Notes: From Cris Warren

* ...he was writing to be read by everyone. He said “I should hate anybody to read my work because he’s been told to and told what to think about it.”

**Sexual intercourse began  
In nineteen sixty-three  
(which was rather late for me) -  
Between the end of the "Chatterley" ban  
And the Beatles' first LP.**

**We have the first edition Chatterly and the Beatles LP (DO WE HAVE THE FIRST?)**

The Move to Pearson Park: AM points Monica advised him on the interior décor, to make it homely, lots of dark pink curtains, green walls

Born in 1922, in middle class comfort in Coventry. He was an intelligent boy, grammar school, not great at maths, but prodigiously talented when it came to English. But nature conspired against Philip. He was short sighted, gangly, awkward, self-conscious and had a bad stammer - he was a lonely little boy and throughout his life would never feel comfortable about his body image

When he died he left two legacies. His published works… …and cardboard boxes full of raw, often ugly revelations about what he thought, what he felt, how he treated the people he professed to love …did we ever really know Larkin?

For a librarian, someone who rationally indexed things for a living, the real Philip Larkin was a categorical mess of contradictions. He was a remarkable talent who led an unremarkable life, a focussed giant of literature and a lover of smut, the most serious, perhaps miserable soul you could hope not to meet and an absolute riot of wit: One couldn’t hope for a more liberal mind until you read his thoughts on immigration…

Perhaps his era was not so different from our own: confused, complex, contradictory. And his poems reflect this: sadness, home-truths, and glimpses of beauty, make the worthless worthwhile…

Eva: He loved her, he hated her. He was tied to her apron strings, bonded to mow her lawn and nurse her, charged with tolerating her infuriating ordinariness for the rest of her life– and she lived a long time….When Eva died in 1975 Larkin all but ceased writing poetry.

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| * When a great poet dies it’s like the keys to the nation’s psyche have been lost * There’s an out pouring of sadness – * Obituaries, a funeral, the works are republished, reappraised and then a biography * Sometime after that a plaque in Poets Corner in Westminster Abbey * And then a slow fade into obscurity or the national curriculum * It’s a process, a ritual |
| V/O Typically Philip Larkin managed to disrupt all that |
| ANDREW actuality:  In a way this is Philip’s other grave -   * This is where it was all stored, Monica alerted me to it when we were making arrangements for Philip’s estate - neatly catalogued in boxes; letters, postcards, drafts of his novel, his two Brunette Coleman outings, photos, minutes from meetings, porn magazines, recipes for jam. * The only thing missing was his diaries – which we knew he had kept since childhood but which he’d made Monica pledge she would arrange to have destroyed as soon as possible after his death. * It was Betty who shredded them – all 30, thick notebooks of them. Sworn not to read any, her eyes couldn’t help taking snapshots of the pages - it was dark stuff, “very unhappy, desperate really.” |
| * Philip’s will, naturally, was full of contradictory clauses. One version demanded all his personal writing remain secret. Another said it was up to the executors – including me – what was done with it. * Philip was ambivalent about a lot of things - work, poetry, women, everything - and he was, I think, ambivalent on this question. He wanted to be let off the decision. |
| PTC   * We know the worst and the best of his personal life, and each of us can make our own estimate of how it does and does not connect with his work. * Or to put this another way: we can see the beauty and truth of the poems in spite and because of what lay behind them. |
| V/O   * Larkin was a person who had profound and unforgettable things to say about common experience. |
| PTC  While he was still breathing, most people assumed they arose from an ordinary life; one of his greatest legacies is to make us pretty sure that no such thing exists. |