

## TIME AND TRANSITIONS IN LARKIN'S POETRY

### Abstract

This paper continues research into Larkin's poetry started in Milojkovic (in press), where computational collocation-based analysis proves Philip Larkin's reputation as a depressive, but disproves his alleged atheism. In Milojkovic (in press) a complete corpus of Larkin's poetry is analysed for key symbols and compared with the famous passage from 1 Corinthians 13 describing the transition from an incomplete human state to that of maturity, self-knowledge and perfection. Both Larkin's corpus and the biblical passage are checked against a reference corpus - a newspaper corpus of 44.5 million words<sup>i</sup>. After stating the findings of Milojkovic (in press), this paper offers further research into Larkin's poetry on the same premises, but this time employs semantic prosody of the grammatical strings found in the biblical passage. It is shown that grammatical strings carry specific semantic prosodies (e.g. 'and now a' versus 'and now I') and thus may be used as means of interpretation (e.g. 'but when did'). Lexical collocation and semantic prosodies of grammatical strings show that in Larkin's poetry transitions repeat themselves, time in most cases stands still, and that Philip Larkin's view of love does not change over time.

### Key words

corpus stylistics, collocation, poetry, Larkin, semantic prosodies, time, transitions, love

### 1 Introduction: summary of previous research

The view of collocation taken in this paper is Neo-Firthian, dynamic view of collocation favoured in corpus linguistics (Williams and Millon, 2011: 151).<sup>ii</sup> Williams' statements that 'meaning is negotiated by use of contextual features' (Williams, 2010: 405) and that collocation 'is, as Firth and Sinclair showed, an area central to language' (Williams, 2010: 403) is in accordance with Louw's view that 'collocation is instrumentation for literary or fictional worlds and is fairly easily supplied' (Louw, 2010: 90). Since our sources agree that collocation is not syntax-bound but determined by proximity, and that collocates influence the word's meaning, then we may agree that in a world of a poet collocates may indeed throw light on the

meaning of the word that the poet tends to attach to it. Let us begin by looking at the samples of concordances of 'day and 'night' taken from Larkin's corpus (for the complete concordances of 'day' and 'night' see Milojkovic (in press))<sup>iii</sup>:

52 lither - Creatures, I cherish you! **By day**, sky builds **Grape-dark** over the salt U  
 53 r's impressive lie - Upon whose **every day** So many **ruined** are May could not make  
 54 ove and money Ways of **slow dying**. The day spent **hunting pig** Or holding a garden-  
 55 h observed Celestial recurrences, The day the flowers come, And when the birds g  
 56 arture: only **shadows** Move when in the day the sun is seen **for an hour**, Yet to me  
 57 omething is always approaching; **every day** Till then we say, Watching from a bluff  
 58 ay' **Sinking** like **sediment** through the day To leave it clearer, onto the floor of  
 59 like long hills, a range We ride **each day** towards, and **never** reach. 17 NorJember  
 60 nripe day you bore your head, And the day was **plucked** and tasted **bitter**, As if s

8 d last bun: How you had **laughed**, the night before you **left**; All your potentialit  
 9 patterns on the curtains, drawn The night before. The milk's been on the step,  
 10 rs sang in their sockets **through the night**: '**Blow bright, blow bright** The coal o  
 11 ing each detail We **toss for half the night**, but find next day All's kodak-distan  
 12 disperses. But We, on this **midsummer** night, can sneer In union at mind that coul  
 13 afternoons. New strong **Rain-bearing** night-winds come: then **Leaves** chase warm bu  
 14 alk on this or that excuse, Till the night comes to **rest** While some high bell is  
 15 home existed) letters of **exile**: Now Night comes on. **Waves** fold behind villages.  
 16 ' By day, a lifted study-storehouse; night **Converts** it to a flattened cube of li  
 17 till: bowing, the woods **bemoan**; **Dark** night **creeps** in, and leaves the world alone  
 18 about it when the meal lay done, The night drawn in, electric light switched on,  
 19 ht' Or resolution's aid. Around, the night drops **swiftly** down Its **veils**; does no  
 20 steps cold. The **rain** drips **drearily**; night's **fingers spin A web** of drifting mist

54 **death** has merely made **beautiful**, And night skies so **brilliantly spread-eagled** Wi  
 55 x. beforelune Iy39 Street Lamps When night **slinks**, like a **puma**, down the **sky**, An  
 56 g sea-pictures - Keep it all off! **By** night, **snow** swerves (O loose moth world) Th  
 57 r the carrying, for its own sake, Is night so **gifted**? Mind never met Image of de  
 58 And everywhere the **stifling mass** of night **Swamps** the bright nervous day, and pu  
 59 t fraying cliffs of water Or late at night **Sweet** under the differently-swung sta

Surprisingly, the overall impression of frustrating routine created by the concordance of 'day' is relieved by Larkin's view of night. The aim of the research in Milojkovic (in press) was to prove or disprove Larkin's reputation as a depressive atheist. However, as it progressed, its findings not only formed a whole of interconnected images that was surprisingly consistent, but also revealed that in Larkin's verse a particular type of transition often takes place. This type of transition noticed in this part of research is time-related (day-night), but also involves a relationship with a woman and a failed transformation. These motifs may or may not appear in the same context but overall their presence is remarkably consistent. Therefore, those of the previous findings that have formed the basis of research into time-related transitions in Larkin will be briefly recounted.

Previous research showed that Larkin's persona viewed night as bringing relief from the tortures of day ('living is a dreadful thing', as he says in 'After-Dinner Remarks'). The type of transition between day and night is either in the focus of the poem ('Winter

Nocturne', 'Midsummer Night') or serves as a backdrop for musings ('After-Dinner Remarks') or events ('The Dance') whose theme is the persona's mismanagement of his encounters with a woman.

The encounters with the woman the persona is interested in ('After-Dinner Remarks', 'The Dance'), or with the prospect of interaction with the opposite sex ('Reasons for Attendance') are in the quoted poems accompanied by the mention of a glass or mirror that brings them into connection with the description of another transition – to heavenly happiness and maturity that, according to St Paul, is to be gained through love. It is the moment in the 1 Corinthians when 'seeing through a glass darkly' becomes 'face to face':

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 ***But when*** that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: ***but when*** I became a man, I put away childish things.

12 For now we ***see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face***: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

13 ***And now*** abideth ***faith, hope, and charity***, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.

(*The Bible*. Cited from Carrol and Pricket 1998: 217- 218, emphasis in bold italics added)

Not dwelling on the implications of the passage (to which there is at least one conscious allusion in Larkin's verse) for Larkin's supposed atheism, it was thought relevant to provide corpus data for Larkin's understanding of the term 'love'. It was found that he viewed it mostly as romantic love, aware as he was of the other, non-romantic, meanings the word has (including what St Paul means by 'charity'), and that his view of love did not change over the years. On the basis of the fact that the poems in question described unsuccessful transitions to a fulfilled encounter with a woman, that Larkin was – expectedly – found to be a deep pessimist, and that he was aware of the Corinthians chapter (although a conscious parallel could not be proved), a bold hypothesis was formed that Larkin viewed happiness as a

consummated relationship and that he failed to attain happiness as he saw it. One last corpus finding suggests that only one line in Larkin's whole collected verse refers to love positively. Or so it may seem.

## 2 Semantic prosodies in grammatical strings and their role in stylistic interpretation

So far we have discovered two moments of transition – from frustrating day to (not always) more peaceful night, and through glasses and mirrors affording him an unsatisfactory view of himself and not affording him the desired but always missed opportunities of love fulfilled. We have also seen that these transitions may be usefully compared to the one described in 1 Corinthians 13 in order to see the differences between Larkin's transitions and the biblical one. If we now look at discourse markers of transition in the quoted 1 Corinthians passage we will have discovered three: '**but when** that which is perfect is come', '**but then** face to face', '**and now** abide faith, hope and charity, these three'.

The devices printed here in bold italics are trumpets of the ultimate change, the transition to perfect love, self-knowledge, maturity and happiness. Let us see how Larkin employs them and whether his use of them is consistent with the Times corpus.

Let us look at 'and now', which in the Bible marks the culmination of perfection attained, faith, hope and charity (read 'love'). Larkin's 'and now' is consistent with the biblical use in that it more often than not marks the beginning of a new verse:

MicroConcord search SW: and now  
80 characters per entry  
Sort : 1R/SW unshifted.

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1 waste of thistles Crowded like men; And now again My thoughts are children With
2 d uniquely: hedges dipped And rose: and now and then a smell of grass Displaced
3 and thistled to be called meadows, And now and then a harsh-named halt, that sh
4 . That is where they live: Not here and now, but where all happened once. This i
5 . Oliver's Riverside Blues, it was. And now I shall, I suppose, always remember
6 s I am now, and you as you are now, And now; something acutely transitory The sl
7 apart, Love and its commerce done; And now the luminous watch-hands Show after
8 repair The eatings of slight love; And now the evening ambles near, Softly, thr
9 , When we face each other honestly! And now the guitar again, Spreading me over
10 e said. 8 October 1961 TW [ 138 ] 'And now the leaves suddenly lose strength' A
11 re to flag At twenty-four or -five; And now the slag Of burnt-out childhood prov
12 the leaves suddenly lose strength' And now the leaves suddenly lose strength. D
13 our for the heart against distress. And now this stride into our solitude, A swa
14 h remained To scatter magnificence; And now what scaffolded mind Can rebuild exp
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Data from the following files:

ZARKIN.TXT

There are 14 lines in all, and 11 are usable for our purpose. Wider contexts were opened, and it was discovered that in Larkin 'and now' is a bridge between an unsatisfactory situation and a state of affairs that may be described as inability and lack of strength.

Only one line is optimistic, and it belongs to a poem written to celebrate the building of a bridge ('Bridge for the living'), which falls into the domain of occasional poetry. In 'On Being 26' we read: 'And now the slag/ of burnt-out childhood proves that I was right.' The overall motif of the poem is the persona's having trouble 'putting away childish things', to use the wording of St Paul. In 'A Stone Church Damaged by a Bomb' the mention is deeply pessimistic. In 'Winter' and in 'And now the leaves suddenly lose strength' 'and now' is followed by the description of winter. In 'Winter' and 'Reference Back' 'and now' is a little later followed by the persona's inability to control memories. Two poems deal with the approach of evening. In 'Two Guitar Pieces', which says: ' And now the guitar again/ Spreading me over the evening like a cloud...' 'we' is the man and the woman. Note the honest encounter face to face in the poem. The persona's sense of inability here is similar to the insomnia the lover feels after love-making in 'The bottle is drunk out by one'. In the latter poem love-making comes before and insomnia after 'and now', reminding us of the persona's inability to be transformed by love that we saw in other poems. 'Two Guitar Pieces' picture a similar situation.

Two poems which connect the motif of the mirror as a marker of a failed man-woman encounter also contain 'and now'. In 'The Dance' 'and now' is not an indicator of change. The author is taking stock in the key moment of encounter: '...me/ As I am now, and you are now,/ and now...' Taking in the woman's 'consenting language' the persona 'descries love' and envisions how this transitory state might become permanent (remember 1 Corinthians), and notwithstanding allows himself to be led away. Thus, 'and now' here is not a marker of transition, but appears in a key moment of transition to love not taking place. The poem 'After-Dinner Remarks' says in the beginning stanza: 'And now the evening ambles near...' The mirror will appear later accompanied by reflections on what the persona has failed to accomplish: 'What gesture in the face of time/ I could have fashioned there'. Since we know that physical love is the persona's at least subconscious idea of paradise, he has failed to accomplish just about everything.

The following table shows the motifs which appear in the poems featuring 'and now'.

Table 1. Contexts, extended contexts and motifs of 'and now'<sup>iv</sup>:

Title	approach of evening	approach of winter	inability to control memories	man-woman love	mirrors <sup>v</sup>
'Winter'		✓	✓		
'Reference Back'			✓		
'The Dance'	✓			✓	✓
'The bottle is drunk out by one...'				✓	
'After-Dinner Remarks'	✓			✓	✓
'Two Guitar Pieces'	✓			✓	
'And now the leaves suddenly lose strength'		✓			
'On Being Twenty-six'			✓		
'Bridge for the Living'					
'A Stone Church Damaged by a Bomb'					

If 'and now' in Larkin is a bridge between the unsatisfactory situation and (his) inability to change it, what is the result of comparing it to the use of 'and now' in the Times corpus? That will largely depend on the context. It is not the purpose of this paper to study the use of transition markers in large reference corpora in detail, but certain consistencies were noticed. In the context of business, profit or professional success 'and now' more often

than not marks a change for the better, or a change to a state of stability. Here are parts of the concordance (consisting of 1542 lines) featuring 'and now a(n)' and 'and now has':

38 ontfort, once Leicester Polytechnic and now a "distributed university" with 26,6  
39 der and editor of the bible of rock and now a millionaire socialite. He recently  
40 immonds, an employee for nine years and now a shareholder, paraphrased Oscar Wil  
41 guin Cafe to mount in South Africa, and now a hugely ambitious, rapturously accl  
42 tuart Wilson) a civil rights lawyer and now a government official in the new lib  
43 astal defence battery built in 1829 and now a museum with living quarters that c  
44 d ShareLink, founded by David Jones and now a subsidiary of the American discoun  
45 a player unfazed by the big arena, and now a proven competitor, unlike the disc  
46 Gramajo, a former Defence Minister and now a presidential candidate in Guatemal

431 million of new business last year and now has £2 billion mortgages on its bala  
432 t 1.5m shares for \$25 each in 1987, and now has a paper profit of more than \$50m  
433 our set up the agency ten years ago and now has more than 800 hopefuls on her bo  
434 adapted and extended over the years and now has excellent facilities. A few minu  
435 he airport at Satolas is a good one and now has its own high-tech, bright-steel  
436 bought the plant three years later and now has 85 per cent of the UK market and  
437 iously thought she could act ha ha! and now has to beg her ex-hub to save her fr  
438 ster, was floated earlier this year and now has a stock-market worth of almost £  
439 ed group, which was founded in 1928 and now has 13 restaurants, serve up a 16.6

A different picture, however, presents itself in the parts of the same concordance where 'and now' is followed by personal pronouns 'I' and 'you', the following semantic prosody threatens to become negative (see Louw 1993: 162;171):

594 never really had any business here, and now I am being found out. I am going so  
595 de of Alan Plater's stilted series, and now I thank the deity for his goodness.  
596 time. He said I had made my own bed and now I could lie in it. I was scared that  
597 getables because I don't have time, and now I was supposed to make time, to make  
598 to play World Cup rugby this summer and now I have been given it." Indeed, scr  
599 with an even layer of tarmac. But and now I am not joking I believe that thing  
600 'd been wondering what he did next, and now I know. "Ray, by day you are a groun  
601 ably, I wasn't really ready for it, and now I am confused; I keep whacking the b  
602 y television column. Alas, no more. And now I recall that even in the halcyon da  
603 nce marked 150 years of operations, and now I know why Roy Randall is so good at  
604 e are a memory. I retired last year and now I want to forget it all. Yours fai  
605 ok but never had an idea in my head and now I have this terrible story to tell."  
606 y of things in the past five years, and now I enjoy it more than I ever did. "  
607 d been running at 100 miles an hour and now I was being expected to run at 120 m  
608 reconciliation about ten years ago and now I am at peace with the past." Toda  
609 d been given my old account number. And now I have discovered that last year the  
610 ertain view of how the world worked and now I am beginning to realise how little

1531 with some more powerful wing-flaps, and now you can see that it is a dark-brown  
1532 id the resorts to accommodate them, and now you have to search long and hard to  
1533 se house you buy. You certainly did and now you are paying the price. I spent an  
1534 amount of water and radio contact, and now you can have a GPS (global positioni  
1535 arned you and you would not listen, and now you have only yourselves to blame".  
1536 xpectation, nor was I disappointed. And now you want to know what I am talking a  
1537 en the pirates inside your own zone and now you are trying to make the European  
1538 from the middle of the speedometer, and now you cannot help instinctively correc  
1539 t a time, it was teeming with life, and now you're lucky if you see a single din  
1540 sort of thing that happens to you, and now you'll never know. I'll know, of c  
1541 wife has left me, I've lost my job, and now you've hit me." I wrote him a cheque

It is obvious that in contexts of personal nature the use of 'and now' in the Times is closer to Larkin's than in those dealing with professional success or profit. However, in all lines of the Times concordance 'and now' is a marker of change; Larkin uses it in contexts of non-action. In 'The Dance' time literally freezes to allow him a view of eternal happiness, only to be followed by a disappointing non-action on the part of the persona. This insight is made possible by analysing grammatical strings of which 'and now' is part. It is, therefore, a different form of collocation from 'an abstraction at the syntagmatic level' (Firth, 1957: 181). Still, this is a specific semantic prosody, an aura of meaning surrounding a word or phrase (see Louw 1993).

'But then' as a time-related transition marker appears in Larkin only once. , the first time as a transition marker in the poem about death 'Old Fools': '...It's only oblivion, true:/ We had it before, but then it was going to end...' 'But then' being a frequent combination, we asked the computer to choose 70 lines from the Times corpus. There were 24 lines containing 'but then' marking a transition in an account of events. In 8 lines it was used negatively and in 16 lines (twice the number) positively. Importantly, there was not a line in our sample which took us back in Time, as Larkin does. Moreover, Larkin's use of 'but then' contains an 'and now' in it. To paraphrase: it (i.e. whatever is before and after human lifespan) is only oblivion, but then it was going to end, and now it (being death, and not pre-birth oblivion) is not going to end!

'But when' in the 1 Corinthians 13 is another device marking transition towards eternal joy:

10 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

**But when** that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: **but when** I became a man, I put away childish things.

From this we infer that 'but when' is a marker denoting transition from partial to complete knowledge and from immaturity to maturity.

There are four occurrences of 'but when' in Larkin.

In the poem 'Within the dream you said' (1944) 'but when' is preceded by a night of physical love, and followed by disappointment. This disappointment is shown by a detailed

description of a two-fold coldness of the heart (the heart feels cold and has grown cold) described through weather images (lambing night, a bird caught in a gale and a root in frost).

In the poem 'When first we met, and touching showed' (December 1975) 'but when' is preceded by a meeting of newly-found lovers and is followed by a general statement (an optimistic one, and the *only* instance in Larkin of optimism in context of love): '*But when did love not try to change/ The world back to itself...*' In the poem itself 'but when' serves as a transition device from a description of disappointment and pain to the description of no pain and no negative experience any more, reminding of heaven. Thus, broadly speaking, this use of 'but when' corresponds to that in 1 Corinthians 13. This is the only seemingly optimistic mention of the word 'love' in Larkin's verse (Milojkovic, in press).

In 'Mother, summer, I' 'but when' is preceded by anxiety about the possibility of summer thunderstorms and followed by a state of no such anxiety because of the advent of autumn, beginning of rains and "brittle" frost which 'sharpens the bird-abandoned air'. This weather description mentioning frost and birds reminds us of that in 'Within the dream you said'. Summer is the emblem of perfect happiness, says the poet, but I find autumn more appropriate.

In 'Morning at last' (February 1976) 'but when' is preceded by a night of physical love, and followed by the ambiguous lines 'What morning woke to will remain, / Whether as happiness or pain.' Taking the dates into consideration, it may be the same woman as in 'When first we met, and touching showed...' Love consummated has not brought the desired happiness.

In three poems of the four 'but when' is preceded by an allusion to or description of physical love (the exception is the one mentioning the persona's mother). In the other three poems of the four (the exception is the optimistic one) 'but when' is followed by descriptions of bad weather. In one of them the poet points out that bad weather he actually prefers to the perfection of summer ('Summer, Mother, I'). However, it is clear that coldness of the heart is not to be preferred.

Table 2. Motifs appearing before and after 'but when' in the corpus of Larkin's poetry.

title	physical love before 'but when'	disappointment after 'but when'	bad weather after 'but when'

'Within the dream you said'	V	V	V
'When first we met, and touching showed'	V		
'Mother, Summer, I'			V
'Morning at last: there in the snow'	V	V	V

It might be worth mentioning that the only poem in the table not containing a preceding mention of physical love (a motif much discussed in this paper) contains in its place a reference to the persona's mother. If we add that the poem's message is 'Being my mother's son, I cannot stand the perfect happiness of summer and prefer the less happy time of autumn', we are only letting the poem speak for itself. Instead of transition to maturity and perfection, in two instances there is transition from physical love to disappointment, and in one instance an explicitly stated transition away from perfection.

Now that we have discovered the contrast of 'but when' in 1 Corinthians 13 and in Larkin's collected verse, let us see what kind of transition it generally signifies in Times corpus. The majority of seventy-four random concordance lines whose contexts were opened revealed the meaning of remarkable change. The contexts were positive in 20 lines and negative in 43.

'When first we met, and touching showed' happens to be the very poem containing Larkin's only positive reference to love. In the third and final stanza the poet exclaims: 'But when did love not try to change/ the world back to itself...'

Let us see what 'but when did' yields in the Times corpus:

```
MicroConcord search SW: but when did
80 characters per entry
Sort : 1R/SW unshifted.
 1 there's nothing wrong with that. But when did a car salesman ever tell you that
 2 s may make little economic sense, but when did economics really come into the eq
 3 s may make little economic sense, but when did economics really come into the eq
 4 yd and Rob Lowe also participate, but when did either last make a prudential car
 5 ties in both manager and country. But when did England last have success or a pu
 6 be the logical time to bow out. But when did football, life, logic, Charlton o
 7 tiality, and has become a cliché. But when did that deter anybody? </Group>
 8 abs. The rot set in after that. But when did the present system start, and why
 9 company, making £2billion a year. But when did you last hear critics sounding of
10 hormone is, of course, a cop-out,but when did you last hear of a netball crowd
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Data from the following files:

TIMES95.TXT

With the exception of one line containing a question, the rest are all rhetorical questions, as in Larkin's only positive reference to love. However, *the remaining lines all contain the rhetorical question as a reference to previous experience to support criticism, the context being strictly negative*. The grammatical context of 'but when' is narrowed and this results in the following negative semantic prosody with a very specific meaning. The change of meaning depending on the narrowing of grammatical context in 'but when did' is similar to the case of 'and now', where the following semantic prosodies depend on whether 'and now' is followed by 'a(n)' and 'has', or 'I' and 'you'.

If we go back to 'Winter Nocturne', the paradox of the line 'The night creeps in, and leaves the world alone' is obvious and contains a conscious deviation from the norm. In the lines 'But when did love not try to change/ The world back to itself – no cost,/ No past, no people else at all...' the clash with the reference corpus could not have been foreseen by Larkin any more than it can be by the reader.

The prosodic clash between the use of 'but when did' in the Times and in Larkin's poem (followed by a reference to what should and does not happen in the former and to what should and does happen in the latter) may indicate subconscious insincerity on the part of the poet (for insincerity and prosodic clashes see Louw (1993: 169-171)). The poet may be avoiding the painful insight that love, again, will fail to change whatever needs changing. If taken further, this supposition may contain the answer to the main question of why love consistently fails the poet. The answer may be that it is so precisely because he expects it to bring major changes into his world, which love never has the magic power to do. To understand the prosodic clash, all we need is to set Larkin's rhetorical question against any found in the Times corpus:

But when did a car salesman ever tell you that you would be better off  
walking or taking the bus?

But when did love not try to change the world back into itself?

A rhetorical question asked in this grammatical context unquestionably implies failure. If we add to this the 'fight-picking' tone of 'but when did' rhetorical questions it will add further to our understanding of Larkin's, here most probably subconscious, frustration.

### 3 Conclusion

Larkin's is a remarkably consistent world, where motifs intertwine to create similar states of affairs. These represent the persona's singular emotional impasse. Through corpus research of transitions in his poetry helped by a comparison with the famous transition described in 1 Corinthians 13 several interrelated types of transition were noted which reflect the persona's emotional stumbling block.

Lexical collocation revealed transition from day to night, (evening) in which night is often seen as relief from the tortures of day. The approach of evening twice appears in the same context with the persona's reflection in a mirror in the context of an unsuccessful encounter with a woman. Once glass appears as a literal barrier between the persona and physical contact with the opposite sex. Ironically, while in St Paul glass is a marker of transition between an incomplete human state to perfect love, Larkin laments over unsuccessful attempts to accomplish a union with a woman, which is how he most often defines love as such, much as he is aware of other meanings of the word. Moreover, he apparently expects love to work the miracle of dramatically changing his life.

Larkin's use of grammatical strings shows his peculiar view on life's transitions. 'And now' is a bridge between dissatisfaction and lack of strength, 'but then', unlike in the reference corpus, takes us far back in time, and 'but when' does reveal the remarkable change it reveals in the reference corpus - to disappointment and bad weather. The three studied grammatical strings, while pointing up the interconnectedness of Larkin's images, are still too broadly used in the English language to point up any specific prosodic clashes in Larkin (with the exception of 'but when did'). However, they are worth comparing with their general usage in the reference corpus to make obvious the peculiarities of Larkin's use.

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<sup>i</sup> What will be referred to as the Times corpus refers to a newspaper corpus (44.5 million words of running text) of the Times of London for the year 1995 created and distributed informally by the late Tim Johns.

<sup>ii</sup> ...[T]raditional phraseology, and much pre-corpus lexicography, and corpus linguistics developed on parallel lines. Those lines were effectively drawn together in the Cobuild initiative[...]

Phraseologists and lexicographers seek to tame language so as to list and classify for inclusion in published works. This requires an essentially static vision of collocation where phraseological units are treated as if created ex nihilo and are simply found and classified on purely linguistic grounds as to what may and what may not be termed as a collocation.

The NeoFirthian approach developed by John Sinclair within the context of corpus linguistics is very different in that it places collocation at the very heart of language as an essentially dynamic process in which meanings are created and exploited within textual contexts. The advantage of corpus linguistics is that it allows an analysis of dynamic collocation whilst providing the material for more reductive phraseological or computational exploitation of the data. (Williams and Millon 2011: 151)

<sup>iii</sup> The concordances of 'day' and 'night', as well as the complete corpus of Larkin's poetry (based on Anthony Thwaite's edition (Thwaite 1988), were given to me by Bill Louw, University of Zimbabwe. For the application of Louw's stylistics to Russian language and literature, see Milojkovic 2011.

<sup>iv</sup> V indicates the presence of a particular motif.

<sup>v</sup> It is worth noting here that forms of 'mirror' appear in Larkin's poetry five times. Apart from the references to Radio 3 and 'the shame of evening trousers', there is a reference to 'harmless mirrors' in 'I am washed upon a rock' and two references that are sinister: in 'A house on the edge of a serious wood' and in 'Time and Space were only their disguises'.