

## Always Philip Larkin

READING JAMES BOOTH'S cloddishly entitled *Philip Larkin: Life, Art and Love* so that I might review it for the *New York Times Book Review*, I was glad to find that the only sane view of Larkin is once again becoming standard, after too long a period in which there have been serious debates about how so disturbed a psyche could have produced such serenely integrated poetry. (Some pundits resolved the question by announcing that Larkin's poetry was never really much good at all, but luckily their witless views did not penetrate as far as the high schools, where children continued to be told, correctly, that some of Larkin's poems were as good as anything they were ever likely to read.) But for once, while working, I found myself a bit short of the necessary books. Over the years I have accumulated all the individual collections of Larkin's poetry plus both versions of the *Collected Poems* (one version