

Preface

It is profoundly surprising to find a poet's reputation undergo a dramatic transformation in only a decade following his death. Philip Arthur Larkin (1922-85), whose reputation as a major poet was already established at the time of his death, has provoked adverse criticism to such an extent that the very basis of his claim to eminence is often questioned. Nevertheless, everything changed with the publication of the letters and the authorized biography. Epistolary evidence was foregrounded to project Larkin the man as racist, sexist, parochial etc, with the unhappy result that the potential of Larkin the poet got somewhat overshadowed. The Eliotic credo which had so effectively separated the life of a poet from the life of poetry was forgotten by the then reigning critics who were actually resorting to vituperative criticism of the poet by way of safeguarding the morality of the reader from degenerate poetry. However, when literary criticism stoops to the level of verbal abuse, the desire for a change begins to gather momentum. It is in this context that the title of the dissertation **Larkin Lost, Larkin Found: Towards a New Poetics of Reading** assumes significance.

I express my profound gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Chandanashis Laha who, in spite of busy academic schedules has always found time to assist me in the course of this research. It is his indulgence which has afforded me the freedom to pursue the subject from a perspective that I thought would be congenial to the reading of Larkin's poetry. My sincere thanks are due to Prof. Stephen Regan who, at a very early stage of the work, was kind enough to confirm the viability of this project. I am also thankful to the British Council Library, Kolkata, without whose assistance this project would not have been possible.

The memory of my late father plagues me as I recount his deep desire to see his eldest born evolve as a discerning reader of literature, and words will simply fail me to express my

indebtedness to him. It is to him that I owe every part of my being. I am also particularly indebted to my late teacher Prof. Samar Chakraborty, who taught me the divergent ways from which poetry can be engaged with. The fact that I could not live up to his expectations is solely due to my mediocrity.

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