Ambulances - Philip Larkin

Closed like confessionals, they thread
Loud noons of cities, giving back
None of the glances they absorb.
Light glossy grey, arms on a plaque,
They come to rest at any kerb:
All streets in time are visited.

Then children strewn on steps or road,
Or women coming from the shops
Past smells of different dinners, see
A wild white face that overtops
Red stretcher-blankets momentarily
As it is carried in and stowed.

And sense the solving emptiness
That lies just under all we do,
And for a second get it whole,
So permanent and blank and true.
The fastened doors recede. Poor soul,
They whisper at their own distress.

For borne away in deadened air
May go the sudden shut of loss
Round something nearly at an end,
And what cohered in it across
The years, the unique random blend
Of families and fashions, there

At last begin to loosen. Far
From the exchange of love to lie
Unreachable insiders a room
The traffic parts to let go by
Brings closer what is left to come,
And dulls to distance all we are.

Literal traffic moving away from
Ambulance / metaphorical traffic of
Life

Death unravels you - reduces who you are.
Everything that makes you unique - makes you 'you' - your personality.

People realise their own mortality and are glad it isn't
away from life them and family/friends.

Simile, alliteration - cut off from
normal life. Spiritual / religious / sins.
Pass without consideration
Coat of arms
Ambulances, like death, can go anywhere for anyone. Age and status
don't matter.

Contrast between white and red.
Red connotes ideas of danger / blood.

'it' and 'stared' de-humanise, make the
person an object

colloquial/informal to convey message
repetition reinforces the point.

People realise their own
mortality and are glad it isn't
away from life them and family/friends.
sibilance - draws focus - life can
be interrupted suddenly by death.

Death unravels you - reduces who you are.
Everything that makes you unique - makes you 'you' - your personality.

Seeing the ambulance gives us a shock.
We realise our own mortality.
"Pulls to distance all we are". We are just
people, here for a very short time.
Life will end, and others will go on
without us.