibit both their strength and weakness in a balanced way. The speaker now shows less interest in his revolutionary enthusiasm and feels forced to accept the real situation:

Ah, were I courageous enough
To shout *stuff your pension!*

But I know, all too well, that’s the stuff

That dreams are made on:

*(CP,89)*

The poetic persona is torn within by two conflicting voices pleading for risky freedom and security. He wishes that he could be bold enough to refuse unhesitatingly the regular pension which is a normal consequence of his strict adherence to regular work. But the next moment he feels that he cannot shout, "*Stuff your pension*" to risk a life of misery after retirement. He comes to realize that rejection of pension for him is a fantasy, "the stuff of dreams." The word "stuff" is a slang which means "do what you like with." Moreover, here "stuff" is an echo from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (IV i 156-8):

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.
Prospero in *The Tempest*, while offering his philosophic view of the human race, considers our life embedded in reality as an illusory dream. The poetic persona in “Toads” deliberately turns the statement of Prospero into something flatly prosaic as demanded by the modern situation. He seems to pronounce that he has no other alternative than to build his hopes and dreams on “pension”. The comic irony, thus, makes its presence strongly felt as Prospero’s deeply philosophic observation on life is exploited by the poetic persona in “Toads” in connection with something utterly mundane, namely retiring benefits or pension. The speaker admits the importance of work culture and, hence, feels that he has metaphorically absorbed “toad” in his nature: “For something sufficiently toad-like / Squats in me, too; / Its hunkers are heavy as hard luck, / And cold as snow.” Now he can surely crave for the keenly desired fruits of success of prolonged hard work: “The fame and the girl and the money / All at one sitting.” But the speaker also knows that there is ironically enough a gulf of difference between what he desires and what he as a man of honesty actually gets in real life. Such a triple crown of success may be achieved “at one sitting” only by the heroes in the pulp fiction or by those who “blarney” or cheat others.

The concluding stanza of “Toads” reveals an indecisively complex design in man’s attitude to the routine work: “I don’t say, one bodies the other / One’s spiritual truth; / But I do say its hard to lose either, / when you have both.” The speaker is pulled by the contending voices within with equal force pleading for working and not working simultaneously to achieve either security or freedom. What is of deeper consequence is that “working and not working” are not obvious alternatives They, on the contrary, “complement one another.” The tension that engulfs the entire poem as a consequence of the fiercely contested arguments and counterarguments by the
divided selves of the poetic persona has been effectively built up by the rhymes which are "rough, half-rhymes (soils/bills) and assonances (toad-like/hard luck)." 66

Larkin is unquestionably adept in exploiting irony which has become instrumental in constructing double voices in his poems. Kingsley Amis who has contributed largely to determine Larkin's literary ambition has made him rightly feel that irony is "just as important as affection." 67 Larkin is superb in using ironic device effectively and sharply in "Toads Revisited (1962 TWW) which "was planned as a companion to" 68 "Toads." The poetic persona in "Toads" has courted, though ineffectively, risky life of adventure for liberation from the drabness of the lengthy routine work. But in "Toads Revisited" the speaker keeps safe distance from revolutionary zeal and decides to settle down to "toad work" so that he may not appear pale "before the horror of dropping out of decent, regular security, like the lonely old grubbers... in the park." 69 He celebrates ironically in the second poem of "toad" his hectic life of comfortable security as compared to the miserably idle life of the people in the park "dodging the toad work."

The speaker who dodges the toad work temporarily one afternoon comes out of the cell in his office and feels tempted to savour the luxury of idleness in the refreshing expanse of nature in the park: "Walking around the park / Should feel better than work: / The lake, the sunshine, / The grass to lie on." The romantic voice in the speaker is countered by another voice attributing sole importance to the dedicated work as a key to comfort and security as well. A "crack", however, appears in the structure of logic defending the monotony of uninterrupted work and rejecting
the healing touches of nature when the speaker abruptly and almost forcibly pulls himself away from the elemental attractions of nature required for a man’s emotional support in the midst of struggle for existence and deliberately ignores the importance of the park at the cost of work which has become an obsession for him: “Not a bad place to be. Yet it doesn’t suit me.”

The speaker expresses his dislike categorically for the men he meets one afternoon in the park — ”All dodging the toad work.” These people have obviously nothing in common with the carefree heroes in “Toads” or with the romantic adventurers in “Poetry of Departures” The characters in “Toads Revisited” may be cited as examples of human miseries — “victims of age, or neurosis, or accident or impoverishment”:70

Palsied old step-takers,
Hare-eyed clerks with jitters,

Waxed-fleshed out-patients
Still vague from accidents,
And characters in long coats
Deep in the litter-baskets –

(CP, 147)

The description of human misery and sufferings here has the strength of empirical precision. It may be mentioned that Larkin has learned to use real experiences of life in his poems from Hardy. Anyway, the speaker’s disdain towards these pathetically
projected victims may arguably be mentioned as an illustration of comic irony. The comicality of the situation lies in the fact that there could be no comparison between the physically and mentally retarded persons and the speaker who is their diametrical opposite. The characters plagued by stupidity or weakness have no minimal hold on their selves and, hence, they are helplessly unable to contribute something positive towards the construction of welfare both for the individual and the community. Ironically enough, the poetic persona is debunking his own sense of judgement when he compares himself seriously in terms of toad work with the physically and mentally jeopardized characters. The speakers in Larkin’s poems are basically complex characters who refuse to be decisive in their approach to life. A voice of soft sympathy in the “Toads Revisited” makes its presence felt when the poetic persona realizes the terrible loneliness of these victims of fate or circumstances or follies:

Turning over their failures
By some bed of lobelias,
Nowhere to go but indoors,
No friends but empty chairs –

(CP, 147)

The speaker now feels satisfied with his bustling life of discipline and respectability giving him the emphatic impression that he is superior to the people in the park:

No, give me my in-tray
My loaf-haired secretary,
My shall-I-keep-the-call-in-Sir:

(CP, 148)

The "surge of enthusiasm" as exposed in these brisk lines brings to surface the wry humour which may be discerned in reference to the hair-do of the secretary. The voice of enthusiasm endorsing the rigorous work in the office cannot choke the voice of irony pointing out the lurking emptiness. Like the people in the park he is also a prisoner of "indoors" as he is confined solely to office and isolated from the rest of the world by his inescapable burden of work. Moreover, the respectable speaker and the worthless people in the park share the same fate as they slowly but steadily make their ways to "dusty death." The speaker cannot avoid the bleakness of death, though he holds the superior social position. His own existence, despite his disciplined lifestyle absolutely dedicated to work, is drifting out of his command; hours are slipping away towards something drearily predestined giving him the perception as realized by the poetic persona in the poem " 'This is the first thing' " (1943-4 TNS): / This is the first thing / I have understood: / Time is the echo of an axe / Within a wood." Just as the men in the park waiting helplessly for the inevitable to come, so the speaker has no alternative but to prepare himself for going "down Cemetery Road":

When the lights came on at four

At the end of another year?

Give me your arm, old toad;

Help me down Cemetery Road

(CP, 148)
So, working and not working have the same result as none of the choice as made by man can stop or at least retard the advent of death. The only difference that strikes in this context is that the speaker’s acceptance of toad of work and responsibility has made him endure the bleakness of existence and prepared him to face the inescapable fate: “Give me your arm, old toad;/ Help me down Cemetery Road.”

Age and death are the key aspects in Larkin's poetry. Hardy's influence on Larkin in these 'aspects' can be discerned. Hardy’s “Thoughts of Phena at News of her death” made “a deep impression” on Larkin. Yeats' impact on Larkin has never ceased. The impact may be noticed in many poems of Larkin. The poem “Age” (1954 TLD) views age as “a disposable property.” The concept has the Yeatsian resonance. The age of the poetic persona has “fallen away like white swaddling” floating in the middle distance and turns to be an “inhabited cloud.” Raphael Ingelbien in his illuminating article “From Hardy to Yeats? Larkin’s Poetry of Aging” mentions the poems such as “Lines on a Young Lady’s Photograph Album” (1953 TLD) and “Skin” (1954 TLD) and detects the impact of Hardy with reference to age on Larkin. The poetic persona in Larkin's poems have treated age and death seriously from various angles. One may remember in this context Betjeman's poem, “The Metropolitan Railway” where the cruelty involved in death is revealed: “Cancer has killed him. Heart is killing her./ The trees are down.” Larkin's poems record ambiguously the “age, and then the only end of age.”

Death is figured with all its inconsolable horrors in “Aubade,” published in Times Literary Supplement (23 December 1977). The poem, which Larkin started writing on 11th March 1974, was completed on 29th November 1977. “Aubade”
remains at the centre of literary curiosity as it is considered to be the last major poem by the poet. Significantly enough “Aubade” which unveils without any illusion the terror of death was recited by Harold Pinter after the poet passed away at a “memorial meeting” on March 3, 1986. A close reading of the poem, however, may arguably attest to the argument that it is not predominantly monologic highlighting particularly the horrors of death; it is, on the contrary, dialogic as the “selves” of the poet negotiating with each other give the impression that the contradictory views in the structure of thought concentrated on death in the poem coexist.

The speaker in “Aubade” appears to be “less deceived” when his voice of concern remains “unprecedentedly straightforward” in its admission of fear of death:

I work all day, and get half-drunk at night.

Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare.

In time the curtain-edges will grow light.

Till then I see what’s really always there:

Unresting death,

(CP, 208)

The speaker who debunks the romantic concept of death is not haunted by the fear of death at daytime when he is absorbed completely in toad of work. But as the night advances the speaker grows restless and panic-stricken at the thought of the inevitable death to strike him any moment. He gets “half-drunk” to benumb his senses and to embrace sleep consequently with the hope of avoiding night. But the “Unresting
death” with all its might of horror keeps him awake “at four to soundless dark” before dawn:

   a whole day nearer now,

   Making all thought impossible but how

   And where and when I shall myself die.

   Arid interrogation: yet the dread

   Of dying, and being dead,

   Flashes afresh to hold and horrify.

   (CP, 208)

The second, third and fourth stanzas stand firmly uninterrupted in their logic of “the dread of dying, and being dead.” The frame of mind grows blank in the fear of total extinction and declines to assess the emotional as well as worldly events of life in terms of success and failure. Nothing in the world can remove the dread of “total emptiness” — “No trick dispels.” Religion, which was once supposed to inspire the devotees with the concept of immortality of soul, nowadays ironically fails in its mission:

   Religion used to try,

   The vast moth-eaten musical brocade

   Created to pretend we never die,

   (CP, 208)
The speaker is ruthlessly sincere in his disillusioned concept of death which stands humanly inconsolable and insurmountable:

And realisation of it rages out
In furnace-fear when we are caught without
People or drink. Courage no good:
It means not scaring others. Being brave
Lets no one off the grave.
Death is no different whined at than withstood.

(CP, 209)

Larkin, as William Kerrigan has rightly observed, has magnificently exploited alliteration to offer "a fair idea of the tonal range of "Aubade" evoking mournfully the approach of formidable death. The end of the fourth stanza is meaningfully remarkable for "infusing the alliterating half-lines with Marvellian irony: 'Death is no different whined at than withstood'."72

The voice of concern in the poetic persona dominating right from the opening stanza is intercepted in the final stanza where the voice of assertion makes its presence felt at dawn advocating hard work as an effective tool for countering sheer dread of death:

Slowly light strengthens, and the room takes shape.
It stands plain as a wardrobe, what we know,
Have always known, know that we can’t escape,
Yet can’t accept. One side will have to go.
Meanwhile telephones crouch, getting ready to ring
In locked-up offices, and all the uncaring
Intricate rented world begins to rouse.
The sky is white as clay, with no sun.
Work has to be done.
Postmen like doctors go from house to house.

(CP, 209)

With the day dawning death which is in the room has lost its sting of terror. It stands exceedingly "plain as a wardrobe." The use of the word "wardrobe" in this context suggests that death is totally devoid of vagueness. It is as real as the wardrobe. Death cannot be escaped, but the dread of death as it afflicts the speaker at night cannot be allowed to continue at daytime. So, the light that gradually strengthens brings the speaker back to the world of activities. "The quotidian world makes ready to open its doors, answer its phones, pay its mortgages, open its mail." The terror of death making the speaker restless at the darkness of night fails to strike the citadel of work in the world of commerce and industry at dawn. The image of telephones crouching which Larkin may have borrowed from A Glass of Blessings (1958), a novel by Barbara Pym, is employed deliberately to attribute animation to the telephonic messages to be pressed into activities. Kerrigan explains the use of the adjective "rented":
'Rented' has a lovely double reference to worldly economics, one of the motives behind work, and the old stoic and epicurean idea (also in Shakespeare) that life is a debt that must at death be repaid; dispersing the terror of this truth is another motive behind work. 75

The last line of "Aubade" is wonderfully loaded with rich suggestion in favour of hard labour giving tough resistance against the terror of death. Postmen assume the role of doctor and go from house to house to deliver the message-cum-prescription: "Work has to be done." The poem begins with the reference to work ("I work all day") and comes to close emphasizing the same. The title of "Aubade" meaning a poem or a piece of music appropriate to dawn is ironic in the sense that it does not focus fully the terror of death; on the contrary, it symbolically suggests a way of challenging it so that the mental preparation for accepting death through toad of work may be achieved: "Give me your arm, old toad; / Help me down Cemetery Road" ("Toads Revisited"). Work in "Aubade" stands for dawn flashing upon the darkening terror of death. "Aubade" is, therefore, a complex poem where the voices of concern and of assurance as well coexist ambivalently.

The colloquial bravura of "Toads" and "Toads Revisited" is magnificently offset by lyrical grace in the poems like "The Trees" (1967 HW) where attitude
towards nature is not straightforwardly simple but complex or mixed producing the impression that ambiguity exists strongly in the world of nature too:

The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said:
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.

(CP, 166)

The poetic persona who studies trees closely with a philosophic bent of mind turns divided in noticing paradox or duality in them. The voice of the speaker expressing its surprise and joy with the trees putting on leaves is contradicted by the voice anticipating the shadow of death hidden in the freshly sprouted leaves. Thus ambivalence strikes in the very opening stanza of “The Trees” where creation is threatened by destruction. The paradox is brilliantly constructed by acknowledging that “coming into leaf” “is a kind of grief.” The juxtaposition of the words “greenness” and “grief” registering contradiction both at the semantic and metaphoric levels is a pointer to the fact that ambiguity is naturally recognized as a balancing force in the world nature.

The voice in the poetic persona refusing to be deceived by orthodox religious belief admits that the trees despite their process of renewal are vulnerable to time. An analogy between the trees and the human beings, therefore, may be drawn to this tune that mortality is common between them: “Is it that they are born again / And we grow old? No, they die too.” The imprint of age of the trees is invariably recorded by the
number of rings, which they _cannot_ obliterate inside their trunk. But what they can do positively is to evolve a yearly “trick” so that they can remain unaffected by the pressure of growing age and present themselves fascinatingly fresh in look: “Their yearly trick of looking new / Is written down in rings of grain.”

The ambiguity that adds both strength and beauty to “The Trees” expands itself in the final stanza with the towering majesty. The contesting voices that grow out of the speaker in terms of his study made on the trees reaffirm paradoxically the coexistence of death and rebirth in the cycle of nature. But what is unique of the trees is that they stand as solid as castles in their acquired indifference to the knowledge of mortality. This generates extraordinary vigour in them and inspires them to look wonderfully afresh ignoring the threat of death of the previous year:

Yet still the unresting castles thresh
In fullgrown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Being afresh, afresh, afresh.

(CP, 166)

The term “thresh” evokes ambivalence effectively. Violence is necessary for beating the grains or seeds out of the fruits of the tress, but the seeds coming out of threshing at the end of a season like spring as indicated by May here become instrumental in generating the new trees. The repetition of “afresh” thrice confirms lyrically the power of rejuvenation in nature which may be termed as “Celestial recurrences” (“Forget What Did” _HW_). As an analogy has been drawn between trees and human
beings in the second stanza, a suggestion may be constructed to this effect that man should learn the "trick" of looking "afresh" from nature.

The validity of the beautifully restorative world of nature that refuses to surrender to the vulnerable time is fiercely challenged in "Going, Going" (1972 *HW*), as the poetic persona feels, by the rapidly industrialized society at the cost of nature. The coexistence in the voices of bitterness and sentimentality, outspokenness and romanticism, "sadness and impatience", grim realism and tender nostalgia gives the poetic persona magnificently constructed ironic complexity in his structure of reflections embedded basically in the commercially and industrially vitiated social spectrum of the modern world.

The poetic persona who views "human environment as measuring society's level of culture and its quality of daily experience"76 is assured by his voice of romantic idealism that the "money boys and the money girl"77 of the world of commerce and industry will have some good sense to protect nature:

I thought it would last my time –
The sense that, beyond the town,
There would always be fields and farms,
Where the village louts could climb
Such trees as were not cut down;

(*CP*, 189)
The speaker sincerely believes that the greed of the commercial barons will not come to its full circle considering the importance of balance between industry and nature. The voice of realism in the poetic persona counters the voice of idealism to articulate the grim fact that “industrial vandalism” and the attendant erosion in social and cultural ideals have gathered an enormous strength to destroy the age-old equipoise that has so far kept the greed of the “moneyboys” in check to conserve plants, water and other components of nature which are unavoidably essential for life to flourish on earth biologically, socially and culturally. The poetic persona in “The Whitsun Weddings,” an earlier poem by Larkin, has registered his voice of concern at the contamination of water in the rapidly industrialized society: “Canals with floatings of industrial froth.” Now, the voice of indignation emerging out of the poetic persona in “Going, Going” grows bitter at the unbridled commercial and industrial vandalism committed on nature: “Chuck filth in the sea, if you must:/ The tides will be clean beyond.” The voice coming to terms with the real situation of the age makes the speaker realize the demands of the culturally degenerated generation showing no interest in the conservation of the ecological balance for the all-out expansion of the material imperialism:

The crowd
Is young in the M1 café;
Their kids are screaming for more –
More houses, more parking allowed,
More caravan sites, more pay.

(CP, 189)
Mr. Fennel in Larkin’s second novel *A Girl in Winter* (1947) has expressed the same concern about nature to accelerate the process of urbanization in England: “But it’s the same all over England – good arable land being turned into pasture, pasture turning into housing estates. It’ll be the ruin of us.” 78 Anyway, the nucleus of stimulus of these people described as the “crowd” is obviously not any creative activity promoting in them a cultural bent of mind required for constructing a world with a human face; their sole interest remains confined to the exciting information on the world of trade and commerce with which they have turned themselves to expand their profit-escalating empires. A score of “spectacled grins” remain glued to the “Business Page.” The voice of banter in the poetic persona at the rapidly deteriorated state of culture ventilates its reaction by way of allowing “the venomous caricature” to strike at. Stan Smith is arguably justified when he observes that Larkin’s poetry is valuable as “a symptomatic document of cultural decline.” 79

The voice which accommodates banter and bitterness, panic and sadness records the speaker’s deeply-rooted concern about the horrific expansion of the “material” devouring nature, imagination, moral and aesthetic values:

That before I snuff it, the whole
Boiling will be bricked in
Except for the tourist parts –
First slum of Europe: a role
It won’t be so hard to win,
With a cast of crooks and torts.

*(CP, 190)*
It is not merely the voice of bitterness articulated at the demolition of cohesive life in England at social, moral and cultural levels; the voice registering implicitly the speaker's anguish and sadness cannot be ignored.

The voice of anger in the speaker demonstrates a "crack" in it in the sense that the elegiac voice lamenting nostalgically the passing of old rural England with all its glories both in nature and architecture makes its presence poignantly felt:

There'll be books; it will linger on
In galleries; but all that remains
For us will be concrete and tyres.

(CP, 190)

Larkin's anxiety about the crisis of the mechanical civilization as registered in "Going, Going" seems to be a resonance from Lawrence's novel Lady Chatterley's Lover:

This is history. One England blots out another. The mines had made the halls wealthy. Now they were blotting them out, as they had already blotted out the cottages. The industrial England blots out the agricultural England. One meaning blots out another. The new England blots out the old England. And the continuity
"Going, Going" is not exclusively a poem of bitter resentment; the poem is more than that as something positive lurks in the apprehension that the "greed" which is as infectious as "garbage" will soon devour the green of nature and the values of the traditional culture. The voice of protest in the poetic persona, however strong it may be, cannot deny the emergence of the voice of expectation. True, the speaker grows ruthlessly vocal in his bitter attack on commercial as well as industrial vandalism; but the implicit mission of the speaker should not be overlooked. He wishes sincerely to conserve old natural scenario and cultural values as far as possible in the industrially dictated world. Thus, "Going, Going" accommodates not a single view; instead, it allows heterogeneous ideas as exhibited by the clashing voices to interact with each other without minimizing the importance of any of the voices.

The statement released in the concluding line of "A Study of Reading Habits" (1960 TWW) that "Books are a load of crap" is ostensibly shocking in the sense that the line comes obviously from a poet-librarian. Significantly, the speaker who airs his views on the effect of studying a particular type of books is not the poet himself but the persona constructed to serve the irreconcilably conflicting attitudes in an objective manner. The speaker who has now reached the middle age records how in the days of boyhood and adolescence he felt the excitement of sexual imagination when he developed the habit of reading juvenile fiction, or, more precisely speaking, pornography;

When getting my nose in a book
Cured most things short of school,
It was worth ruining my eyes
To know I could still keep cool,
And deal out the old right hook
To dirty dogs twice my size.

*(CP, 131)*

It was not the school books but the juvenile fiction stuffed with the out-of-reach events in real life performed by the supermen gave the boy-speaker the stimulus and offered him imaginative support to fight out the villains or "dirty dogs" in encounters soaked in sexual excitement, keeping his cool. The voice of excitement as emerging out of the speaker as a boy is, however, subdued by the voice apprehensive of the consequences of such a reading habit of books made of fantasies, entirely detached from normal events in real life. This is brilliantly indicated by the expression: "worth ruining my eyes." What is important to note is that Larkin in this poem, as also in other poems, has magnificently exploited the command of idiom appropriate for the different voices. The language in the poem is mostly inflated in tonal character smacking of juvenile romances. The phrases such as "dirty dogs" in the first stanza, "The women" "clubbed with sex" and breaking "them like meringues" in the second stanza and "the dude/ Who lets the girl down" in the final stanza attest to the concept categorically. The vehicle matches the tenor.

The continuation of the reading of the cheap and vulgar romances sharpens the sexual insecurity of the poetic persona in his adolescent stage ministering to his gratification of sex in the world of fantasy:
Later, with inch-thick specs,
Evil was just my lark,
Me and my cloak and fangs
Had ripping times in the dark.
The women I clubbed with sex!
I broke them up like meringues.

(CP, 130)

A note of ambiguity, however, may be discerned in the adolescent speaker’s attitude to satisfaction of fantasizing about sex. The gratification of sex achieved by the villainous brutality is apparent when the speaker describes his experience in the world of fantasy: “The women I clubbed with sex! / I broke them up like meringues.” The act of clubbing and breaking pinpoints the beastly and sadistic violence the speaker wanted to commit in imagination towards the fair sex. The voice of gratification in the speaker is offset by his voice of sanity which defines the indulgence in sexual violence in an unreal world as evil: “Evil was just my luck.”

The speaker who has now reached middle age is struck by the voice of disenchantment advising him not to read much the fiction creating illusion out of the events seeming “far too familiar”:

Don’t read much now: the dude
Who lets the girl down before
The hero arrives, the chap
Who's yellow and keeps the store,

Seem far too familiar.

(\textit{CP, 131})

The speaker through his frustratingly accumulated knowledge now feels without an iota of illusion that his identification with the heroes or even with the villains in the fiction does not at all relate to reality. His self-assessment in terms of real situation in life makes him admit that he can at best be a "dude/ Who lets the girl down before / The hero arrives" or a store-keeper infected with awful cowardice. The juvenile romances purveying to ordinary men larger-than-life pictures provide them with an enchanted escape from the stark reality. They cater, pander to low taste, and, even more than that they hold a distorted mirror before the readers. The speaker's admission of failures caused by developing a reading habit of the sexually adventurous fiction produces in him "explosive imprecation"\textsuperscript{81}: "Gets stewed: /Books are a load crap." The voice of authority constructed out of the inflated concept of life in juvenile romance is subverted by the voice of irony emerging out of the concluding line of the poem. The books which deceive the people into believing something unreal as real are dismissed as rubbish. The judgement on books as passed by the speaker is shockingly anti-intellectual and partial and, hence, ambivalent. The speaker who at last grows mature in the context of social and moral values exposes the falseness of the books of juvenile fiction. A close reading of the context in which the statement is released by the speaker obviously reveals the truth that the value of the books in general is not questioned. The ostensible irony embedded in the final line of the poem is meant for juxtaposition of the opposites — the books creating misleading illusions are rejected explicitly, and at the same time, the books presenting
truth are welcome implicitly. "A Study of Reading Habits" may be considered as a social discourse where the reading habits of books particularly by the ordinary people are studied from the sociological perspective.

The world of "Posterity" (1968 THW) is magnificently dominated by paradoxes which register the truth acquired through experiences at grass roots of life that a particular view appearing to be final is unavoidably challenged by the opposite view to achieve an equilibrium. In the poem an Englishman's ironic insight is set in collision with an American's unguarded candour with a purpose of defining their identities for the proper understanding of their apparently contradictory characters.

A sense of seeming hostility or contempt by the poetic persona right at the outset of the poem towards the young American university teacher, Jake Balokowsky, who is desperate to complete his research work for material security, serves to create tension:

Jake Balokowsky, my biographer,
Has this page microfilmed. Sitting inside
His air-conditioned cell at Kennedy
In jeans and sneakers, he's no call to hide
Some slight impatience with his destiny:

(CP, 170)

The name of the biographer itself evokes a sense of repulsion. Moreover, the academic appearing in "jeans and sneakers" gives the impression that he looks more
like a dandy than a scholar. The speaker grows tense as he is almost sure that such an academic is incompetent to do justice to his life and work. The voice of unsympathetic disgust in the speaker demonstrating the comicality about the American scholar appears to be justified when the academic himself does not conceal his motive for working on the life of a poet he despises for his uninteresting life and dated beliefs: “I’m stuck with this old fart at least a year;” “It’s stinking dead, the research line: / Just let me put this bastard on the skids, / I’ll get a couple of semesters leave / To work on Protest Theater.” The voice coming out of the American scholar indicates his embarrassment at his selection of topic in research which is prompted not by respect for the poet but by the material gain only at the cost of academic honesty.82 Ironically enough, he shares the idiosyncrasies of the poet presented as the persona in the poem by way of carrying on the academic project on him:

‘What’s he like?

Christ, I just told you. Oh, you know the thing,

That crummy textbook stuff from Freshman Psych,

Not out of kicks or something happening –

One of those old-type natural fouled-up guys;

(CP, 170)

The abusive language as used by the characters or speakers or personae in Larkin’s poems has achieved carnivalesque effect. True, such language shocks, but at the same time it serves to reveal the unpleasant truth about man in various contexts. The voice of the scholar emerging out of his assessment of the poet he is working on academically sounds paradoxical. He in spite of defining the works of the poet as
miserably and ignominiously insignificant, resolves to exhibit importance to the poet by completing his project only for material stability.

The poetic persona and the university scholar, despite their pronounced mistrust of each other, are caught into paradoxes unaware. “They are both”, as Andrew Motion has inimitably analysed, “in Balokowsky’s reductively crude phrase, ‘old-type natural fouled-up guys’ – Larkin by his own admission in a large number of other poems, and Balokowsky as a result of ‘Some slight impatience with his destiny’.”83 Their irreparable frustrations are rooted not in “kicks or something happening” but in their very boringly mundane existence and the subsequent compulsions in which they are inevitably trapped. The parallel between the persona and the university teacher may also be discerned strikingly and ironically as well in their aspirations and the consequences they achieve. They both experience the dichotomy between the romantic or “out of reach” longings and the pragmatically-oriented requirements. Balokowsky’s ambition of teaching “school in Tel Aviv” was baffled by the mounting financial pressure imposed upon him by his wife and children for the comfort and the security of the family at the cost of his career:

I wanted to teach school in Tel Aviv,

But Myra’s folks – he makes the money sign –

‘Insisted I got tenure. When there’s kids –’

*(CP, 170)*
The poetic persona suffers the same fate as he fails to reach as a poet the height of excellence. The significant limitations of his poetry are justly pointed out by the scholar who despite his pronounced reservation for the poet speaks out the truth.

The uninhibited American diction dominating largely the poem and the words conveying "Englishman’s periphrastic irony" are the very components, as perceived by Andrew Swarbrick, for the construction of conflicting points of view expressed by the two vocal characters in the poem. Swarbrick observes: “Bakhtin’s remarks ask us to focus on Larkin’s rhetoric, on the ways in which his poems construct themselves as speech – acts in order to persuade the reader one point of view or another.” The very identities of Balokowsky and the poetic persona are defined only when their relationship with “otherness” comes under scrutiny.

The dialogic interactions between the stern realism and the mellow romanticism construct magnificently the contesting voices in “Here” (1961 TWW), another poem “about a journey on a train”. The journey in the poem has double implications. It is a real journey across the rural landscapes and urban scenes of contemporary England; the journey is also, metaphorically speaking, a flight in imagination from the gross materialism of modern life towards a “vision” of boundless freedom and solitariness in a state of “unfenced existence.”

The voices in the poetic persona reveal wonder at the sight of the refreshing landscapes in the countryside and disgust generated by the monotony of the commercial activities in an industrialized town as “glimpsed” from the window of a
train in motion. "Swerving east, from rich industrial shadows / And traffic all night north; swerving through fields" and "swerving too solitude," the poetic persona journeys along the contrasting scenes of town and village. The repetition of the present participle "swerving" is suggestive of the motion in the journey. The expression "rich industrial shadows" is ironic in its implications. The industrial expansion is "rich" in terms of material prosperity; but the use of term "shadows" may at the same time suggest something sinister about the rapid industrialization of the urban society. The voice in the poetic persona feels excited at the sight of the beauty of nature in countryside, unaffected by the pollution of machine. The solitude of "skies and scarecrows, haystacks, hares and pheasants," and the "widening river," and the "piled gold clouds, the shining gull-marked mud" constitutes the "essential beauty" or aesthetics of life. The voice of concern makes its presence felt when the narrator glimpses a "large town" where the commercial culture reduces beauty and imagination:

Here domes and statues, spires and cranes cluster
Beside grain-scattered streets, barge-crowded water,
And residents from raw estates, brought down
The dead straight miles by stealing flat-faced trolleys,
Push through plate-glass swing doors to their desires
Cheap suits, red kitchen-ware, sharp shoes, iced lollies,
Electric mixers, Toasters, washers, driers--

A cut-price crowd, urban yet simple,

(CP, 136)
This is enticing world of “desires” for a “cut-price crowd” wasting their energies and resources for artificial comfort. The juxtaposition of the articles like “sharp shoes” and “iced lollies” is odd and suggestive of the confusion in the people “urban yet simple”. Again, a note of contradiction may be struck in the character of the people; they are urban, but they are not fully complex in their approach to life. That is why they are confused in the order of preference of the articles they desire to purchase.

The phrase “stealing flat-faced trolleys” is Larkinesque in its ambivalence. Literally it does not mean “theft”, but metaphorically it suggests the very baseness of a thief. The trolleys are “enticing, seducing people to the stores” 86 of commercial trap. A contrast, however, is achieved as the focus now shifts from the domain of trade and commerce to the world of nature, symbolizing a “pastoral paradise” in solitude:

A cut-price crowd, urban yet simple, dwelling
Where only salesmen and relations come
Within a terminate and fishy-smelling
Pastoral of ships up streets, the slave museum,
Tattoo-shops, consulates, grim head-scarfed wives;
And out beyond its mortgaged half-built edges
Fast-shadowed wheat-fields, running high as hedges,

(CP, 136)

Swarbrick is perspicacious in his observation that “the slave museum” is both a historical monument and a quietly ironic reminder that in their own way ‘grim head-
scarfed wives’ are themselves ‘slaves’ to a life-style they never chose.”87 The voice of concern is followed by the voice of liberation which has already manifested itself gloriously in the ‘Fast-shadowed wheat fields, running high as hedges’:

Isolate villages, where removed lives

Loneliness clarifies, Here silence stands
Like heat. Here leaves unnoticed thicken,
Hidden weeds flower, neglected waters quicken,
Luminously-peopled air ascends;
And past the poppies bluish neutral distance
Ends the land suddenly beyond a beach
Of shapes and shingle. Here is unfenced existence:
Facing the sun, untalkative, out of reach.

(CP, 136 – 137)

The desire for an existence immersed in “loneliness” or “solitude” is traditionally romantic. Wordsworth in “Tintern Abbey” has defended such a life of “solitude” in “green pastoral landscape” which remains far from the “dreary intercourse of daily life”. Larkin, however, has no interest in the matter related to spiritual development of man in “solitude” as interpreted by Wordsworth in his poetry. Anyway, in Larkin the romantic expanse of isolation in nature has symbolic resonances. Loneliness, paradoxically enough, is not cold, it is warmly regenerative – “Here silence stands / Like heat,” The word of prime significance here is “heat” which gives us the impression that silence has after all the potentiality in shaping man’s life towards a state of creativity. The adjectives “unnoticed,” “Hidden” and “neglected” convey
negative sense; they are contrasted with the verbs "thicken," "flower" and "quicken", suggesting a sense of growth. The device of opposites reaffirms the growth in the objects of nature such as "leaves," "weeds" and "waters." The phrase "Luminously-peopled air ascends" has double meanings. It suggests the abundance of light in the air. Moreover, the expression, according too Swarbrick, is almost a "paradox" as "it is in states of solitariness that we become vividly aware of other almost ghostly presences of non-human life and the lives lived by generations before us." The romantic voice in the persona tries to convey the truth that peace can be felt only in the isolation of nature, not in the commercially vitiated noisy life. The journey which ends at the sea-beach suggests paradoxically its endlessness: "And past the poppies bluish neutral distance/ Ends the land suddenly beyond a beach / Of shapes and shingle." The poetic persona, who feels inspired by the endlessness of the sea before him, unfolds his vision of ideal freedom beyond land and human habitation: "Here is unfenced existence:/ Facing the sun, untalkative, out of reach." The "unfenced existence" is the creation of romantic imagination; the endlessness of the sky and the sea makes the existence "unfenced". "It is untalkative" because of its uninterrupted silence. The final phrase, "has an arresting ambiguity." The existence, as conceived by the poetic persona, remains "out of reach" of the people entrapped in gross materialistic comfort, it is also beyond the reach of the persona. "It is both 'Here' and nowhere, and attainable only in imagination, not in fact." It may in its "neutral distance" also suggest the unavoidable vacancy of death.

"Wants" (1950 XX, TLD), an earlier poem by Larkin, anticipates the voice of liberation as revealed in "Here". This short poem of ten lines has lyrically presented
the contending voices, registering the necessity of social and biological commitments, on the one hand, and the urge for freedom from the prison of such commitments, on the other. "Wants" differs from other poems of Larkin as it is only in this poem that a "desire of oblivion" has taken precedence over a "romantic death." The "desire of oblivion," however, is no less romantic. In fact, the poem may be viewed as a space where a clash is recorded between man's prosaic and sexual obligations and his inherent romantic inclination to disclaim them.

The syntax in the poem brings out the lassitude in the speaker. The two refrains ("Beyond all this the wish to be alone:" and "Beneath it all, the desire of oblivion runs") composed in the "sluggish iambic pentameter" capture effectively the monotony. The repetition of the adverb "However" in the beginning of the second, third and fourth lines of the first stanza and the parallelism achieved in the structure of both the stanzas convey the impression of exhaustion and frustration. The tension in the poem is generated by the divided "selves" of the poetic persona.

In the first stanza one self of the speaker upholds the necessity of the mechanisms giving importance to the shared identity which is evolved in the domains of social engagements ("invitation cards") and family life ("the family is photographed under the flagstaff"). The "printed directions of sex," however, as Steve Clark feels, challenge "outright any lingering assumption that sex must necessarily be good for us, where we must find our happiness or not at all." Another self notices futility in all these and wishes to be alone:

Beyond all this, the wish to be alone:

However the sky grows dark with invitation-cards
However we follow the printed directions of sex

However the family is photographed under the flagstaff—

Beyond all this, the wish to be alone.

(CP, 42)

The mechanical social and biological demands which are heavily cramping and threatening are contrasted with the solitude or seclusion promising release from the oppressions referred to.

The second stanza demonstrates the tussle between the two voices – one, though tense, cannot refuse to recognize the mechanisms of time, and the other, intent on keeping perpetual distance from the tensions, wishes a refuge in the oblivion:

Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs:

Despite the artful tensions of the calendar,

The life insurance, the tabled fertility rites,

The costly aversion of the eyes from death—

Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs.

(CP, 42)

The mechanisms of time make one voice of the speaker turn away from the thought of death and urge him not to be tense in the passage of time as recorded in calendar; instead, the speaker should best utilize the benefits of insurance and the comforts of marriage ("the tabled fertility rites"). The other voice refuses to be deceived by the promises offered by the mechanisms of time; the only way to resolve this crisis is the desire of oblivion. The phrase "life insurance" is ironic; life of an individual cannot be
offered guarantee under the scheme; what can be guaranteed is death. Thus the promise contained in life insurance is a "lie". "Wants" is a memorable poem of ambiguity. The mechanisms of social and sexual obligations and the plans intended for security in the critical hours cannot fully guarantee happiness; while the desire of oblivion can be achieved not in real life but in imagination.

"At Grass" (1950 XX, TLD) is more than a "fusion of sunshine, empire and Edwardian nostalgia;" it is a poem of opposing voices in terms of space and time as evident in the analysis made by the visitor on two race-horses in their retirement. "Spatial distance," according to Stan smith, "places the observer in a secure frame":

The eye can hardly pick them out
From the cold shade they shelter in,
Till wind distresses tail and mane;
Then one crops grass, and moves about
~ The other seeming to look on~
And stands anonymous again.

(CP, 29)

The description of the horses by the visitor produces in him the opposing voices of harsh realism in the present and of dreamy nostalgia of the past. The landscape in which they are presented now is an actual place. The richly suggestive language depicts wonderfully the conditions of the horses. The effect of the passage of time can be noticed strongly on the two retired race-horses; they are so changed and turned
inactive that “The eye can hardly pick them out.” They have lost their individual identities and are reduced to the state of anonymity. That is why they are described imprecisely as “them.” The expression, “wind distresses tail and mane,” has dual implications. They are troubled physically by the wind blowing; they are at the same time agitated within by the thought with reference to their glorious past. This is distressing as they know that they cannot relive the past. As the horses now accept the reality that the days of glory on the turf can by no means be revived, “one crops grass and moves about” and the “other seeming to look on,” forgetting their individual identities. They now stand “anonymous again” because they are completely divorced from the excitement of the race-course. The phrasal verb “moves about” is ironic in its connotation; the horses in spite of their physical movement remain static in place and time in terms of their destiny.

The observer, with his “spatial” and “temporal distance” as well, recreates in imagination in the second and third stanzas the days of glories of the two horses on the race-course; they “were ‘picked out’ both by binoculars and by fame.”

Yet fifteen years ago, perhaps
Two dozen distances sufficed
To fable them; faint afternoons
Of cups and Stakes and Handicaps,
Whereby their names were artificed
To inlay faded, classic Junes –

Silks at the start: against the sky
Numbers and parasols: outside,
Squadrons of empty cars, and heat,
And littered grass: then the long cry
Hanging unhushed till it subside
To stop-press columns on the street.

(CP, 29)

The identities of the two race-horses could definitely be ascertained in the second and third stanzas where these animals were “fabled.” The use of the words like “faint” “faded” and “subside,” however, metaphorically questions the stability of their popularity or fame in the folk-memory of the “classic June.” David lodge appreciates Larkin for his extraordinary application of the metonymic strategy in evoking “the past glories of the race-horses” particularly in the third stanza. The rapidity of excitement in the race is demonstrated by the use of the phrases cut short by colons such as ‘silks at the start:’ etc.

The trip down memory lane ends with the third stanza and the present scene in the “cold shade” returns in the fourth stanza and continues in the fifth or final stanza. The stanza begins with a simile in which the burden of nostalgia seems to be exposed: “Do memories plague their ears like flies”? The simile showing the odd combination of the abstract idea (“memories”) and the animate object (“flies”) is loaded with grave implications. The way the horses shake their heads indicate that the past glories cannot produce in the them “unwelcome annoyance.” But the very question raised with the support of the simile implies that the horses were plagued by memories like flies immediately after their retirement. The detachment of long fifteen years from the turf and the close attachment to nature have made them feel the bliss of solitude in the
“unmolesting meadows.” What is significant to note in this context is that the days of hectic activities leading to spectacular success on the race-course cannot be blotted out totally. The experiences as embedded in the “days” have made the horses realize the importance of joy in resignation and the state of being free from competition: “And not a fieldglass sees them home, / Or curious stop-watch prophesies.” Now they gallop not for the excitement of proving their superiority on the molested grass but for sheer joy of freedom in the solitude of virgin nature. Their illustrious identities remain recorded in the past (“Almanacked”); they are now content to be anonymous (“Have slipped their names”). The concluding lines, however, register a note of ambivalence in the context of joy in unplagued freedom:

Only the groom, and the groom’s boy,
With bridles in the evening come.

(CP, 30)

The horses submit to the groom and the groom’s boy coming with bridles at the approach of the evening. These two human beings and the instruments (“bridles”) they use in controlling or taming the horses have symbolic resonance. They stand for death; while the bridles are meant for putting an end to the unbridled freedom the horses are enjoying in their retirement. In short, the joy of freedom is threatened by the inevitability of death.

Larkin’s argument with commercial culture is sensibly articulated in “The Large Cool Store” (1961 TWW). Larkin has constructed in this poem a persona who in course of offering his analysis on the display of clothes in the two sections of a
supermarket is caught indecisively by his contending voices of quotidian reality and unattainable fantasy.

The first section of the supermarket as described in the poem caters for the working class people struggling for survival:

The large cool store selling cheap clothes
Set out in simple sizes plainly
(Knitwear, Summer Casuals, Hose,
In browns and greys, maroon and navy)
Conjures the weekday world of those

Who leave at dawn low terraced houses
Timed for factory, yard and site.

(CP, 135)

The adjectives “cheap” and “simple” and the dull colours like “browns and greys, maroon and navy” summon up the practical requirement of the shift-workers who are awfully busy with their “toad” of labour in factories, yard and site. The “low terraced houses” they leave at dawn for the daily grind of work are demonstrative of the banality of their life which invariably matches with their necessity of cheap clothes heaped in the supermart.

Beyond this demonstrative ordinariness in the first section of the supermarket, a world of dream and magic is conjured up in the second section through the exciting
display of women's nightdress "which Larkin's language elevates to an almost ethereal status." 96

But past the heaps of shirts and trousers
Spread the stands of Modes for Night:
Machine-embroidered thin as blouses,

Lemon, sapphire, moss-green, rose
Bri-Nylon Baby Dolls and Shorties
Flounce in clusters.

(CP, 135)

The "heaps of shirts and trousers" are contrasted effectively with "Modes for Night" both in colour and in art of display. "Modes for Night" is a tricky phrase evolved by the advertisers as a part of the sale-strategy to entice the male customers into the world of illusion. Women's nightdresses are not heaped, they "Spread" the stands like "flowers in bloom" in their exotic colours such as "Lemon, sapphire, moss-green" and obviously "rose". The sparkling colours which are sexually evocative seem to give the impression that they are too precious for "the weekday world." The image they are supposed to call up is unearthly and "out of reach." That is why they are irresistibly alluring for the male customers who are sick of the banalities of life. The image of the women the nightwears conjure up artfully has nothing to do with the drab world of the working class people. The nightdresses are meant for representing the ethereal or fairy-like images in the brand-names such as "Baby Dolls."
The fairy-like girls as represented in the nightwears seem to be “unreal wishes” of the young men who burn with the desire of reaching a world where they can meet and win their ideal women of perfect beauty:

To suppose

They share that world, to think their sort is

Matched by something in it, shows

How separate and unearthly love is,

Or women are, or what they do,

Or in our young unreal wishes

Seem to be: synthetic, new,

And natureless in ecstasies.

(CP, 135)

The words of prime focus here are “synthetic” and “natureless.” They are indicative of the untruth that underlies the dreamy world of women as constructed by the manipulative advertisers. The term “synthetic” suggests that the image of womanhood as evoked by the “Modes for Night” is utterly false; while “natureless” implies that the vision of women as represented in the sexually provocative garments is estranged from truth and reality. Such women exist not in reality but in imagination “The Large Cool Store” presents the coexistence of the two worlds of contradiction – actual and imaginary. The significance of one world can be defined only with reference to the other.
“Sunny Prestatyn” (1962 TWW) is another remarkable poem where the seemingly idealized image evoked by the advertisers stands opposed to the starker reality of life. The voices in the persona are both romantic and ironic, sprightly and bitter. The poem like other poems such as “The Large Cool Store” and “Essential Beauty” (1962 TWW) brings to focus Larkin’s commitment as an artist to expose the evils of commercial culture designed to reduce the human values and aesthetics.

“Sunny Prestatyn,” according to Steve Clark, is an “opposition between purchased fantasy and actual world.” The poster girl in the first stanza of the poem is a shrewd and scintillating device by the advertising world to attract the tourists to Prestatyn, a coastal resort in Welsh:

*Come to Sunny Prestatyn*

Laughed the girl on the poster,
Kneeling up on the sand
In tautened white satin.
Behind her, a hunk of coast, a
Hotel with palms
Seemed to expand from her thighs and
Spread breast-lifting arms.

*(CP 149)*

The commercially designed image provokes eroticism disguised in romanticism to seduce the tourists into the “erotic Eden” where unfulfilled wishes might be satisfied. The girl dressed in “tautened white satin” paradoxically suggests her “virginal purity” as her image does not produce a sense of solemnity or serenity; instead, it provokes in
the viewers the promise of carefree excitement in sex in the coastal resort flooded by the warmth of sun. The way “a hunk of coast” appears to emerge from the thighs of the poster girl reveals the point. This is reinforced when her “breast-lifting arms” are intended to emphasize the irresistible eroticism she can provoke. A “hunk” is a slang meaning a physically “attractive man;” the term by “extension” may be used as a “sexual reference.” The phrase “a hunk of coast” implies male freedom in sexual gratification in the coastal resort; the girl on the poster “Kneeling up” (or submitting) confirms the view symbolically. The poster girl is drawn in hyperbolic terms; the hotels under the shade of palms, the golden sandy beach and the endlessly blue sea and sky look eclipsed by the dazzling sexual appeal of the girl. The girl on the poster stands for an image which seems to guarantee the ideal sexual enjoyment in the romantic setting of the coastal resort.

The image of erotic idealism is subverted in the second stanza and the process continues in the final stanza: “She was slapped up one day in March.” Ironically enough the signs of cruelty bedeck her larger than life image on the poster within a couple of weeks:

And her face

Was snaggle-toothed and boss-eyed;

Huge tits and a fissured crotch

Were scored well in, and space

Between her legs held scrawls

That set her fairly astride

A tuberous cock and balls
Autographed Titch Thomas,

(CP, 149)

The language of excitement with occasional lyrical touch in the opening stanza gives way to that of shocking vulgarity to accelerate the subversion. The breasts of the girl now become "Huge tits," while her "crotch" is "fissured." The language demonstrates effectively the violence of defacement and conveys metaphorically the impression that she has been raped by the disillusioned man who knows that the promised Eden of eroticism remains out of his reach. The poster is an illusion: "She was too good for this life." The defilement of the poster by the graffitist, Titch Thomas, rings a note of ambiguity. Incidentally John Thomas is a slangy phrase meaning the male sexual organ in Lawrence's John Thomas and Lady Jane. The obscenities involved in the violence on the poster offend against taste and shock our sense of refinement; but at the same time our sympathies are directed to the man who indulges in vandalism out of disillusionment and frustration. He realizes that he is bound to be confined to the world of grim reality. By defiling the poster girl Titch Thomas proves his identity and refuses to be deceived by the commercially tricky advertiser. Someone stabbing through the "moustached lips" of the girl's smile punctures in reality the "the inflated dream world" which exists only in imagination:

Someone had used a knife
Or something to stab through
The moustached lips of her smile.
She was too good for this life.

(CP, 149)
The assault on the poster by the defiler seems to suggest that "the glimpse of beauty, paradise" and escape from the mundane world are mockery. The new *Fight Cancer* poster is a remainder of truth – the bleaker reality of life:

Very soon, a great transverse tear
Left only a hand and some blue.
Now *Fight Cancer* is there.

*(CP, 149)*

Some "blue, however, is ambiguous in the context of bleakness; "some blue" (sky) suggests that some hope or promise for the "erotic Eden" cannot utterly be ruled out. The personae or speakers in some of Larkin's poems ("A Study of Reading Habits", for example) appear to be sexually violent on women.

"Annus Mirabilis" (1967 *HW*) is an extraordinarily complex poem where the contesting voices of the persona offer nuances to the interpretations of the poem. The title of the poem is borrowed from Dryden's poem "Annus Mirabilis." "Annus Mirabilis" is a Latin phrase meaning "Year of Wonders." Dryden's poem published in 1667 ascribes special significance to the year that witnessed "the victory of the English over the Dutch and the Fire of London." Larkin's title which is used to "pinpoint" 1963 as a year of victory in terms of liberation achieved in sexual enjoyment has ironic implications.
The persona, while welcoming the sexual liberation in the “Swinging Sixties” is disturbed “wryly and humorously”\textsuperscript{100} by the voice of envy in him:

Sexual intercourse began
In nineteen sixty-three
(Which was rather late for me) –
Between the end of the \textit{Chatterley} ban
And the Beatles’ first L P.

\textit{(CP, 167)}

The statement, “sexual intercourse began / In nineteen sixty-three,” sounds absurd. The real meaning that emerges out of the apparent absurdity is that “a change in the social structure and the advent of contraceptives”\textsuperscript{101} have brought revolutionary freedom in the sexual relations at the pre-marital stage in the “Swinging Sixties.” The references to \textit{Lady Chatterley’s Lover} and the long-playing records by the Beatles are suggestive of the physical and emotional excitement in the freedom of sex. The concept of the celebration of liberation in sex is made clear in the second stanza where it is mentioned that before sixties “A wrangle for a ring” was a natural phenomenon. The voice in the middle-aged bachelor welcoming the revolution in sexual relations is ironically undercut by the voice of envy which is recorded in parenthesis: “(which was rather late for me).” This reservation is repeated almost as a refrain with some modification of words in the fourth or final stanza: “(Though just late for me)”.
"Annus Mirabilis" may be viewed as a space where voices approving and growing sceptic of the revolution meet and clash indeterminately. The pre-marital sexual relations before the miracle of the 1960s were awfully predominated by bargaining, wrangling and shame:

Up till then there'd only been
A sort of bargaining,
A wrangle for a ring,
A shame that started at sixteen
And spread to everything.

(CP, 167)

The fear of stigma in the domain of free sex no longer threatens the people socially and morally since sixties:

Then all at once the quarrel sank:
Everyone felt the same,
And every life became
A brilliant breaking of the bank,
A quite unlosable game.

(CP, 167)

The irony that underlies the poem is that the poetic persona is not fully convinced of the advantage promised in free sex. The advantages are highlighted hyperbolically. The impression that life in the new situation is fantastically a “quite unlosable game” in terms of free sex is false and, hence, parodic. The speaker himself remains an
outsider; the “moral restraint” of the older generations prevents him from sharing the
fruits of the miracle. Paradoxically enough, the speaker, however, welcomes the
revolution of sex impersonally:

So life was never better than
In nineteen sixty-three
(Though just too late for me) –
Between the end of the Chatterley ban
And the Beatles’ first L.P.

(CP, 167)

The withdrawal of the ban on Lady Chatterley’s Lover and the phenomenal success of
the Beatles are evocative of the bliss in sexual freedom. While the speaker admires
the liberation of sex in the sixties, his tone rings something hyperbolic, ironic and
sceptic. The liberation is viewed not as an unmixed blessing. Janice Rossen is brilliant
when she points out the contradictions in the poem: “…the tone of the entire poem is
a puzzling mixture of sincerity and irony.”

“High Windows” (1967 HW) accommodates the conflicting voices on the
issues of sex, religion and freedom. The focus in the poem shifts from the mundane
world to the endlessness of the deep blue; while the language shows an odd
combination of obscenity and elevation in tune with varying moods of the persona.
The voice promising paradise of sexual freedom ensured by the use of contraceptives
is challenged by another voice ironic in tone:
When I see a couple of kids
And guess he’s fucking her and she’s
Taking pills or wearing a diaphragm
I know this is paradise

(CP, 165)

The term “fuck” has been used several times in Lawrence’s novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (“It’s all this cold-hearted fucking that is death and idiocy”. “I don’t want to fuck you at all”. P. 242). “This Be The Verse” (1971 *HW*) is another poem where Larkin has used the term “fuck” ironically: “They fuck you up, your mum and dad. / They may not mean to, but they do.” The coarseness in the language in Larkin’s poem intended to produce deliberately a shocking effect on the culturally sensitive readers. The concept of “paradise” is paradoxical; sex without reference to emotional attachment or involvement and support of love is the opposite of paradise. The promise of endless happiness ignoring the values as encapsulated in the traditionally honoured human relationships rings an ironic tone:

Everyone old has dreamed of all their lives –
Bonds and gestures pushed to one side
Like an outdated combine harvester,
And everyone young going down the long slide

To happiness, endlessly.

(CP, 165)
The image of "an outdated combine harvester," now rejected, is indicative of the loss of feelings by the people of the new generation for the social, moral and cultural values which were regarded as important components in life some years back.

The freedom of sex in the young leads the speaker to reflect on the freedom of religion as desired by the generations before his own. The freedom of sex means a state of being free from moral restraint; while freedom in religion suggests "godless independence promised on earth." The voice feeling the religious hegemony has dual implications:

That'll be the life;

No God any more, or sweating in the dark

About hell and that, or having to hide

What you think of the priest.

(CP, 165)

The excitement as generated by the thought of a "life" free from the dictates of religion has something hyperbolic about it; the insignificance of religion has been exaggerated.

Freedom which seems to be desirable both at sexual and religious levels is presented in terms of contradictions. The image of infinity, however, is suggested at the close of the poem where the reflection of the persona takes a dramatic turn from the noisy battle of words to the "thought" of endlessness:
And immediately

Rather than words comes the thought of high windows:
The sun-comprehending glass,
And beyond it, the deep blue air, that shows
Nothing, and is nowhere, and is endless.

(CP, 165)

"The sun-comprehending glass" of Larkin, Andrew Motion in his book Philip Larkin thinks, "recalls Shelley's ‘dome of many-coloured glass' between life and death". The thought sparked off by the image of "High windows" is symbolic in essence. Barbara Everett in her seminal article "Philip Larkin: After symbolism" brilliantly explains Larkin's symbolist strategy and traces the origin of the window image in a poem by the great French symbolist Mallarmé. The thought marks the shift in the device of the poem; it shows a shift from the ironies of colloquial speech to "symbolist intensity." The deep blue beyond the "sun-comprehending glass" of high windows are indicative of the release from the contradictions in human thought on the construction of earthly paradise to the romantically conceived paradise of imagination. The endlessness of the blue sky is a symbol of man's desire for an idealized existence unhindered by failures and tensions in the mundane world. But the presence of the two negatives "Nothing" and "nowhere" is ambivalent in the context of creating an alternative paradise. Therefore, the romantic voice is offset by the voice of bleak realism. The promise of "freedom from specific circumstances" is challenged by the
fear of "extinction" as suggested by the words "Nothing" and "nowhere." A large number of Larkin's poems attest to the impression that the poet has not rejected fully the symbolist strategy which he learned from Yeats.

Larkin's wonderful insight into the polyphonic voices is superbly illustrated in "Vers de Société" (1971 HW). Larkin's experience of writing novels has helped him immensely to manipulate the language of other people with reference to their divided selves or split personalities in the moments of intensity in his poems. The present poem registers inherent dialogicity in the persona's reaction to a social invitation:

My wife and I have asked a crowd of craps
To come and waste their time and ours: perhaps
You'd care to join us? In a pig's arse, friend.
Day comes to an end.
The gas fire breathes, the trees are darkly swayed,
And so Dear Warlock-Williams: I'm afraid –

(CP, 181)

The expression "The gas fire breathes" is an echo from Larkin's earlier poem "Best Society" (1951?): "Viciously, then, I lock my door. / The gas-fire breathes." The invitation to a party demands from the invitee a decision out of two opposites – solitariness and sociability. The text of the invitation shows the oscillation between two extremes as evoked by the dubious intention of the host. The text prepared by the friend tends to be both social and anti-social. It is intended to welcome the speaker to a social gathering. But at the same time it seems to discourage him from joining in it
by way of defining the worthlessness of the invitees as "a crowd of craps." The "formality of the social invitation" is inimitably "synchronised with its opposite idiom." The text of the invitation is like a double-edged sword; the contempt directed towards "a crowd of craps" does not ironically spare the host and the speaker. The coexistence of the "colloquial discourse" and the "rhymed couplets" adds intensity to the ironic design of the poem. The speaker's reaction to the invitation is shockingly savage, and, hence, lacks refinement in taste: "In a pig's arse, friend." The ironic voice of the speaker, however, is countered by the voice of helplessness in him at his realization of the loneliness of the approaching old age: "The gas fire breathes, the trees are darkly swayed." The speaker is caught in a dilemma. He knows that the party will obviously be boring; yet he feels tempted to be there to escape the dread of isolation. Now the speaker seems to be less harsh on the usefulness of going to the party: "Dear Warlock-Williams: I'm afraid -." The tonal change proves the point.

True, the speaker prefers his loneliness under a "lamp, hearing the noise of wind / And looking out to see the moon thinned / To an air-sharpened blade," as he knows the meaninglessness in party-going. In any party he usually feels forced to direct his attention to "some bitch / Wh's read nothing but which", ask reluctantly "that ass about his fool research" and waste the evening "With forks and faces." The speaker in spite of being savagely satiric on the social gathering cannot remain fully hostile to it. He acknowledges the boredom involved in the party; but at the same time he cannot ignore its social commitment to reduce to some extent the pangs of alienated existence in man. The "social intercourse is a means of escaping for a while
the dreadful pangs of remorse and despair, and the painful acknowledgement of the encroachment of time.”

And sitting by a lamp more often brings
Not peace, but other things.
Beyond the light stand failure and remorse
Whispering *Dear Warlock-Williams: Why, of course –*

*(CP, 182)*

The coarseness in the initial reaction of invitation to the party is subdued towards the end of the poem; the concluding line reveals a soft compromising tone in the persona. The diction in Larkin’s poem achieves the required balance out of the opposites. The note of hesitation as revealed in the expression “I’m afraid” is offset by the resolution as made clear in the concluding phrase “Why, of course.” The contrary arguments with reference to both social gathering and loneliness are to be accepted and rejected. One voice points out the reasons for not attending the party, while the other voice highlights the necessity of joining in it. Both voices are to be honoured to achieve a balance between them. The social gathering in ”Vers de Société” acts as an excellent symbol of ambiguity. Tom Paulin is of the view that Larkin’s “moon thinned / To an air-sharpened blade” is a “daring echo of Yeats in his visionary tower, a version of Sato’s sword in ‘The Table’.” Paulin quotes Yeats’ poem in support of his argument: “Chaucer had not drawn breath / When it was forged. In Sato’s house, / Curved like new moon luminous, moon-luminous, / It lay five hundred years.”
"The Winter Palace" (1978) was not included in any of the anthologies designed by Larkin himself. The poem illustrates Larkin’s wonderful skill in highlighting the voices locked in indecisive arguments of the opposites with references to age, money and knowledge. The traditional concept that an ageing man should be honoured as a storehouse of knowledge is contradicted by the person: “Most people know more as they get older: / I give all that the cold shoulder.” The speaker’s refusal to load his memory with what he has so far learnt and what may come to him now and after does not appear entirely natural:

I spent my second quarter-century
Losing what I had learnt at university

And refusing to take in what had happened since
Now I know none of the names in the public prints,

And am starting to give offence by forgetting faces
And swearing I’ve never been in certain places.

It will be worth it, if in the end I manage
To blank out whatever it is that is doing the damage.

(CP, 211)

The ageing persona who seems to repudiate knowledge with reference to academic activities and social intercourses is caught in ambiguity. It is not a voice but the voices that essentially emerge out of the persona to indicate tensions in his reflections. David
Lodge quotes Bakhtin in his seminal work *After Bakhtin* to show that no literary discourse is monologic:

It may be

that every single-voiced and nonobjectal discourse is naive and inappropriate to authentic creation. The authentically creative voice can only be a *second* in the discourse. Only the second *voice-pure relation*, can remain nonobjectal to the end and cost no substantial and phenomenal shadow. The writer is a person who knows how to work language while remaining outside of it; he has the gift of indirect speech. 110

The second voice in “The Winter Palace” is not divorced from the first voice. Both the voices are inseparably related to each other. The first voice appears to be firm in keeping the memory blank, refusing to ascribe importance to knowledge in any domain of experience. The second voice is sceptic of the determination demonstrated by the first voice. The phrases and words such as “starting to”, swearing” and “mange” convey lack of confidence and the undercurrent of tension in the speaker.

The speaker’s desire for freedom or oblivion from the oppression of knowledge stored in memory is ironic or ambiguous:

Then there will be nothing I know

My mind will fold into itself, like fields, like snow.

*(CP, 211)*
The withdrawal from the oppression of knowledge ensuring the retirement of mind into freedom of vacant memory is not entirely guaranteed. The syntax of the penultimate line of the poem deserves special attention in this context. The speaker does not say straightway: “Then I will not know anything;” instead, what he says is ambivalent: “Then there will be nothing I know.” The expression “There will be” means something positive; while the word “nothing” clearly indicates something negative. This very juxtaposition of the affirmative and the negative will figure in the speaker’s mind. The concept is clarified by the coexistence of the two contrary images in the concluding line – ”like fields, like snow.” Fields stand for death and oblivion. The mind of the speaker, now free from the oppression of knowledge, will fold itself into the liberty of the expanding fields. The desire for withdrawal is ‘the dominant;’ this other desire for expansive liberation is the ‘marginal’ which subverts ‘the dominant’ The speaker in his new state of existence will savour the joy of freedom unhindered. He will absorb freedom in his entity. The mind of the speaker at the same time may fold itself into snow covering the fields like a blanket. As the speaker is now ageing, the joy of endless freedom may be subverted by the fear of death.

Voices in Larkin fold and unfold, meet and clash, signifying the truth that nothing can be fixed in life where indeterminacy is the norm. The significance of one voice becomes comprehensible only with reference to the other; the concept of “otherness” matters unquestionably in Larkin’s poems. The continual pursuit of differences in Larkin’s poetry is a dialogic approach. The different shades of deception are defined in “Deceptions” (1950 XX, TLD), which is exceptional for the
insight offered by the poetic persona into a horrific incident of rape committed on a girl:

For you hardly care
That you were less deceived, out on that bed,
Then he was, stumbling up the breathless stair
To burst into fulfilment’s desolate attic.

(CP, 32)

The girl drugged and raped in her state of unconsciousness is no doubt deceived not by herself but by the circumstances beyond her control. Yet, if she emotionally feels the stings of deception, she is logically less deceived as the suffering of outrage has been forced upon her; it has never been inherent in her. The rapist, though gratified in the fulfilment of his sexual desire, suffers and is more deceived than the victim. He suffers from the illusion that his carnal desire is satisfied. While the victim is aware of the cause of her suffering or deception, the victimiser remains ironically ignorant of it. Larkin as a poet of distinct individual identity has not interfered with his characters by way of imposing his personal views on them. That is why he has constructed personae in his poems. The selves of the personae and other characters in the poems are in constant negotiations or conversations with each other. The contending voices emerging out of them are presented as negotiating dialogic interactions in terms of language, incidents, occasions, ideas or concepts, opinions or views, values and truth etc. It is through this unceasing process of interactions that the identities of the personae and other characters are evolved with all their diverse nuances.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2 Larkin in a letter to Norman Iles on July 23, 1941 (Selected Letters) appreciated Lawrence’s poem “Snake” as “easily the best poem” (p. 19) in an anthology of animal poems. Larkin turned emotional in defining Lawrence’s impact on him: “I am reading Lawrence daily (like the Bible) with great devotion” (p. 19).


4 While discussing the dialogic nature of Dostoevsky’s work in Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics (trans. C. Emerson, 1984) Bakhtin refers to the term crack: “In every voice he could hear two contesting voices, in every expression a crack” (p. 30).


6 Salem K. Hassan, Philip Larkin and His Contemporaries (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988) 33.


   The “Lawrentian elements” are at work in other poems by Larkin such as “The Whitsun Weddings.” Steve Clark in his essay “‘Get Out As Early As you Can’: Larkin’s Sexual Politics” (Philip Larkin ed. Stephen Regan) has made this observation (p. 125).
9 A. Swarbrick, The Whitsun Weddings and The Less Deceived by Philip Larkin, 24.


11 A. Swarbrick, The Whitsun Weddings and The Less Deceived by Philip Larkin, 24.

12 G. Harvey, The Romantic Tradition in Modern English Poetry, 106.

13 qtd. in A. Motion, Philip Larkin: A Writer’s Life, 287.

14 qtd. in A. Motion, Philip Larkin: A Writer’s Life, 287.

15 A. Motion, Philip Larkin: A Writer’s Life, 288.

16 A. Swarbrick, The Whitsun Weddings and The Less Deceived by Philip Larkin, 51.


19 A. Motion, Philip Larkin: A Writers Life, 289.


21 Andrew Motion describes the background of writing “An Arundel Tomb” in Philip Larkin: A Writer’s Life (p273-274).

22 Andrew Motion, Philip Larkin (London: Methuen, 1982) 65.

23 S. Clark, “‘Get Out As Early As You Can’: Larkin’s Sexual Politics,” Philip Larkin, ed S Regan, 128.

24 A. Swarbrick, The Whitsun Weddings and The less Deceived by Philip Larkin, 71.
25 Ibid., 71.


27 Salem K. Hassan in Notes to Chapter 4: *High Windows* in his book *Philip Larkin and His Contemporaries* has magnificently explained Larkin’s use of the word “almost”:

“The words ‘almost’ and its synonym ‘nearly’ are frequent in Larkin’s poetry, for example, ‘Our almost-instinct almost true’ (‘An Arundel Tomb’), ‘it was nearly done’ (‘The Whitsun Weddings’). Both words are used to bring about a quality of incompleteness and imperfection, as well as negation of a given situation’ (p. 194).


30 A. Swarbrick, *The Whitsun Weddings and The Less Deceived by Philip larkin*, 55.


David Timms in his book *Philip Larkin* (Edinbrugh: Oliver and Boyd, 1973) makes a superb analysis of Larkins employment of meter in “Talking in Bed” in the context of disharmony engulfing the souls of the lovers: “The lines in ‘Talking in Bed’ are all recognizably imabic pentmeters with the exception of the last and next last, iambic tetrameter and an imabic trimeter respectively. Almost all the lines have the standard ten syllables, but there is no line that is completely regular” (p. 107).
Roger Day in page 43 of his book Larkin has explained the use of the metaphor "clothe." The metaphor indicates the serious function performed by the church in the days when religion has almost lost its command over humanity.

Salem K. Hassan in Notes to Chapter 4: High Windows in his book Philip Larkin and His Contemporaries argues that both Benson and Larkin share something common in terms of water in religion. Hassan in the Notes (p. 195) quotes Arthur C. Benson. Benson wrote in 1915: "If I could make a religion, I should make water its symbol – so pure and cool, so capable of being fouled and spoilt, and yet capable again of laying all its filth aside."
47 A. Swarbrick, *The Whitsun Weddings and The Less Deceived* by Philip Larkin, 49.

48 A. Motion, *Philip Larkin*, 78.


50 Barbara Everett, "Larkin's Edens." *English* (Spring 1982) 42.

51 *Ibid.*, 42.

52 A. Motion, *Philip Larkin*, 60-61.


57 A. Swarbrick, *The Whitsun Weddings and The Less Deceived* by Philip Larkin, 25.

58 Philip Larkin, "An Interview with the *Observer* " *Required Writing* (London: Faber, 1983) 52.

59 A. Swarbrick, *The Whitsun Weddings and The Less Deceived* by Philip Larkin, 33.


63 A. Swarbrick, *The Whitsun Weddings and The Less Deceived* by Philip Larkin, 32.
64 Ibid., 32.
65 A. Motion, Philip Larkin, 66.
67 A Motion, Philip Larkin: A Writer’s Life, 143.
69 G. Thurley, The Ironic Harvest, 146.
70 A. Swarbrick, The Whitsun Weddings and The Less Deceived by Philip Larkin, 48.
71 Alan Bennett in his essay “Alas! Deceived” (Philip Larkin, ed. Stephen Regan) gives an account of “commemorative programme for Larkin” organized at Riverside Studios (pp. 246-247).
73 Ibid., 291.
74 Stephen Derry in his article “Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin’s ‘Aubade’” in Notes and Queries v. 44 n. (Sept, 1997): 365 has shown interestingly that “Philip Larkin’s poem has a traceable resemblance to the novel ‘A Glass of Blessings’ by Barbara Pym.”
76 G. Harvey, The Romantic Tradition in Modern English Poetry, 97.
77 The view that a particular class is governing the society is articulated in D. H Lawrence’s novel Lady Chatterley’s Lover (1928):
“There was only one class nowadays: moneyboys. The moneyboys and the moneygirl, the only difference was how much you’d got and how much you wanted’ (p. 121) (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1961).


80 The anxiety about the crisis of the mechanical civilization is registered in D. H Lawrence’s novel Lady Chatterley’s Lover (p. 183).


82 In Small World and other campus novels, David Lodge has satirized this travesty of research.

83 A. Motion, Philip Larkin, 67.


85 Ibid., 218.


87 A. Swarbrick, The Whitsun Weddings and The Less Deceived by Philip Larkin, 41.

88 Ibid., 41.

89 A. Motion, Philip Larkin 80.

90 Ibid., 80.


94 Ibid., 179.


96 A. Swarbrick, The Whitsun Weddings and The Less Deceived by Philip Larkin, 56.

97 S. Clark, ""Get Out As Early As You Can": Larkin's Sexual Politics," Philip Larkin, ed. S. Regan, 121.

98 Ibid., 123.

99 Roger Day in his book Larkin has briefly stated the significance of the title "Annus Mirabilis."


101 Janice Rossen, "Difficulties with Girls" Philip Larkin, S. Regan, 150.

102 Ibid., 150.

103 A. Motion, Philip Larkin, 81.

104 Barbara Everett in her article "Philip Larkin: After Symbolism," Essays in Criticism, vol. XXX no. 3 (July, 1980) believes that Larkin was influenced by Mallarmé who had used majestically the window image in his poem "Les Fenêtres" (The Windows). Everett believes that the poetry of Mallarmé is full of "the calm irony of the endless blue").

105 A. Motion, Philip Larkin, 81.


107 S. K Hassan, Philip Larkin and His Contemporaries, 118.

