

The Psychological Crisis: Navigating the Tension Between Home and Homelessness in Philip Larkin

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Abstract:

Philip Larkin's poetry often grapples with a conflict between affinity for and alienation from his homeland. Larkin's literary career thrived throughout the mid-20th century, a period marked by significant transformations in British thinking and society as a result of the Second World War. Larkin, the acknowledged Unofficial Poet Laureate of England, maintains strong connections to regional or national identities throughout his lifetime. Commonly, Larkin is referred to as a poet of Englishness. The protagonists in Larkin's works inherently embody the poet's own personality. The Larkin persona lacks a feeling of attachment to his childhood hometown of Coventry when he revisits it after ten years, as it does not evoke any nostalgia in him. The location of his birth and upbringing does not exert any influence on his recollection, resulting in a sense of alienation from his previous life. Larkin went between several geographical locations while serving as a librarian at various colleges or universities. Larkin expressed in his letter to Monica Jones that neither Hull nor any other place truly felt like home to him, following a fifteen-year residence there. Larkin declined to be constrained by his affiliation with his temporary residence. For Larkin, belonging to a place is not always a matter of choice, but rather an inevitable circumstance. The possession of a rented room, which might be described as a 'one hired box', induces a sense of belonging crisis in a Larkin speaker. The objective of this dissertation is to examine Larkin's conflicting emotions of belonging and non-belonging towards home in several of his poems.

Keywords: Belonging, non-belonging, homelessness, existence, home

Introduction

The poetry of Philip Larkin is believed to have developed from his deep awareness of environment. He considers the British culture in reverence and highlights the value of embracing his cultural roots. He truly opposes something that is a threat to English culture. In her essay *Larkin, Decadence and the Lyric Poem*, Edna Longley explores Larkin's strong focus on home, considering both the concept of home as England and England as home, drawing inspiration from both sets of meanings. The connection between England and home is favourable when events allow for a certain level of emotional or spiritual agreement with the national identity (Booth, 2000, p. 44). However, Larkin's perspective on home is ambiguous. His sense of belonging and alienation from home may stem from his nomadic librarianship in several schools and institutions, as well as from the marital discord between his parents who are constantly at odds with each other (Motion, 1993, p. 82). His entire existence was characterised by homelessness and itinerance. For a period of three years (1943-46) he served as the Librarian at the Public Library in Wellington, a small

town in Shropshire. He then worked as an Assistant Librarian at University College, Leicester for four years (1946-50), and as a Sub-Librarian at Queen's University, Belfast for five years (1950-55). Finally, he held the position of Librarian at the University of Hull for almost thirty years until his death in 1985. Despite residing in Hull for the majority of his latter years and being referred to as the 'hermit of Hull', Larkin states in his letter to his lifelong friend Monica Jones (Booth, 2010, p. 400) that he does not consider any place to be truly his home. After residing in leased accommodations for the bulk of his life, Larkin acquired a feeling of uncertainty about his home. For Larkin, home is delicate. Longley further asserts that the term "Home," which sways between the personal and cultural realms, consistently presents challenges in Larkin's poetry. It is more typically seen as an unsatisfying familial location (Booth, 2000, p. 44). Throughout his professional career as a librarian, he consistently made periodic trips back home from exile. In such a poetry, larkinesque figures are eternally in flux. James Booth (2018) astutely observes in his latest book, *Philip Larkin: Letters Home 1936-1977*, that although Larkin had fled his home, he never quite escaped from it. This paradox is a fundamental aspect contributing to the excellence of his poetry. (Page 46). According to Larkin, the more captivating the foreign world appears, the more familiar England becomes in stark contrast. Janice Rossen (1989) argues that the concept of home shaping one's identity is a key factor in Larkin's poetry, which explains his appeal to readers as the 'Unofficial Laureate'. (Page 65).

Literature Review

The poetry of Philip Larkin frequently engages with the concept of home and homelessness, therefore mirroring a wider existential conflict between the feelings of belonging and alienation. His oeuvre, including *The Whitsun Weddings* and *High Windows*, showcases a keen understanding of contemporary human displacement and psychological turmoil. Various scholarly interpretations of Larkin's preoccupation with home and homelessness are examined in this literature study, which also identifies a crucial research gap in comprehending the psychological depth of this contradiction in his poetry.

Larkin's poetry is widely acknowledged by many academics to exhibit a multifaceted connection with the notion of home. Andrew Swarbrick observes that Larkin's portrayal of home is infused with regret and a desire for a romanticized past, an unachievable state of stability that frequently contradicts the estrangement of contemporary existence. In his book *"Out of Reach: The Poetry of Philip Larkin,"* Swarbrick asserts that in Larkin's poetry, the notion of home is transitory, serving as an abstract notion rather than a physical location. It symbolizes a need for a sense of belonging that the poet himself found difficult to attain (Swarbrick 56). In Swarbrick's analysis, the enigmatic nature of home is closely linked to Larkin's feeling of being out of place in the contemporary society, so mirroring wider concerns around identity and a sense of belonging.

In her essay *"Philip Larkin: After Symbolism,"* Barbara Everett argues that Larkin's depiction of home is profoundly sarcastic, representing a desire for simplicity that conflicts with the intricacy and disappointment of his poetic subjects. Everett contends that Larkin portrays home not just as a tangible edifice but also as a psychological refuge, which is perpetually endangered by the influences of modernity (Everett 22). Therefore, in Larkin's poetry, home is predominantly unachievable, serving as a representation of deprivation rather than solace.

In contrast, homelessness in Larkin's poetry is frequently understood as a symbolic representation of profound existential hopelessness. According to James Booth's analysis in *Philip Larkin: Life, Art and Love*, the poet's direct involvement with homelessness serves as a more comprehensive critique of the individual's detachment from society. Booth asserts that Larkin's characters frequently navigate life

aimlessly, as if they were homeless in a deeper sense—devoid of significance in an apathetic environment (Booth 78). The recurring motif of existential homelessness is prominent in Larkin's later works, particularly in poems such as "Aubade," when the poet delves into the realm of emptiness resulting from the lack of faith or direction.

In his work "Philippine Larkin and Englishness," scholar Terry Whalen expands upon this concept by emphasizing the poet's criticism of social systems that do not adequately deliver a feeling of safety or belonging for the individual. Whalen argues that according to Larkin, homelessness is not only a physical reality but a widespread experience of contemporary estrangement, worsened by the deteriorating principles of postwar England (Whalen 101). Whalen argues that this social critique embodies a crucial element of Larkin's modernist intellectual philosophy.

Notwithstanding the considerable research conducted on Larkin's portrayal of home and homelessness, there is still a lack of study on the psychological crisis that arises from the conflict between these two conditions. Although scholars such as Swarbrick and Booth have analysed Larkin's use of home and homelessness as metaphors for wider societal or existential concerns, scant focus has been given to the interior psychological distress felt by Larkin's poetic characters as they bounce between these extremes. Further study is warranted to explore the psychological aspect of this conflict, namely how the longing for home confronts the unavoidable reality of homelessness, both in a literal and metaphorical sense.

Specifically, there is a scarcity of academic examination about the manifestation of this tension as a psychological crisis or inner conflict in Larkin's written work. While existential alienation has been a subject of critical discussion, the manner in which Larkin's characters internalize this alienation and perceive it as a psychic rupture has not been systematically examined. Specifically, in poems like "Home Is So Sad," the speaker's emotional confusion implies a more profound psychological conflict that goes beyond simple social or existential analysis. As the poem contemplates, "Home is profoundly sorrowful." The structure remains unchanged, molded to provide comfort to the final individuals to depart, as if to entice them to return (Larkin 2-4). The residence is characterized as deserted, yet nevertheless deeply desiring a reunion, representing a psychological attraction towards something that has been lost but cannot be recovered.

Although previous academic research has appropriately examined Larkin's metaphorical and symbolic exploration of home and homelessness, there is still a lack of comprehension on how these themes lead to a psychological crisis in his poetry. Potential future investigation could explore the psychological and emotional displacement experienced by Larkin's characters due to their fragmented connection with the concept of home. This task would entail not just examining the superficial conflicts between the feelings of belonging and alienation, but also investigating how these conflicts contribute to a more profound sense of psychological instability, therefore enhancing our comprehension of Larkin's portrayal of the human condition.

Larkin's examination of the concepts of home and homelessness embodies a profound and shared feeling of being uprooted in the contemporary society. Although scholars have emphasized the existential and societal aspects of these themes, additional study is required to explore the psychological crises that underpins the conflict between home and homelessness in Larkin's poetry. An investigation of this nature will enhance comprehension of the intricate emotional and psychological aspects in Larkin's work, illuminating how his poetic characters negotiate the delicate equilibrium between yearning for safety and facing the unavoidable reality of loss and displacement.

Research Method

The objective of this study is to investigate the psychological dilemma that emerges from the conflict between home and homelessness in Philip Larkin's poetry, using a qualitative research methodology. Through an analysis of the emotional and psychological aspects present in Larkin's work, this study will explore how his lyrical characters confront the concepts of belonging and alienation. Given its capacity to facilitate a thorough investigation of subjective experiences, emotions, and psychological states as portrayed in the poetry, the qualitative approach is especially well-suited for this study.

In this study, a textual analysis approach will be used to thoroughly investigate specific poems from Larkin's prominent collections, including "I Remember, I Remember", "Mr. Bleany", and 'Poetry of Departures'. Employing a qualitative method for textual analysis enables the researcher to understand Larkin's poetic language, imagery, and structure with the aim of revealing latent psychological issues. Given that this study centres on the emotional and psychological reactions of Larkin's poetic speakers, the research methodology will give priority to interpretive analysis. The principal data for this study will comprise a curated collection of Larkin's poems that directly or indirectly explore the concepts of home and homelessness.

Comprehensive analysis will be conducted on significant poems such as "I Remember, I Remember," "Mr. Bleany," and "Poetry of Departures." The poems will establish the basis for comprehending Larkin's portrayal of the psychological notion of home and homelessness, as well as how his speakers negotiate the conflict between the longing for security and the unavoidable state of displacement. Furthermore, alongside the main texts, supplementary sources including academic papers, books, and critical essays on Larkin's work will be used to enhance the analysis. This will facilitate the contextualization of Larkin's poetry within wider critical discourses concerning modernism, alienation and psychological trauma.

The data analysis procedure will include a thorough examination of the chosen poems using a thematic analysis approach. This methodology is highly appropriate for qualitative research since it allows the researcher to discern reoccurring motifs, symbols, and linguistic patterns that clearly demonstrate Larkin's active involvement with the subjects of home and homelessness. The study will investigate how Larkin's speakers convey emotional displacement, anxiety, and desire through their attitudes towards home, with a specific emphasis on the psychological ramifications of these themes.

Furthermore, the examination will examine how Larkin's use of form, structure, and language enhances the emotional resonance of the poems. For example, Larkin's widespread use of enjambment and irregular rhyme schemes typically reflects the fractured psychic conditions of his speakers, while his selection of simple, straightforward language can elicit a feeling of existential hopelessness. In order to comprehend the psychological crisis in Larkin's work more thoroughly, the analysis will also utilise psychoanalytic literary criticism, specifically focusing on the theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan concerning alienation, anxiety, and loss. The concept of the "unattainable Real" as proposed by Lacan can be extended to Larkin's depiction of home, which frequently embodies an idealized yet unachievable condition of psychological ease and security.

The validity and trustworthiness of the findings are crucial in qualitative research to guarantee the credibility of the analysis. This work will adhere to a triangulation approach by incorporating several sources of data in order to preserve its authenticity. To achieve a thorough comprehension of the psychological crisis depicted in Larkin's poetry, the study will cross-reference the original texts with secondary literature and pertinent psychoanalytic ideas. Furthermore, the study will highlight reflexivity, recognizing the subjective character of interpretive interpretation. In order to reduce bias and increase the

credibility of the results, the researcher's personal viewpoints and assumptions will be thoroughly scrutinized throughout the process.

Since this work solely examines textual analysis and does not include human participants, ethical concerns are negligible. Nevertheless, rigorous adherence to appropriate citation and acknowledgment of all sources shall be maintained to uphold academic honesty.

All citations to Larkin's writings and secondary sources will adhere to MLA citation standards, guaranteeing the proper representation of the contributions made by earlier academics. While this qualitative study will provide a comprehensive examination of the psychological crisis in Larkin's poetry, it is crucial to recognise its constraints. This study specifically examines a limited set of poems, which may not comprehensively cover Larkin's whole exploration of home and homelessness. Moreover, the interpretive character of the analysis allows for varied interpretations of Larkin's work, contingent upon the critical perspective used.

Moreover, this study mainly focuses on psychoanalytic theory, therefore restricting the research area by omitting other theoretical frameworks such as Marxism, feminism, or postcolonialism. These frameworks could provide useful insights into Larkin's exploration of home and homelessness.

The objective of this qualitative research study is to investigate the psychological crisis depicted in Philip Larkin's poetry through an analysis of the conflict between identity and homelessness. Employing a thematic and psychoanalytic method of textual analysis, this study aims to elucidate the emotional and psychological dislocation experienced by Larkin's speakers. Ultimately, it seeks to enhance our comprehension of the poet's involvement with contemporary existential concerns. The present study aims to fill the significant void in current academic research concerning the psychological complexity of Larkin's depiction of home and homelessness by examining the internal conflicts of the personas.

Discussion

"I Remember, I Remember" is a poem featured in *The Less Deceived* (1955) that Larkin wrote during his visit to his birthplace, Coventry. After spending the Christmas holiday in 1953 with his mother in Loughborough, Larkin composed the poem a few days later, namely on January 8, 1954. Larkin's protagonist embarks on a train ride through Coventry, which serves as an opportunity for him to reflect on his childhood recollections in a straightforward and unassuming manner. During that period, Larkin was in Northern Ireland fulfilling his role as a librarian at Queen's University in Belfast. In the new year, the Larkin character embarked on a journey to England by train, taking a different route from the customary one. The phrase "Coming up England by a different line/ For once, early in the cold new year" summarises this journey (Larkin, 1988, p. 81). As the train halted at Coventry, his hometown from his early years, he vividly recalled, "I was born here" and sought a tangible indication that this town remained the one that had been a part of his identity (Larkin, 1988, p. 81). However, while attempting to discern recognisable sights from the window, he lacked clarity on which side was which (Larkin, 1988, p. 81). When questioned by his travelling companion, who may be the speaker's alter ego, if the city they are passing through is where he has his 'roots', the speaker responds with a profound sense of alienation: 'No, merely where my youth was devoid of experiences' (Larkin, 1988, p. 81). Although Coventry may not be his birthplace, it nonetheless served as the starting point of his life. His only recollection is of his boyhood, which he explicitly described as "unspent". As an internal exile, he maintains a significant sense of deracination towards Coventry, which he expresses by stating, '... just where I started' (Larkin, 1988, p. 81). John Osborne (2008) argues that the inclusion of the term 'England' in the opening line does not initially create

a feeling of belonging, but rather briefly suggests that the narrator is foreign (p. 135). His formative years, lacking any exciting romantic experiences, are characterised by monotonous nothingness. The disjointed memories of his empty youth preclude any idealised and romanticised concept of childhood revered in mainstream literature. There were no significant events of particular relevance to the protagonist in Coventry. Although aspects such as garden, family, and bracken were present, they have little practical value for him. He did not receive any communication from an elderly relative and never sought solace in their esteemed family when he experienced feelings of sadness. The family possessed a comical and absurd Ford, as well as a farm where I could truly express myself, namely the bracken where I never trembled (Larkin, 1988, p. 81). The speaker could authentically express his own personality in a different location, rather than in Coventry. 'From the outset of the poem, he clearly demonstrates an intense desire for a feeling of belonging in some place' (Martin, 1978, p. 70). The lack of authenticity in his identity is not simply a source of dissatisfaction with his specific upbringing in Coventry, but also with his overall life. Therefore, when his buddy cleverly remarks, 'You appear as if you desired to be in Hell', the Larkinesque figure openly acknowledges: 'I suppose it is not the responsibility of the location' (Larkin, 1988, p. 82). Based on Richard Hoffpauir's (1991) statement (p. 274), we can assume that the 'problem' lies with him, 'the weakness is not in being at home but in being Philip Larkin'. The extensive use of negatives by the speaker renders his affiliation with his hometown insignificant. The content of his memory consists of the absence of events from his boyhood rather than the actual occurrences. David Timms (1973) analyses that in this poem, Larkin contemplates his upbringing, reminiscing about all the events that did not occur (p. 3). The culminating phrase of the poem intensifies the series of negations: 'Nothing, like anything, happens anywhere' (Larkin, 1988, p. 82). Nothing comparable to the events of his boyhood in Coventry occurs anywhere. Peter Hollindale, in his evaluation of the poem, observes that the subject matter conforms to Larkin's characteristic: emptiness, non-occurrence, not-being. The text recounts a childhood that did not actually occur (Cookson and Loughery, 1989, p. 51). Furthermore, the title emphasises in an ironic manner what the speaker is unable to recall rather than what he is able to recall. In an interview with Miriam Gross in the Observer, Larkin himself fully disregarded all memories of his upbringing, stating, "Oh, I have completely forgotten it [childhood]..." It was possibly a less refined upbringing... (Larkin, 1983, p. 47). Richard Bradford (2005), in his new biography of Larkin, observes that Larkin often reminisced about his upbringing with a combination of pretended oblivion and annoyance at being compelled, due to his popularity, to discuss it at all (p. 23). According to Adam Piette (2013), in his article 'Childhood Wiped Out: Larkin, His Father, and the Bombing of Coventry', the bombing of Coventry during the Second World War resulted in Larkin's perception of Coventry as his father's city being invalidated (p. 234). In a letter to Maeve Brennan, a colleague and close friend at the University of Hull, Larkin disclosed the extent of the destruction caused to their residence by the Coventry air raids: 'Our house has been completely removed from the ground' (Thwaite, 1992, p. 485).

Having spent the majority of his life in rented housing, Larkin experienced a profound feeling of displacement, which gave rise to 'Mr Bleany', the second poem in *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964). The poem was composed shortly after Larkin's arrival in Hull in 1955, during which time Hull University formally organised excavations on his behalf. The location was situated on the ground level of Holtby House, a residential facility for students in Cottingham, a picturesque village situated on the northern boundary of Hull. Subsequently, Larkin corresponded with Judy Egerton, whom he formed a friendship with during his time in Belfast, expressing his dissatisfaction with the lodging. He described it as unsuitable, characterized by its small size, lack of flooring, and high level of noise. He described it as if

he were confined to a destitute doss-house at night, with isolated individuals snoring and arguing about him. Reference: Thwaite, 1992, page 237). The presence of 'Mr Bleany' is a result of the Larkin speaker's occupation of a leased room that was lately abandoned by the former resident, Mr Bleany. The dilapidated room is filled with the reminders of Bleany's abhorrent existence: the curtains are short, 'thin and tattered/ Fall to within five inches of the sill' (Larkin, 1988, p. 102); the light bulb is low-wattage ('sixty-watt'); the bed is flimsy; a makeshift ash-tray made of a saucer-souvenir'; and above all, the room is cramped ('no space for books or bags'). The poem commences with the landlady's declaration, "This enclosed space was designated for Mr. Bleany." According to Larkin (1988), he remained at the Bodies for the entire duration until he was relocated. The speaker's perceptive analysis of the suffocating ambiance in the room exposes how Bleany's limited possessions influence his outlook on life. Salem K. Hassan (1988) notes that Mr. Bleany's life, devoid of purpose, presents itself as a dilemma for which he acknowledges no resolution save nihilism (P. 45). Furthermore, 'the Bodies' not only refers to the 'vehicle bodies' but also implies our actual bodies, which cease to exist after death. The removal of Mr. Bleany from 'the Bodies' serves to strengthen the formal termination of his life. The seemingly little details of his life powerfully imply the limited essence of his routines: 'That our way of living reflects our inherent essence' (Larkin, 1988, p. 103). He entered the football polls without ever achieving victory, consistently spent his summer vacations at the same resort as 'the Frinton folk', and celebrated Christmas in Stoke with his sister. Bleany's existence is characterized by a profound sense of purposelessness. The rented room is permeated with a pervasive sense of emptiness. According to Larkin (1988), the limited nature of both Bleany's daily activity and the accommodation he receives indicate that he is not deserving of more than a single hired box, as he did not offer any more. Bleany's unassuming living in a 'one hired box' connoting coffins is akin to death-in-life. The fact that Bleany resides in a rented home serves as a constant reminder of the finite time he has available. His finite existence in the leased room is a component of death-in-life. The existential philosopher Martin Heidegger (1927/1958) asserts that death is neither a future event that has not yet occurred, nor is it something that is still anticipated but has been minimized. Death is an imminent and unavoidable reality that confronts us (pp 293-94).

The first five stanzas not only vividly depict the desolation of both the apartment and Mr. Bleany's life, but also, through the landlady's narration, suggest a striking resemblance between the speaker and the titular man. Establishing ownership of the space belonging to the former tenant, the speaker demonstrates that he is equally inferior to Mr. Bleany. Despite the speaker's seeming contempt for Mr. Bleany, he is actually Mr. Bleany's counterpart. Rather than Mr. Bleany, who observed the cold wind tearing the clouds apart and reclined on the uncomfortable bed, declaring it his home, it is the speaker who is assuming Mr. Bleany's position. The speaker openly acknowledges, 'I happen to take up the same position as Mr. Bleany and stub my fags on the same saucer-souvenir' (Larkin, 1988, p. 102). Both individuals are classified as fellow-sufferers, as they both experience homelessness. Devoid of their own residence, all, including Larkin, are compelled to rely on the generosity of others. According to Andrew Swarbrick (1995), Mr. Bleany considered this to be his home and there is no other place to support his sense of detachment from it, the 'hired box' of his identity. Page 98. Being recognized by the singular rented room, Mr. Bleany and the speaker can be readily interchanged. They lease the room instead of possessing it, and thus each of them is unable to cultivate a feeling of ownership over it. Towards the conclusion of the poem, the third-person pronoun combines with the first-person pronoun, therefore exposing other aspects of the speaker's character that is beyond his conscious awareness. What emerges at the conclusion is the speaker's derisive and disdainful intent directed towards himself. The protagonist becomes the target of his own derision.

The poem 'Poetry of Departures', penned on 23 January 1954 while Larkin was in Belfast and published in *The Less Deceived*, vividly captures the protagonist's conflicting feelings towards home: he is drawn to that (i.e., domestic life) that he pretends to loathe. The poem revolves on the decision between departing from home and maintaining a stable existence at home. The speaker hears a 'fifth-hand' dialogue in which an individual, driven by a desire for an ideal life, abandons their present home life: 'He discarded everything/ And simply cleared off' (Larkin, 1988 p. 85). Through his audacious statement: 'We all despise home/ And having to be there:/ I detest my room' (Larkin, 1988, p. 85), he articulates his need to abandon home for an other life on the wide road. The revelation that 'He went out on the whole crowd/ Leaves me [the narrator] flushed and agitated' (Larkin, 1988, p. 85) presents him with a vivid and idealised world that juxtaposes the harsh reality of domestic life. Nevertheless, the lingering doubt of the rumour compels him to admit, 'This bold, purifying,/ Elemental action' (Larkin, 1988, p. 85). Thus, he is uncertain about whether to disrupt his everyday life at home or to adhere to it, as expressed by his question, 'Surely I can, if he did?' (Larkin, 1988, page 85). Rossen (1989) argues that the crucial aspect is not the consideration of the poet's course of action, as this is an inevitable outcome, but rather the portrayal of his discontent in relation to a clear and unambiguous set of options. Page 134.

The longing of the narrator to flee home conflicts with the imperative to remain. His sense of existential crises arises from his critical evaluation of vulnerable decision-making. By selecting one alternative, the speaker eliminates the feasibility of the other choice, therefore restricting his freedom. Opting for the lifestyle of an escapist over that of a conformist at home results in the speaker experiencing a sense of sobriety and diligence (Larkin, 1988, p. 85). His anticipation of leaving home evokes a sense of youthful excitement, as he utters the words, 'Then she unbuttoned her dress/ Or Take that you bastard' (Larkin, 1988, p. 85). Daring escape entails two depictions of envisioned alternate lives: 'Stroke the highways littered with nuts,/ Crouch in the fo'c'sle/ Stubbly with goodness' (Larkin, 1988, p.85). Both images serve as an ideal complementary representation of the speaker's domestic life, as described in the poem 'The nice books, the good bed,/ And my life, in perfect order' (Larkin, 1988, p. 85). Life away from home is characterised as 'a life/ Reprehensibly perfect' and will necessitate his endeavour to 'make an object' (Larkin, 1988, p. 86). The concept of a life characterised by daring freedom is idealised and transformed into something artificial, a purposeful regression (Larkin, 1988, p. 85). The title accurately highlights the absence of both 'poetry' and 'romance' in 'departures' from the realm of stay-at-home life. The lines in italics are positioned prominently apart from the rest of the poem, implying an unattainable potential for the narrator. The speaker's final decision to remain at home instead of pursuing a life of trite adventure affirms his unique identity above general society. His distinct inner self remains recognisable among the nameless multitude. By transcending the masses, he attains his genuine essence. Upon overturning the mob, the speaker asserts, albeit self-justifyingly, that he will not resort to cutting and pursuing an unattainable ideal of alternate lifestyles. Participating in a group, an individual, Soren Kierkegaard (1849/2001) analyses, 'does not have the courage to have faith in oneself, finds it too daring to express one's true self, far more convenient and secure to conform to the others, to become a replica, a numerical value, a cypher within the group' (p. 303). Through the exercise of his decision, the narrator establishes his unique identity. In this regard, the Larkin speaker adheres to the Sartrean decision. According to Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist work "Being and Nothingness" (1943/1992), human existence is determined by the act of choosing oneself. There is no external or internal source that may be received or accepted by the consciousness (p. 440).

Conclusion

The sense of isolation and unease depicted by Larkin in his poems is emblematic of the human experience in post-war Britain during the 1940s and 1950s. Once English authority in Asia and Africa was lost, the decline of family and religion principles in individual human life became more prominent. Larkin is renowned for portraying the shared human experience on the basis of his firsthand observations in England. Larkin once expressed his strong aversion to being overseas. Broadly speaking, the farther one moves away from home, the more intense the suffering becomes (Larkin, 1983, p. 55). His feeling of attachment to his home is heightened when he is not physically present at home. Due to his lack of a wife, children, house, and land, Larkin perceives himself as an outsider (Thwaite, 1992, p. 460). The inability to locate a 'own' place of residence leads to an unavoidable existential dilemma in the lives of Larkin's characters. Residency on the fringes was not just a physical reality for Larkin, but also a creative location where the concept of 'here' intersected with 'elsewhere' and beyond the fringe lay boundless possibilities. Reference: Swarbrick, 1995, page 169. Residing predominantly in rural areas throughout his whole life, Larkin experiences a profound sense of dislocation from his place of origin. John Osborne (2008) aptly described Larkin's feeling of incomplete belonging as analogous to the Jewish experience of captivity, the Irish experience of exile, and the Western black experience of forced diaspora: deracination underlies all of these phenomena (p. 230). His profound sense of being isolated from his homeland elicits poems of alienation and lack of belonging.

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