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## **The Ironic Mismatch between the Ideal and the Real in Philip Larkin's Poetry**

An M. A. Thesis

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**2015**  
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This study examines the basic thematic assumptions of Philip Larkin's mature poetry. Larkin's central concern is fully self-knowledge against delusion and inherent false expectations. Self-knowledge allows one to unveil the underlying tragedy of the ordinary man's existence, as well as enables one to understand that life is irredeemably mundane and often painful. Most part of such life is bounded by sadness, only occasionally quickened by joy, and has one absolute certainty, the passing of time into death. Thus, a Larkin's irony is not just an amusing naughtiness. It does not be an aim in itself. But it seems to be a way to make one's mind to contemplate different implicit significances beyond an enactment of the conflict between the real and the imagination, the ideal and the actual- which further sets the two in mutual critique- to find categorical answers for disturbing quests for the true nature of real existence as spiritual salvation.

This thesis is divided, accordingly, into an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. Following the introductory chapter, the first chapter defines Larkin's meditative irony and his aesthetic detachments towards different contrarities. A side by side his seeming extreme pessimism, he still develops a sense of quiet, reasonable judgment and stoic forbearance to coexist our imposed reality as it should be.

Chapter Two digresses somewhat to show that sound religious concepts are considered to be a backbone of human society's righteousness. In spite of Larkin's fixed belief, he still satirizes the plain dogmatic disturbance. A side by side the poet's torn between the defects of secularity and the perfection of faith, the state of the more deceived and the less deceived, there is still such persistent spirit of the seeker of illumination on his way to get in touch with the main of light and safely reach mystical moments of transcendence, revelation or vision as a real salvation.

Chapter Three examines his perplexing attitudes towards a variety of subsistence experiences, especially love. Along selected collections of poems, Larkin offers a detailed explanation of true love's value which can ease man's sufferings and pave the way to reform sound human existence. Such real human entity does not confess with transient struggles that lead to nothing but to more deterioration. Larkin demonstrates that the spiritual love is still an only

consolation to restore one's inner peace and achieve the real integration with the other in an increasingly alien, hostile and disappointing world. In spite of Larkin's eternal doubt towards such farfetched foundation of true love, his constructive sarcastic writings carry a deep belief in reviving such false virtue which can preserve one from mutability and death. Such morbid fears have been turned into just stages to reach more idealistic and realistic existence rather than such limited material reality.

Therefore, Larkin's elevating ironical style does not come to critic such imposed reality, but to restore extorting human values under merciless pressures of modern age. Deliberately or spontaneously, Larkin surely balances between one's disintegration with a surrounding reality and a sense of continuance along his truly communicative poetry.