Chapter I: Introduction
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Introduction

In this dissertation, we shall examine the poetic works of Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes in the context of contemporary socio-political condition of Great Britain. It was, as we shall try to demonstrate, a 'post-imperial' situation. The term 'post-imperial' has been used here in the particular context of post-war situation, as it has been felt that the loss of empire affected the mindset of not only the political leaders of the nation but also its common middle class population who felt the impact in their lived experiences. It was a very important factor no doubt, but in the artistic and cultural representations, the impact may not always be directly stated. Mediated through artistic sensibilities, the percolated experiences were rendered not always in political terms. But the mindset regarding the 'presence' and 'absence' of the imperial power to act, 'supervise' and 'dominate' is traceable in different manifestations in the literary works of the time. Therefore the term 'post-imperial space' will not always be used to refer to the political phenomenon of the loss of empire; it will also be employed to indicate situations – social, cultural, psychological – where the impact of the loss was perceived in a more complicated, but less visible, way. To make things more complex, other factors like growing industrialization and large scale immigration began to impact upon the common
life. Often such combinations of emerging factors were referred to as 'modern.' One cannot deny the presence in contemporary works of an overwhelming sense of frustration and ennui as well as of a pressing need for resurgence and regeneration both of which can be, in some way or other, related to the political situation of the time. Such a complex of emotional responses can be traced in the works of the two poets we will discuss. Both Larkin and Hughes returned to the old England most notably through a return to the gradually vanishing beautiful landscape, the national myths and legends, to the archetypal English customs and conventions, in a word return to what has been called 'Englishness.' In this dissertation the main thrust of our arguments will be that both Larkin and Hughes responded to the post-imperial space mainly from the point of view of Englishness. Thus in this dissertation 'Englishness' will be a framework that will bind the works of the two poets together; it will be a constant reference point.

The idea of what Steve Padley calls 'Englishness as a literary concept' (83) is an interesting area of study. Englishness has been evolving through centuries. Intricately connected with the values emanating from England as a geographical space and England as a socio-cultural space, Englishness as an abstract idea is intrinsic to the identity of a people who gradually became politically powerful so much so that the sun in the British Empire never set. The sense of power became associated with England, which extended its political domination over a large number of colonies. That is why Simon Gikandi rightly observes that an English identity cannot be imagined "outside the history of Empire and the culture of colonialism" (213). The empire, even when it ceased to exist, went on to exercise a vital role in the English consciousness for a long time. This sense of power was gradually absorbed in the very concept of Englishness.
In her Introduction to *Englishness Revisited*, Floriane Reviron-Piegay points out that the concept of 'Britishness' was forged in the eighteenth century. Protestantism brought together the peoples of England, Scotland and Wales. Initially it did not conflict with Englishness. On the contrary, both the ideas continued to exist together and indeed often overlapped. The English did not feel uncomfortable with the wider connotations of the British identity.¹ It has been pointed out by Reviron-Piegay that industrial revolution, like the Empire and the two World Wars, which shaped the British psyche, was 'pan-Britannic' in nature. Later the Scots and the Welsh began to cling to their own ethnic identities as they started realizing that Britain and the British Empire were more English in nature than anything else. The assumption of the Scottishness or the Welshness is conceived to be "a sort of compensation for or counterweight against the predominant role of English" (Reviron-Piegay 2). Kathleen Wilson makes a similar point when she observes that despite sharing some important features with European and Celtic cultures, Englishness took care to differentiate itself from other "island races" on "assumptions which ranged from the superior capacity of English people for rational thought to the greater aesthetic beauty of the 'pink and white complexion'" (40). She further comments that "centuries of historical differentiation" even within the British Isles ignored the "shared roots in a Gothic past" (4). As a result, despite the presence of "other 'island races' in the British archipelago, there was clearly one superior 'Island Race'" (4).

The attempt at differentiation noted in the earlier paragraph was more prominent in the Empire – outside the British Isles and Europe. It is in the colonies that the Englishness was sought to be projected in a more pronounced way. The colonies as the space of imperial power, however, proved to be problematical. Face to face with the
‘Other’, their English ‘superiority’ was put to severe test. Although they received loyalty and was able to make a section of the colonised population internalize a sense of cultural inferiority, they also faced stiff cultural and ideological resistance from them. Simon Featherstone contends: “the dynamic of empire becomes one of displacement rather than expansion and of hybridisation rather than confident consolidation of existing cultural values and meanings” (20). To reinforce his contention he quotes Ian Baucom who comments that empire “is less a place where England exerts control than the place where England loses command of its own narrative of identity. It is the place onto which the island kingdom arrogantly displaces itself and from which a puzzled England returns as a stranger to itself” (qtd. in Featherstone 20).

Krishan Kumar observes that “all that the English can really call upon is the highly selective, partly nostalgic and backward looking version of ‘cultural Englishness’ elaborated in the late nineteenth century and continued into the next” (Identity 269). Jeremy Paxman finds that the English as a people are “marching backwards into the future” (qtd. in Reviron-Piegay 4). The paradox of Englishness thus lies in the fact that it is both stable and changing. Reviron-Piegay elaborates the point by saying that since the English have no traditional way to follow, they have to invent one. She mentions that “the display of the English flag representing the St. George cross during sporting events may be seen precisely as belonging to this new tradition” (4). There is therefore a deliberate attempt to construct an English identity in order to distinguish the Self from the Other – this ‘Other’ may be the Scots, the Welsh within the nation or the coloured immigrants from outside. Both Ian Baucom in his Out of Place and Benedict Anderson in Imagined Communities consider such constructions as the result more of emotional
attachment than of reasoned consideration. Baucom terms this as an 'affectionate condition' (12) while Anderson considers it to have 'a profound emotional legitimacy' (4).

It is interesting to note that the academic discourse of Englishness received a boost mainly from 1980s, which became more intense in the 1990s and in the first decade of the new century. Englishness had not been a new phenomenon. But what is to be observed is the fact that critics have taken up the issue with new energy and vigour only during and after 1980s. In fact, there has been a proliferation of books on Englishness. It is mainly because the paradigm of Englishness continuing from the eighteenth century suddenly began to face challenge. Not only did the empire end and the two World Wars shattered England, but also issues like joining the European Union or accepting the new common currency (Euro) affected the independent status of England.

The period covered in this dissertation is tentatively from the mid-1940s to early 1990s, although the focus is mainly concentrated on the poetry written and published in the 1950s and 1960s. However, we have referred to some works, which were written even earlier – in the mid 1940s – and also later – in the 1970s, 1980s and even early 1990s.

There are many works which deal with the disintegration of the empire. They are mainly written from the point of view of the formerly colonized people and the literary works were concerned both with the colonial hangover and the attempt to break away from that. In this dissertation, however, an attempt will be made to look at the post-imperial space from the point of view of the imperialists, in this particular respect, the British. Not much work has been done to explore the British psyche after the loss of
empire. There was a sense of tentativeness, uncertainty, frustration and even anger as the fact of the ‘loss’ began to sink in the English mind. Moreover, the British frustration and anger were reinforced as everything in Britain began to change substantially as will be shown in this dissertation. One of the most important of these changes was the influx of the immigrants. This was greatly facilitated by the Nationality Act of 1948 which allowed immigration from the former and existing British colonies. As a result people began to come in greater numbers and settle in London and other parts of England. The arrival of the ship SS Empire Windrush at Tilbury on 22 June 1948 is considered to be of great importance in this respect.3

There has been a series of literary, cultural attempts to assert these changed and changing contours of Englishness and also a necessary historical connection between colonization/imperialism and the arrival of new immigrants. Louise Bennett, for example, in her poem “Colonisation in Reverse” (1966) speaks of, in typical creole terms, how “Jamaica people colonizin /Englan in reverse” (16). Louise shows how hundreds and thousands of “ship-load” and “plane-load” Jamaicans thronged England (“Jamaica is Englan boun”). Like “fire” they “immigrate” and “populate” England, the “seat a de Empire” (16). The most glaring truth she wants to bring home to us is the fact that from England’s point of view, it is a situation worse than even war (“What a devilment a Englan!/ Dem face war an brave de worse”). The English were once in Jamaica, in the process of ‘colonisation’; that is why the Jamaicans now are in England, in the process that she aptly calls ‘colonisation in reverse’. Moniza Alvi also, in her poem “Arrival 1946” (1993), picks up some objects – washed items like ‘underwear’ on the clothing line – which are indicative/symbolic of the changing England. The boat the character called
Tariq came by docked at Liverpool from where he took a train. What he observed during his journey was an “unbroken line of washing/from the North West to Euston” (204). The appearance of these items on the open takes even Tariq by surprise and he wonders at the prevalence of such ‘strange’, and of course ‘foreign’ elements in the ‘Englishman’s garden’: “An Empire, and all this washing, /The underwear, the Englishman’s garden” (204). As a result of such large-scale immigration and several other factors resulting from the weakening of the British power in the international arena, the entire socio-economic situation in England began to change. The impact of all this on the psyche of the mainstream British population can be easily imagined.

In the next two sections of this chapter, an attempt will be made to deal with the socio-political background and the contemporary poetic landscape respectively, without which any discussion of the poetry of the period in general and of Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes in particular would remain unfinished.

I

The loss of empire, as has already been mentioned, was a serious setback for Great Britain from the point of view of politics and that of British psyche as well. It created a sense of loss, a vacuum. At the social and political level several forces were at work and these contesting forces were vying for primacy. As a result, the socio-political structure was undergoing transformation. The new order required new priorities, and wastage outside the country had to be cut in order to create a new economic order at the domestic level. Withdrawal from the role of the empire-builder, from the centrality of
attention and activity, was something to which the creative writers were responding in their own individual ways. The insecurity and angst caused by the loss of empire made the whole British psyche shrink. Frustration and disillusionment, even anger were evident in their works. Insularity, in turn, ruled the roost with most of the writers who became more and more concerned with the ‘English’ elements in their writing. Thus we find the great, international and cosmopolitan themes, of Eliot for instance, being replaced by ones of narrow domestic importance like the description of changing English countryside, or faunas like crows, hawks, pikes, otters, jaguars and foxes or by trivial objects like bicycle and train.

By July 1940 Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, put a paper to the Cabinet which for the first time accepted that Britain’s future survival depended upon substantial assistance from the United States. Britain was negotiating to obtain 50 First World War destroyers (a small fast war-ship) from the United States of America (henceforth referred to as USA) in exchange for granting the USA bases in seven British colonies. On 22 August of the same year, Sir Kingsley Wood, Chancellor of the Exchequer, presented a paper to the Cabinet indicating that Britain was virtually bankrupt. It “marked the effective end of Great Britain’s status as an independent power” (Ponting 505). Churchill sent Professor Tizard to the US in August with design details of some of Britain’s most secret inventions – microwave radar, the cavity magnetron, chemical warfare formulae, special explosives, jet engine designs, and so on. Before it received aid, Britain was forced to sell all its assets in the USA, some below their market value. Churchill felt Britain was being not just skinned, “but flayed to the bone” (Ponting 510). By March 1941 the USA Congress approved ‘Lend-Lease’ (Childs 10), which
meant American war materials did not have to be paid for. However, Britain had to accept USA views on what rules should guide future international trade.

The crushing economic and military realities of the post-1945 world relegated Great Britain to the position of “America’s junior partner” (Lawrence 529). After her meeting with President Truman in January 1952, Evelyn Shuckburgh observed, “It was impossible not to be conscious that we were playing second fiddle” (32). Playing the supporting role did not come easily to the citizens of a nation, which had grown accustomed to being at the ‘centre of the stage.’ The English officials continued to think and act as if they were the policy-makers and agents of a great power. The most striking evidence of their attitude was the decision to proceed with the manufacture of an atomic bomb.

Immediately after the Second World War, Great Britain had been obliged to withdraw from its most prized imperial possession, India, in circumstances which suggested that the “British authorities had lost control” (Butler xii). Actually in the history of Great Britain World War II marked the end of an era and ushered in a new one. The Labour government was voted to power in 1945. And in a slow but steady way Labour did dismantle the British Empire. The chief British actor was Attlee, who towards the end of his life believed that he would be best remembered for what he had done to facilitate the transfer of power in India. He saw it as a moral duty, to which he and his party had long been pledged, and, for he was a pragmatist, an advantage to Britain. The Treasury would no longer have to dispense money to maintain a British garrison in the subcontinent and, if Britain got the terms it desired, commerce with India would continue to flourish. Attlee also appreciated that a peaceful exchange of power and
a stable India would add to British prestige and serve as a “bulwark against Communism in Asia” (Lawrence 547). He and his chiefs of staff also wanted India within the Commonwealth, and if possible as an ally which would continue to host British bases. Attlee’s mandate to Mountbatten, delivered in February 1947, instructed the Viceroy to secure “the closest and most friendly relations between India and the UK. A feature of this relationship should be a military treaty” (Lawrence 547). Even the successive Conservative Governments of 1951, 1955 and 1959 did not effect any change in their policy. Geographically contracted to a ‘Little England’, she had to make a harsh compromise to a more modest role in international affairs. It seemed to many that “the Empire was on the way out, the welfare state was on the way in” (Judd 14). After coming to power replacing the wartime hero Winston Churchill, the Attlee cabinet started building up a Welfare State that assured health care, subsidized housing, social insurance, old age pensions and so on. Asa Briggs, quite reasonably, remarks that in the twentieth century, “warfare has necessitated welfare” (qtd. in Kumar, “Setting” 23). The Labour Party ascended the office to implement its socialist policies in the domestic space, their top priority being the building of a Welfare State. In Attlee’s own words:

The Labour Party came to power with a well defined policy worked out over many years. It had been set out very clearly in our Election Manifesto and we were determined to carry it out. Its ultimate objective was the creation of a society based on social justice, and, in our view, this could only be attained by bringing under public ownership and control the main factors in the economic system. (qtd. in Heffer 21)
Thus the energy of the nation turned inwards, making the centrifugal centripetal. In the introduction to *Intercultural Voices in Contemporary British Literature: The Implosion of Empire* Lars Ole Sauerberg has employed the two terms ‘explosion’ and ‘implosion’ in the context of expansion and loss of British domain. An ‘explosion’ is the upshot of huge concentrated energy looking for an outlet. ‘Explosion’ is an appropriate metaphor to describe the British imperialistic expansion of power, to extend the imperial space. The building of the British Empire could well be compared to a slow-paced explosion. Colonies provided various English industries with the raw materials. After that England manufactured the finished products and then they were sold again to those colonies. This is how a vicious circle was formed: “Imperial expansion depended heavily upon the export of manufactured goods from the metropolitan centre in exchange for raw materials from the periphery” (Cain and Hopkins 663). An ‘implosion’, on the other hand, begets force by the necessity to fill a suddenly created vacuum. The idea of ‘implosion’ can aptly portray the shedding of Britain’s empire and creating a void thereby. The energy, earlier going from Britain to various parts of the world in keeping with the imperialistic expansion, changed its direction and came back to Britain herself this time. This vacuum – resulting from the loss of empire, in our context – needed to be filled up.

Empires can be thought of as “multi-ethnic conglomerates held together by transnational organisational and cultural ties” (Cain and Hopkins 664). They were expansionist by definition and had globalizing ambitions. In the early 1930s, as B.J.C. McKercher points out, Britain was the only power that could fairly claim to have retained
a "truly global stature" (qtd. in Cain and Hopkins 676). This lofty position continued to be identified with the possession of empire. The empire was woven into the fabric of the great British institutions: "the monarchy, the Church, and Parliament" (Williams 203). It was only after the outbreak of World War II that Great Britain’s dependence on the United States became so acute that her global leadership had to be “first shared and then surrendered” (qtd. in Cain and Hopkins 677). Actually, the contraction and eventual demise of the British Empire was one of the most dramatic indicators of Great Britain’s changing status in the twentieth century. The disintegration of the British imperial system was remarkably rapid. From being the largest empire in the history of the world in the 1930s, Britain’s global system amounted, by the late 1960s, to “little more than a few outposts or ‘points’” (Butler xi), and to a set of relationships, embodied in the Commonwealth, successor body to the empire. Moreover, Britain’s external relationships seemed, by the late 1960s, to have undergone a fundamental reorientation: from being a power with truly global interests, Great Britain was coming to be seen as one of a number of “middle-ranking powers whose interests were bound up in continuing plans for the integration of Western Europe” (Butler xi). The Suez Crisis of 1956, on which Larkin wrote a poem from domestic point of view (discussed in chapter 2), has often been depicted as a ‘turning point’ in the history of Great Britain’s external relations and status as an imperial power. Under the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement of 1954, the British “bowed to USA pressure to evacuate, within two years, the Suez Canal Zone” (Jackson 146). The last British troops left in March 1956. Only weeks after that, on July 26, 1956, Egypt’s President Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalised the French and British owned Suez Canal. Great Britain was the biggest single user of the Canal. Two-thirds of Western Europe’s
oil was imported via the Canal (Blake 366). Seeing Nasser’s move as a serious threat to British interests, Britain’s Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, secretly initiated plans for an Anglo-French invasion. The two countries prepared for joint operations by air, land and sea, inviting Israel, long angered by Egypt’s attacks on her territory and support for Palestinian guerrillas, to strike at the same time: the British and French “cooked up with Israel a secret plan for a joint simultaneous invasion” (Campbell 92). On October 29, the Israelis attacked, giving Great Britain and France an excuse to invade Egypt in the guise of peacemakers and protectors of the Canal. The Egyptians were enormously aided by world reaction to the invasion. By an overwhelming majority the nations of the world including the USA and all the Commonwealth countries except Australia and New Zealand, opposed the Anglo-French action and called for an immediate ceasefire. The Soviet Premier, Nikolai Alexandrovich Bulganin, sent threatening messages to London, Paris and Tel Aviv. It was the USA attitude above all that proved decisive: President Eisenhower refused to supply oil to the West until Great Britain called a halt. Faced with a drastic run on sterling in addition to the oil crisis, the British government turned with relief to a Canadian proposal to form a U.N. Emergency Force for Suez and, on November 6 both Great Britain and France accepted a ceasefire. The Eden government still hoped to extract concessions from Egypt in return for the withdrawal of British troops. But Eisenhower was adamant, there would be no help with oil supplies until the troops were out. By December 23 they had all been withdrawn. The Suez fiasco provided the humiliating proof that Britain’s days of Big Power intervention were well and truly over. Stripped of global power, Great Britain was reduced to the role of an onlooker, a “kind of umpire nation, able to see through the law, always looking for justice” (Fowles
The war illustrated Great Britain's problems in defending a genuinely global imperial system, and its inability to prosecute, unaired, a war in two hemispheres simultaneously. The lesson of the entire period since the mid-1920s, that imperial defence would require the assistance of at least one powerful ally, prompted London increasingly to seek to appease the United States, and involve the Americans in security arrangements. Once the War had broken out in Europe, Britain found itself seeking USA support. For the Labour government of Clement Attlee which took office before the end of the Second World War, maintaining Great Britain's status as one of the 'Big Three' global powers was an unquestioned priority. In the government's worldview, the empire occupied a central role. However, imperial policy in the post-war years was affected by the new conditions in which Great Britain found itself. The country's economic situation was of overriding significance. Exhausted by the demands of war, the British economy faced a difficult period of readjustment, at a time when it was expected to support not only greatly extended overseas commitments, but also an ambitious programme of domestic social reform. The international climate, too, harboured many uncertainties: the disintegration of the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union and the onset of the Cold War lent added significance to fears that the United States might once again retreat into isolationism, leaving Britain to shoulder the burden of defending Western Europe from an aggressive Soviet Union. Soviet ambitions seemed to include "the dissolution of the British Empire" as well (Butler 63).

A major determinant in policy during this period was Britain's economic position. Attlee's ministers were unfortunate in having to confront three major crises during their time in office: in 1947, in relation to sterling and the dollar shortage, in 1949 over
devaluation, and in 1950-51, surrounding the financial implications of massive rearmament. All of these would have important repercussions for Britain’s external policies, and especially the imperial connection. Forced to shed more than a billion pounds’ worth of overseas assets during the war, Great Britain was now the world’s largest debtor, to the tune of around £4.7 billion (Butler 64). Having depended for so long on invisible earnings, Great Britain’s balance of payments position seemed bleak. Compounding this, in August 1945, was the shock of Washington’s abrupt termination of Lend-Lease. As John Maynard Keynes famously observed, Britain faced a “financial Dunkirk” (Butler 64) unless it could secure substantial USA assistance. Keynes and his team of negotiators failed to persuade Washington to provide the hoped-for interest-free grant (in recognition of Britain’s wartime sacrifices). Instead, the American loan of $3.75 billion (at two per cent interest), and the writing-off of Lend-Lease debts of $21 billion for $650 million, came with unpalatable ‘strings’. Among these, one of the most problematic for Britain was the promise to ratify the 1944 Bretton Woods agreement by cancelling the sterling balances and making the pound fully convertible into dollars by the middle of July 1947. The sterling balances were funds held in the Bank of England by overseas governments, representing Britain’s sterling debts to these countries, often arising from wartime expenditure. By the end of the war, they totalled £3,150 million, about a quarter of which was owed to the colonies, with other major sums owing to India and Egypt. Cancelling the balances was opposed by the Treasury and the Bank of England, which saw them as assets, enabling Britain to import goods on credit and reinforcing the position of sterling as a major world currency. In political terms, too, cancelling the balances would be difficult (Hyam xlii-xliii). To aggravate matters, Britain
was already facing internal economic difficulties early in 1947, when a severe winter caused a fuel crisis and a consequent decline in industrial production. Not surprisingly, Britain’s growing financial problems led to calls within the government for major reductions in Britain’s overseas commitments, especially its military spending. Not only would this save dollar expenditure, but it could also free scarce labour for deployment in the export drive. Among the additional responsibilities currently being borne by Britain were support for the Greek regime in its civil war against Communists, justified on the grounds that such a sensitive region as the Mediterranean could not be left vulnerable to Soviet encroachment in the event of a Communist victory, and Germany, where occupation forces had to be maintained, and civilians in the British Zone supplied with food. At a time when USA help to Great Britain and Western Europe was still limited, and Cold War tensions appeared to be worsening, it was clear that, given its already severe balance of payments problems, Great Britain’s economy was being stretched too far. All of this coincided with the deteriorating situation in India, and Palestine (Reynolds 162-3). Evidently, cuts had to be made. There followed, during February 1947, a series of decisions which had far-reaching consequences for Britain’s world role. Chief among these was Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin’s declaration that the question of the future of Palestine would be referred to the United Nations, that aid to Greece and Turkey would end almost immediately, and that Britain would withdraw from India by June 1948 at the latest. These decisions seemed to represent a watershed in Britain’s world role, recognition of national enfeeblement, and an acceptance that some tasks, such as the defence of Greece and Turkey, would have to be surrendered to the much more powerful United States. As the Chiefs of Staff argued in October 1952, “Our standard of living
stems in large measure from our status as a great power and this depends to no small extent on the visible indication of our greatness, which our forces, particularly overseas, provide” (qtd. in Kent 133-4). The unfolding challenge was to find means of preserving Britain’s global interests at cost that was acceptable, given the significant reduction in the country’s assets in the post-war world, and its accumulating economic problems. Not only was the economy growing more slowly than that of some important rivals, but also the balance of payments position remained difficult. The government found itself forced to continue a regime of austerity while trying to increase industrial production. (Larkin’s observation quoted in chapter 2, page nos 52-3, bears evidence to this) To complicate Britain’s balance of payments difficulties, the country’s overseas competitors were not only becoming more economically powerful, but also supplanting Britain in some of its traditional export markets. Standing in the way of even and steady economic growth was the phenomenon of stop-go economic policies, in which expansion and restraint alternated in a frustrating manner.

Angela Thirkell in her novel Peace Breaks Out (1946) fittingly says that, with the Labour victory of 1945, “the Brave and Revolting New World came into its own” (qtd. in Kumar, “Setting” 16). Initially there was dilly-dallying regarding the control of the state over the economy and wholesale nationalization. But like a great leveller the World War II inverted the whole scenario. John Maynard Keynes and William Beveridge could well be deemed as the two major exponents of post-war reconstruction. Keynesianism was a means of maintaining full employment by stimulating demand, usually in the form of tax cuts or increased public spending to create jobs. In the observation of Eric Heffer, Britain said yes to “Keynesian concepts of government intervention in economic affairs to create
and maintain employment. With such policies the life of the mass of the people was transformed" (22). Actually state planning and state control of the economy as well as Welfare was deemed by almost all as an absolute necessity at that time. The Liberal party’s manifesto *Britain’s Industrial Future* (‘The Yellow Book’) (1928) was particularly influential in bringing about the collectivist thinking of the post-war Britain. Also there were influences and instigations of thinkers like Oswald Mosley, G.D.H. Cole, Webbs, Barbara Wootton and so on who became instrumental with their socialist writings. The urge to construct a new social order demolishing entirely the older one, to move forward towards a democratic socialism, produced a new temperament in post-war British society. This new mood opposed the reckless bohemianism, the abundant sloppy emotionalism of the neo-Romantic 1940s, and also to the political bias of the Marxist 1930s, and to crown it all, any sort of extreme pronouncement. Rather, it preferred what came to be known as the ‘middle opinion’ or mixed economy.

A “people’s peace” (Webster 7) that emphasized welfare at home, especially through the post-war development of the welfare state, corresponded closely to the rhetoric of a “people’s empire” (Webster 7) that emphasized ideas of welfare and development. The two major, and outstandingly important, welfare measures were the National Health Services Act and the National Insurance Act, both passed in 1946 and implemented with effect from 1948. The welfare legislation also included the Industrial Injuries Act. Another piece of relevant legislation, that covering family allowances had already been enacted in 1945 by Churchill’s caretaker administration. The National Health Service Act nationalized the nation’s hospitals, about half of which belonged to the local authorities. The outcome was a transformation in medical care, especially for
women and children, within a highly cost-efficient system. Aneurin Bevan, the minister responsible, wanted a service which would encompass all the nation’s citizens, and provide them all, irrespective of their financial circumstances or where they lived, with completely free and comprehensive medical care. The legislation was based on Sir William Beveridge’s report on *Social Insurance and Allied Services* of November 1942 which recommended “public protection for all ‘from the cradle to the grave’” (Childs17). Allan Sillitoe, the writer who, in 1945, was a capstan-lathe operator in Nottingham, has commented:

> ...the Health Service was a sort of enormous sign of relief – no more Panel – it made the most incredible difference to the mentality of the less well off – probably the greatest single factor in this century in creating a new pride in the English working class. (qtd. in Childs17)

Attlee told David Childs in 1962 that he believed it to be his government’s biggest single achievement in home affairs. Unlike the new social security system, though universal, it was not intended to be minimal in its level of provision. Under Labour the costs were kept to a minimum. Partly in consequence, regional inequalities long survived. Despite publicly expressed fears of the crushing costs of public demand for a bonanza of free teeth and spectacles – the real need for which had been seriously underestimated – up to the early 1950s the rise in costs of the health service only just kept pace with the rise in the birth-rate. Under the National Insurance Act the whole population was brought, for the first time, into a comprehensive system covering unemployment, sickness, maternity,
guardianship, retirement, and death. The promised ‘housing drive’ to solve the housing problem, which had been worsened by the war, was severely constrained and only in 1948 did the Labour Government meet the promised target of 240,000 new houses per year. In the economic crisis of 1947, only 189,000 were completed in the United Kingdom. A total of 1,192,000 had been added to the stock by 1951 (Tanner, Thane and Porter 98-102). However, under Attlee’s governments over a million homes were built, which was not bad, considering the shortages of men and materials. Labour did implement the pledge to raise the school-leaving age to 15 in 1947. They also implemented the tripartite system of secondary education embodied in the 1944 Education Act without apparently considering its divisive features.

What deserves special mention is that not just the Labour, the Conservatives also favoured the idea of Welfare and neither of them sought to dismantle the apparatus of the Welfare State. Eden’s successor, the ‘urbane and surprisingly liberal Macmillan, took power with the United States’ backing and pushed through a programme of decolonisation that at least equalled that of the Attlee government and in important respects surpassed it. As newly liberated colonies abounded, and the artificial federations were allowed to collapse, the British public were told that they had “never had it so good” (Judd 15). Consumer spending and economic growth were the new gods, not the Empire and the crippling expenditure on forces ‘east of Suez’. Harold Macmillan came out with Reconstruction (1934) and The Middle Way (1938). The very name of the last-mentioned book sums up the prevailing middling mood. Also there were Winston Churchill, Lord Eustace Percy, Oliver Stanley, Robert Boothbey and others who sought after the ‘middle opinion’. Moreover, there were groups like Political and Economic
Planning (PEP), the Industrial Reorganization League, the Next Five Years Group etc. who did support Welfare. After the World War II almost all the parties, groups or factions, therefore, became unanimous in rejecting nineteenth-century view of state planning and accepting a Welfare society.

Again, Welfare demanded reconstruction not only in material domain but in moral or psychological sphere also. ‘Education for citizenship’ which also implied ‘education for all’ became the slogan. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) virtually became “a ministry of culture” (Kumar, “Setting” 19). From 1939 onwards, it also widened in bulk. Above all it adapted itself to the altered scenario by accommodating mass-culture. So far the BBC was as if a prerogative of the elite class; but now it started embracing the common mass by providing them with ‘light entertainment’. Thus the BBC presented its listeners with comedy programme, current affairs programme etc. Actually after the war the BBC turned into a virtual haven for the British literati. Thus, critics and writers like William Empson, Louis MacNeice, Herbert Read, George Orwell and others used it to give vent to their radical thoughts. The system accommodated even the radical elements (leftists) as it was the demand of the hour. Thus the Great War got almost each of the British intelligentsia involved. But the most important thing was – be he/she high or low, left or right, or anything else – war and the aftermath of war cut everyone to size giving birth to an all pervading radical egalitarian spirit in consequence. The consensus was that the new order should be built without the prerogative of any sort. The Times of 1 July 1940 wrote, “the new order cannot be based on the preservation of privilege, whether the privilege be that of a country, of a class, or of an individual” (qtd. in Kumar, “Setting” 22).
Another aspect of egalitarianism was perceived in the social domain in the form of equality. The society started recognizing to a great extent the hitherto neglected marginalized people. They came to be valued only when they shed their lives in the war to save England. Their worth was grasped not just by the Labour only, but also by the Liberal Tory or Conservatives who ruled for thirteen unbroken years after 1951. Thus at the post-War and post-imperial phase, England, so far deemed to be the England of the upper class only, became England of the commoners also to a great extent. The collective struggle went a long way in narrowing the gap between the high and low. The agency of the BBC to modify the British culture based on class differences in order to re-establish a new one was also crucial. Even the working-class families could afford televisions, cars, washing machines and holidays as well. To cite an example – the 3,00,000 televisions sold to the customers in Britain in 1950 increased to 10,500,000 by the end of the decade (Halsey 24-6).

However, economy remained the major stumbling-block to both the Governments – Conservatives and Labour. Thus the first and foremost concern of Harold Macmillan’s Conservative government was how to recuperate in the field of economy after the Suez. In order to bridle the increasing wage demands and inflation Peter Thorneycroft, the new Chancellor proposed, “a reduction in the subsidies to nationalized industries, a curb on wages, and substantial cuts in defence and welfare” (Bloom and Day 2). However, the Conservative Party could not dare to do so as, “it would imply the withdrawal of more than half the only post-war social service which a Conservative government could claim to have created” (Morgan 174). In fact throughout their tenure the Conservatives
constantly increased subsidies in health care, education and housing. Still they had to face
defeat in the election for their inability to modernize the economy.

The Macmillan era ended with the return of a Labour government under Harold
Wilson in 1964. The Labour Party that succeeded the Conservatives had to suffer a
similar fate for the same reason. In order to fulfil its commitment to the Welfare the
Labour Party materialized a series of projects such as the abolition of capital punishment
(1965), the expansion of higher education and the creation of the Open University (1966),
the decriminalisation of homosexuality (1967), the establishment of the giant Department
of Health and Social Security (1968) and so on. As early as in 1956 Anthony Crosland,
wrote, “a fairer education system, better relations between workers and managers on the
shop-floor, better welfare provision for the disadvantaged, more liberal policies towards
censorship, abortion, divorce and sexuality – these were essential steps to a more
egalitarian social order” (42). But what mattered in the election was Labour Party’s
incapacity to rejuvenate the economy and its inability to deal with the unions.

However, the ‘swinging sixties’ and the music of the Beatles seemed a “far cry
from the age of imperial supremacy and high-minded duty” (Judd 15) and by the end of
the 1970s Welfare lost its relevance being accused as it was of giving birth to a
“dependency culture” (Bloom and Day 6). Keynesian economy, the mainstay of Welfare,
also suffered a serious setback at that time. Keynes believed in creating full employment
by stimulating demand – but this increased demand was seldom met by increased
production and resulted in greater imports that had to be squared from the foreign
exchange stocks of the Bank of England. Whenever the foreign reserves were found to be
flowing out too fast a crisis was created, requiring tax and interest rate rises, a tightening
of credit and a reduction in government expenditure. Ultimately, the election in May 1979, of a Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher marked an end to support for the Welfare State. Keynesianism was effectively replaced by Thatcher's monetary policies. This move of Mrs. Thatcher was supposed to provide the answer to the question, “What's wrong with the British economy?” which, since the late 1950s, “has been at the very heart of political debate” (Porter 26). Monetarism intended to eradicate inflation by regulating the money supply. Thus there could be no borrowing or printing of money to meet wage demands. The money for these had to be obtained out of increased revenue arising from a more competitive economy.

Now, if we look back, the picture was not a happy one. The promise of equality and common culture was not fulfilled. Despite the material prosperity, inequality existed at the social and economic levels. And when unemployment reigned supreme in the late seventies, the class conflict transformed into racial conflict as well. The reformation in the education sector turned out to be a miscarriage. True, there were some silver linings. In the British society before the World War II, the line was sharply drawn between 'us' and 'them'; between the upper-class privilege and the working-class endurance; the elite 'high culture' of painting, music, drama and literature and the mass-culture, based mostly on the cinema and the dance hall. However, after the war, it appeared, at least for a while, that egalitarian beliefs might effect fundamental amendment in the make-up of the social order. But the class differences, inequalities etc. in the British society – though lessened to a great extent – still remained. The promises were only partially fulfilled. Indeed, "too much of the reconstruction of the Era of Consensus was in rhetoric rather than reality" (Marwick, *British Society* 277).
In the wake of the Welfare policies (as discussed in the earlier section) Britain became a society for a mixed economy and full employment ["Full employment for men was achieved..." (Thane 98)]. This mood influenced the literary domain as well. The best literary manifestation of this middle of the road attitude was the Movement. In fact, it would not be improper to declare that the Movement provided the idiom to correspond to the new social temper. Thus, the Movement was the expression of Welfare capitalism. A common culture would go with the Keynesian economy. The arts, like state benefits, should be available to all. Furthermore, the Movement's characteristic disbelief in big ideas was a fair reflection of the consensus between the two major parties, summed up in the word 'Butskellism', a term coined by The Economist in its issue of 13 February 1954 to express the real lack of difference between the politico-economic policies of the Labour and Conservative parties. ('Butskellism' is a compound of the names of R.A. Butler, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and his Labour predecessor and opposition 'Shadow', Hugh Gaitskell):

There arose the ideological structures which took Britain safely through the forties and brought her to rest in the fifties. That is to say, the mixed economy, 'Butskellism' (in all but name), all-party acceptance for a
welfare state, all-party rejection of the nineteenth-century vision of state planning as a horrible evil ... (Marwick, *Middle Opinion* 285)

Actually, at that time there was a sense that ideology was dead and government was consequently a pure matter-of-fact affair. This proved a source of deep disappointment for many. Thus Jimmy Porter’s outburst in John Osborne’s play *Look Back in Anger* (1956), that there were no great causes anymore, came to typify the mind-set of the ‘angry young man’ to the narrowed horizons of post-war, post-imperial Britain; horizons which found their consummate illustration in Movement writers. After the loss of Empire Britain was no longer a world power. This necessitated a reconsideration of what it meant to be British and Britain’s role in the globe as well. One may ponder over the following conversation between Milan Kundera and Ian McEwan:

[Milan] Kundera: ... You see, if you’re English, you never question the immortality of your nation because you are English. Your Englishness will never be put in doubt. You may question England’s politics, but not its existence.

[Ian] McEwan: Well, once we were very big. Now we are rather small.

Kundera: Not all that small, though.

McEwan: We ask ourselves who we are, and what our position in the world is. We have an image of ourselves that was formed in another time.  (McEwan 210)
In McEwan’s comment to Kundera – “once we were ... big ... small” – the political, economic and cultural fortunes of England are “inflected with a dying fall” (Rogers and McLeod 4). Since the end of the Second World War, both the material circumstances of England and the ways it had been envisaged and projected had undergone sustained revision for a number of reasons. Caryl Phillips’s comment, “England has changed” (3) was of singular importance. In terms of social conditions, England’s relation to the rest of the British Isles and the world overseas altered profoundly. The ascendency of the USA and USSR after the war, coupled with the increasing influence of American culture in popular music, film, television, the visual arts and literature, had seen a shift in the perception of England both at home and abroad as at the centre of international power and global culture. In the early 1960s, Britain tried to enter the West European Common Market, but was rejected. (However, she succeeded in doing so at a second attempt some years later.) The dissolution of Empire, the debacle of Suez (1956), retreat from Cyprus in the later 1950s and the aborted reorientation towards Europe, all undermined the identity of Tory government and international prestige in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Undermined at the same time was a sense of social authority: “Everything about British class system begins to look foolish and tacky when related to a second-class power on the decline” (Bart Moore-Gilbert and John Seed 18). Thus we find, in his poem “A Woman Unconscious” (written in August 1959) Ted Hughes talks about America and Russia (the then USSR):

Russia and America circle each other;

Threats nudge an act that were without doubt
A melting of the mould in the mother,
Stones melting about the root,

The quick of the earth burned out:
The toil of all our ages a loss
With leaf and insect.

(CP 62)

But significantly, Britain is nowhere in the scene. Actually, in the post-war, post-imperial period, and in the era of what is known as the 'cold war', the two indubitable world superpowers were the USA and the USSR, far surpassing Great Britain. In her English Journey: or the road to Milton Keynes, Beryl Bainbridge’s journey up the River Itchen on a trawler, from Hamble to Southampton’s docks, takes her past the rusting, empty supertanker Burmah Endeavour. The tanker was built during the Suez crisis to take oil the long way round. It is now stranded in the Solent because “she’s no longer needed and there’s nothing else she’s fit for. Her salvation would be another crisis, another war” (Bainbridge 15). England is no longer an admirable endeavour epitomized by its economic and naval power but now lies on its last legs like the wrecked supertanker, barely afloat and rotting. In Manchester Bainbridge is overwhelmed by the Town Hall in Albert Square, its “silver plate and busts, its marble columns and mosaic floors ... What a world it represented – cotton and shipping and commerce, the like of which we shall never see again” (81). In Bristol, sitting on the banks of a wharf, she gets haunted by similar sentiments:
On the opposite bank of the river stood a massive warehouse, windows smashed in their oval frames, the roof sprouting hollyhocks. It was sinking into the mud. Nothing shoddy about nineteenth-century architecture. Whether the purpose of the building was to store stacks of sugar or works of art, the exterior, with its balustrades, porticoes, and columns of granite, was a monument to wealth and the permanence of imperialistic trade. I expect the warehouse will be gutted and made into a supermarket or flats for executives, and no one but a filing clerk in some dusty department of the Town Hall will remember what it used to be. (41)

Centuries of supremacy have left many British people ensnared in a mesh of prejudice and shallow assertiveness. Even after losing most of her former colonies, the Coronation year in 1953 was a moment that marked a “post-war high-point” (Webster 7) in Britain. In Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia queues to see a film of the Coronation – *A Queen is Crowned* – began at dawn, and people were still queuing at five in the evening (*Daily Telegraph* 11 Jun.1953). In Britain, it was the most popular film at box offices in 1953. Apart from literature, cinema remained a key site for the production and consumption of mass-mediated meanings of national identity in the 1950s. Empire also allowed British industry and various British institutions to shelter behind the privileges which imperial supremacy often involved. Thus, not only was modernisation put off, but also Britain found herself “stranded and effectively isolated in the post-imperial period” (Judd 16). More recently, the vexed relations with the Continental Europe had been
affected by, the debate over joining a single European currency – an issue seen as “challenging national sovereignty” (Rogers and McLeod 3). In his *Preface to Literary Englands: Versions of ‘Englishness’ in Modern Writing*, David Gervais writes:

> It is a long time since we thought of England as a ‘precious stone set in the silver sea’ or even since we extolled its good fortunes in the manner of Mr Podsnap. We are more likely nowadays to find ourselves performing an autopsy on it. Since the Great War at least it has become a theme for nostalgia, a good belonging to the past like half-heard music that just carries from some distant room. England is too problematic now to inspire simple patriotism. (xiii)

In fact the post-war British people were between the devil and the deep blue sea – either they had to come to terms with their drastically reduced influence in the world, or their country would have been the “new ‘sick man of Europe’, snarling from the sidelines, and dreaming dreams of long ago and far away” (Judd 17). Withdrawal from Europe and the slowly growing British awareness of how other Western European nations were proving better organized as far as industrial production and economic growth were concerned resulted in the anti-cosmopolitan, insular trends of the fifties in the political field and consequently in the field of literature. Stuart Ward has suggested that both the ‘Angry Young Man’ movement and the satire boom of the late 1950s and early 1960s attacked the present for failing to live up to an imperial past. The question of literature, in other words, is bound up with the crisis of national identity.
Thus, what came to be called the ‘Movement’ became the best literary manifestation of the post-imperial, ‘Welfare’ Britain. In the opinion of William Van O’Connor, the first historian of the Movement, the Movement poets were, “as clearly the voices of the 1950s in England as Eliot and Pound were for the 1920s, Auden and Spender for the 1930s, and Dylan Thomas for the 1940s” (qtd. in Ramanan 11). Poets like Robert Conquest, Philip Larkin, Donald Davie, Kingsley Amis, D.J. Enright, Thom Gunn, Elizabeth Jennings, John Holloway, John Wain, and so on believed that the arts, like state benefits, should be available to all. A common culture was the expression of the Keynesian economy and the Welfare State. Patricia Waugh observes: “[t]he cultural ideal of welfare capitalism was the maintenance of a common culture through education, good literature and state subsidies for the Arts…” (208).

The Movement poets’ primary concern was to reassess poetry by reacting against Romanticism, rather neo-Romanticism, of the 1940s — Dylan Thomas being the best representative of it. Thus they were hostile to a perceived formlessness, poetic excess and self-indulgence. They wanted to replace these with a new formal discipline (often by dint of traditional metres). They looked at the everyday world through their poetry and there was a sense that they were seeking to deal with the ordinary life rather than with the flights of imagination that their predecessors found so absorbing. That is why they used Movement scepticism or witty intellectual toughness to replace neo-Romantic ‘vision’. In his ‘Introduction’ to *New Lines* (1956), Robert Conquest repudiates the Romanticism of the previous decade, and advocates a poetry written in “comprehensible language” (xv) which, “empirical in its attitude to all that comes”, exhibits a “reverence for the real person or event” (xiv). This is an unmistakable plea for a “return to the English empiricist
scenario, a poetry presenting a speaker directly experiencing an external reality”

(Easthope183).

Movement’s attack on neo-Romanticism is an aspect of its fundamental hostility to Modernism. In Modernist poetry there was a serious lack of interest in or even aggression towards the audience, whereas Movement poetry put an immense importance on the reader. In the words of Philip Larkin, one of the stalwarts of Movement poetry, “if there is … no successful reading, the poem can hardly be said to exist in a practical sense at all” (80). That is to say, all the efforts of the poet will come to naught if there is no reader for his poem. Poetry, he further asserts, is “born of the tension between what (the poet) non-verbally feels and what can be got over in common word-usage to someone who has not had his experience” (82). The audience, thus, emerges all important in Movement poetry. If at the one end of the rope there is the poet, it is the reader who is standing at the other end, and communication is the sumnum bonum of the poet. Communication is also all important for Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest – two other veteran Movement campaigners. Thus we find Amis saying, “when a new poem looks like getting itself written … I ask myself: Is this idea likely to interest anyone besides me? and try to forget about it if the answer seems to be no” (qtd. in Enright17-8). Conquest charges Modernist poetry for being non-communicating. They attacked it for its stress on the unconscious. The meaningless verbiage of Modernist poetry becomes a stumbling-block in communication. They were up in arms against the avoidable obscurity of much Modernist poetry. This obscurity, they held, was due to the scant respect the Modernist poets gave to the audience. Unlike them, the Movement poets stooped to ponder over the reactions of their readers. At the heyday of Empire, the Modernists (as if
to keep pace with their imperialist masters) appeared boasting enough to disregard their readers. Again, the Movemanteers attacked the Modernists for their excessive fondness for simile, metaphor, image, symbol etc. These were the things, they believed, responsible for making Modern poetry obscure. Thus the Movemanteers rather dispensed with simile-metaphor or image-symbol considering them not essential to poetry. Rather, they were interested in communication, discourse, even meaning and paraphrase in poetry. Movement poets were unwilling to “abandon a rational structure and comprehensible language, even when the verse is most highly charged with sensuous or emotional intent” (Conquest xv). Now to shed off metaphors in poetry is, as if, to shed off the imperial authority. Movement’s concern for the audience gave birth to the creation of Arts Council of Britain and the Poetry Book Society (1954), both organizations being committed to the encouragement of the poetry-reading public.

However, a sparing use of metaphor does never mean the total absence of it. Whenever a word is used poetically, it can be said that a metaphor is created (though in a special sense), for almost all meanings are etymologically metaphorical. Few words in poetry convey much meaning. Moreover, unlike Modernist-Symbolist poetry, Movement poetry does not thrive on image and symbol; rather it takes syntax as its springboard. Words and interrelations between words supply what the Augustans called ‘strength’ (Ramanan11). Donald Davie wraps up: “arranged thus artfully with and against the others, and taking up the exposition which went before, takes on new life, defined freshly and closely” (Purity 65). Thus in Movement poetry there was a scope for meaning which was not so in the Modernist tradition. Movement poetry, says Davie, has got,
"paraphrasable meanings" (Davie, *Articulate Energy* 57). For a Movement poet, a poem is a means of communication.

Unlike the neo-Romantics, the Movement poets paid scrupulous attention to reality. As the Welfare State poets they thought it all important to describe lived and real experience as does D.J. Enright in his poem "The Noodle-Vendor's Flute":

In a real city, from a real house,
At midnight by the ticking clocks,
In winter by the crackling roads:
Hearing the noodle-vendor's flute,
Two single fragile falling notes ...    
(qtd. in Ramanan 46)

The poems of 1940s (after Eliot and company) were often very long and allusive in nature whereas Movement poems were usually short and more importantly limited in themselves in meaning. That is why Movement poems did not refer to other poems or poets or myths (foreign/native) abounding in the poetry of say, T.S. Eliot. Even if some quotations are there in Movement poems, they are secondary to the thought expressed and carry no meaning in themselves, unlike in a poem by Pound or Eliot. A Movement poem had got to be out and out logical, rational and above all - intelligible. Like the imperial rulers, the great poets of the empire also flung the 'rules' in the air. But the Movement poets brought back, rather had to bring back, the 'rules' in their poetry. This was quite in keeping with the post-war return to the 'rules' of English. This coming back
to the ‘rules’ is best perceived in their diction. The Movementeers were not in favour of random experimentation as far as selection of words was concerned; rather they were satisfied to abide by the ‘rules’ of English. An ideal Movement poem is a piece of conversation between the poet and the reader. This conversational tone provided the colloquial touch to Movement poetry. This also accounts for the prosaic quality that has been the hallmark of Movement verse. Again, Movement diction was deliberately chaste, for they were out to ‘purify’ the language. Actually Movement diction was not meant for adding to the existing range of language but to rejuvenate it. And this was quite in tune with a nation out to ‘build’ a Welfare State. A very interesting point to be noted here is, Movement poets bring off their effects by a tactful restraint in the use of metaphor. A strict economy of metaphor was what helped them to a great extent to achieve ‘concentration’ in their poetry. Closeness of expression and a very compact syntax (often called ‘authentic syntax’ as opposed to the ‘pseudo syntax’ of Modernist-Symbolist poetry) were the two major things on which this ‘concentration’ thrived. In his Purity of Diction in English Verse, Donald Davie asserts that syntax does have a social bearing:

... it is impossible not to trace a connection between the laws of syntax and the laws of society .... One could almost say ... that to dislocate syntax in poetry is to threaten the rule of law in the civilized community.

(99)

‘Authentic syntax’ forced a Movement poet to employ a strict metre in his poetry. Modernist-Symbolist poetry, on the other hand, used free verse since free syntax or
musical syntax was the mainspring of Modernist-Symbolist poetry. In the writings of the Movement poets free verse was replaced by a strict metrical pattern. In the days of Empire, the Union Jack fluttered all through the globe. The poets of the Empire, as if keeping this fact in their heads, spread themselves out in ways as many as possible. But after losing the vast Empire Britain had to roll back and this could be well traced in the contemporary poetry with its closed and compact syntax. The incorporation of 'authentic syntax', opines Davie, is part of the British empirical tradition where the poet is consciously engaged with the social and political issues. By using syntax authentically the poets shows his social as well as moral responsibilities. That's why Davie concludes: "Systems of syntax are part of the heritable property of past civilization, and to hold firm to them is to be traditional in the best and most important sense" (Davie, Articulate Energy 129).

Movement poetry was chiefly meant to provide pleasure. Philip Larkin has always charged Modernist poetry for being deliberately obfuscating which, asserts Larkin, dispelled the pleasure-seeking audience for poetry. A Modernist poet was the last person to pay heed to the reader. But the Movementeers had the readers in mind. They were conscious of the primary function of poetry, which was to give pleasure. In Larkin's own words: "... at bottom poetry, like all art, is inextricably bound up with giving pleasure" (81). However, the most important aspect of Movement poetry was its social or moral feature, for the Movement poets did believe that a poem had to perform a larger social function apart from the mere pleasure-giving faculty. Movement poetry is thus not just a "self-justifying activity" (Davie, Purity 198). It always leads to action, is oriented to society. A Movement poet is a citizen perturbed with social problems. Despite being an
artefact, a Movement poem is also a public property concerned with public issues. The subject-matter of Movement poetry has always been the quotidian human experience. It pays little attention to ‘tradition’ (as asserted by Eliot) or ‘a common myth-kitty’. Donald Davie was of the view that poetry must be born of personal experience. The point to be noted here is that, for the Movementeers a poem should not be born from another poem(s). Thus we find Philip Larkin condemning any “casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets” (qtd. in Enright 77-8). And according to Kingsley Amis, “Nobody wants any more poems about philosophers or paintings or novelists or art galleries or mythology or foreign cities or other poems” (qtd. in Enright 17-8). Every poem, opines Larkin, contains “its own sole freshly created universe” (qtd. in Ramanan 67).

According to the Movementeers, poetry should always have a human touch without which it becomes sterile and dry. Poetry must contain, “the smell of soil and soiled flesh, the reek of humanity” (Davie, Articulate Energy 165). With its ‘authentic’ syntax and ‘chaste’ diction, a Movement poem was out to satisfy the reader rationally. This is how Movement poetry was to both moralize and socialize. The Movement poets were to present “the world” (Davie, Articulate Energy 164) instead of “the world of the poem” (Davie, Articulate Energy 164).

The Movementeers consciously did away with the romantic, and ‘Bohemian,’ excess and exuberance of the 1940s since it was totally at discord with the general tone of reconstruction at the post-imperial phase. Donald Davie finds that the Movement represented a “passionate rejection, by one generation of British poets of all the values of Bohemia” (Davie, Purity 198-9). The Augustans were the model of the Movementeers (particularly of Davie’s). What the Movement poets were doing at the post-World War II
(and also post-Empire) period was similar to those of the Augustans at the post-Civil War England. The poetry of both the ages was morally as well as socially valuable. According to Donald Davie, a poet has to be an indispensable part of the society. The "poet", says Davie, will "absolve himself from none of the responsibilities of being human, he will leave none of those responsibilities to 'someone else' ... he is what society cannot dispense with" (Davie, *British Poetry* 188). We have already noted that a Movement poem is at bottom a statement. Being so, ultimately such a poem assumes the nature of a discourse and the poet becomes a person speaking to others. Actually, in the post-War, post-imperial phase, a poet had got be just an ordinary man speaking to men for this was the time England was trying hard to build a Welfare State. What George Orwell sought to assert in his *The English People* is worth mentioning here. In the post World War II Britain, Orwell wanted to compensate for Britain's declining political power by finding it a new moral role. According to him, the English should have a clear notion of their own destiny and not listen either to those telling them that England was finished or to those telling them that the England of the past could never return. If they could do that they could keep their feet in the post-war world, and if they could keep their feet they could give the example that millions of human beings were waiting for. The world was sick of chaos and it was sick of dictatorship. Of all peoples, the English were likeliest to find a way of avoiding both; they knew that it was not possible for any one nation to rule the earth. They wanted above all things to live in peace, both within and outside England. Moreover, the great mass of them were probably prepared for the sacrifices that peace would entail. In the good old days of Empire, when England was the sacrosanct super-power, the poet (Modernist-Symbolist) used to reside in an ivory tower and thereby
having only a bird’s-eye view of what was happening below. He used to be a bard or seer having vatic visions. However, the scenario changed – shattered by the all-round disintegration soon after the World-War II, the poets of the 1950s visualized a reconstruction of the nation in their own imaginative ways.

In the next two chapters, we shall try to show how Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes responded to the post-war, post-imperial political, social and economic situation sketched in this introductory chapter.

Notes

1. The ‘Britishness’ weakened to a considerable extent due to a combination of several factors like the loss of empire, deindustrialization, devolution, revival of nationalism in Scotland, creation of European Union and the ever-increasing immigration waves. In the context of such emerging situation, it became imperative to redefine Englishness.

2. The changing contours of Englishness as a discourse can be found in the books mentioned below. In the 1980s we have books like The Invention of Tradition (1983) edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger; Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism (1983) by Benedict Anderson; English and Englishness (1989) by Brian Doyle. In the 1990s the following major publications appeared: Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837
Continuing debates about 'Englishness' in recent decades embrace multiple ideological positions and they remain open-ended and wide-ranging in their implications. The debates range from conservative and rightist emphasis on revivalism (e.g. Simon Heffer and Roger Scruton) to Marxist contention of an 'absent centre' or intellectual vacuity to create a revolutionary condition in the country (e.g. Tom Nairn). More recently, the postcolonial discussion puts emphasis on a 'cosmopolitan' Englishness (e.g. Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy). The issue has also been approached from the point of view of the popular socio-cultural perspectives (e.g. Featherstone). Featherstone himself offers a view of this 'refreshingly unenclosed and informal cultural project':

The angry nationalist revivalism of Simon Heffer and Roger Scruton, patriotic revisionism of Billy Bragg, the ironic journalism of Jeremy Paxman and Gill, the popular anthropology of Fox, the idiosyncratic Marxism of Nairn and reflections on nationhood and race by Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, make Englishness a diverse and surprisingly heterogeneous field for study and argument, and one that has not yet sealed its roads or hedged its borders. (4)

James Procter points out in his General Introduction to Writing Black Britain 1948-1998: An Interdisciplinary Anthology:

[Four hundred and ninety-two West Indian emigrants disembarked, an event that has since come to mark the 'beginnings' of a black British past.... the extent to which the
Windrush years have already been retrieved and re-evaluated: within the academy (conferences, journals, textbooks), mainstream media (television documentaries, newspaper interviews, magazine features) or as commodifiable event (museum exhibitions and merchandise) mean that the recovery, re-circulation and narrativisation of '1948' will itself constitute a significant 'text' worthy of analysis (1).
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