NOTAT

Elements of civilisation

Britain, Ireland and the British Empire

John S. Seriot

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HØGSKULEN i SOGN OG FJORDANE

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SAMANDRAG

The first part of this volume is devoted to specific issues in the geopolitics and civilisation of the British and Irish Isles, particularly peoples, religions, languages, plus elements of history in the formation of the two present day states, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland. One chapter is more specifically devoted to the English public school tradition and its impact on literature. The second part is a short introduction to the history of the British Empire and Commonwealth, with a brief survey of Empire-related British literature (fiction), as well as in British and American cinema. Whenever possible, in both part 1 and part 2 of the volume, references to relevant titles of fiction and titles of films are given, besides primary and secondary sources.

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Foreword

This compendium is a collection of several handouts written and reviewed over four years for students of English (Grunnfag, English Year Unit, English 1 and 2), and meant to complement the literature used in the civilisation course. They do not, therefore, serve as a substitute for such works but they examine some aspects of British, Irish and imperial history as well as civilisation which are not necessarily covered in the book or books used in class, especially for such topics as languages, public schools in England and imperial history, while providing extra information on religions as well as on the political system in the UK.

For some of these chapters, lists of titles in literature and cinema have been given as possible material for further studies or in order to satisfy simple curiosity. Most of the literature is easily available, but some of the films, especially of the pre WWII period, are not in zone 2 DVD format yet; they can usually be found in VHS.

Maps are not included in this compendium and are handed out in class.

I – The Isles; Geopolitics

In the introduction to *The Isles. A History*, Norman Davies notes the ambiguity of the entries for "Britain" and "British" in *The Oxford English Dictionary* and *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. This ambiguity is not limited to these works and not a few journalists or academics use "Britain", "England", "British", "English" or, albeit not very often, "United Kingdom", without paying much attention to the precise meaning(s) of these words. Norman Davies recalls one occasion when he was invited at University College, Dublin, in those terms:

> **After the presentation, someone in the audience asked about my current project. I started to reply that I was thinking of writing a history of 'the British – '. Then I realized that in Dublin, of all places, one cannot fairly talk of 'the British Isles'. The Isles ceased to be British (…) when the Republic of Ireland left the Commonwealth… (Davies, 1999)**

Before studying the history and civilisation of this region of the world, it is therefore necessary to give short definitions of the geographical and political terms used in this context. After Norman Davies, the term "The Isles" will be used henceforth, in place of "The British Isles".

Geography

The Isles are a group of islands, the largest two being Britain and Ireland, with several smaller islands like the isle of Wight, the Scilly isles, Lindisfarne, the isle of Man, the Blaskett islands, the Arran islands, the Inner Hebrides, the Outer Hebrides (*aka* The Western Isles), Orkney and Shetland (*aka* The Northern Isles).

Politics

The Isles are organised into two independent states: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), and the Republic of Ireland. Both states are members of the United Nations and of the European Union, but only the UK is a member of NATO[1].

1 - The United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland (capital: London)

a) – Great Britain

Great Britain is in fact the same as the geographical entity known as Britain (the largest of the Isles) but is separated into three nations:

- England
- Wales
- Scotland

These three nations were united under a common monarchy and a common parliament, either by conquest or treaty (see "The Making of the UK", p.16).

[1] North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, founded after World War Two, comprising of the United States of America, Canada, plus most western European states (including Norway), and recently extended to several central and eastern European states.

b) – Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland covers in fact the geographical north-east of the island of Ireland, i.e. 15% of the land mass. It comprises 6 counties (administrative divisions) which are part of the United Kingdom but not of Great Britain (also see “The Republic of Ireland” and “Northern Ireland”).

2 - The Republic of Ireland (capital: Dublin)

The Republic of Ireland comprises 26 counties and covers ca. 85 % of the island of Ireland. The Republic has been fully independent since 1949, although it became a dominion with self-government in 1921 (also see “The Republic of Ireland” and “A Short Introduction To The British Empire”). Ireland is traditionally divided into 4 provinces: Leinster in the east, Munster in the south-west, Connacht (also spelt “Connaught”) in the west and Ulster in the north. The term “Ulster”, however, is often wrongly used for “Northern Ireland”: the 6 counties of Northern Ireland are indeed part of the ancient province of Ulster, but Ulster comprises 9 counties in total (3 being in the Republic of Ireland).

3 – Football or rugby?

Football fans know that there is no such thing as a national British football team, but 4 national teams (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland). If we add the Republic of Ireland, we then have 5 national football teams in the Isles.

When it comes to rugby however, the situation is different. There are 4 national teams plus one supranational team:

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Ireland (note that the Irish rugby team is an all-Ireland team, with players from the Republic as well as Northern Ireland)
- The British and Irish Lions, with players from the UK and the Republic of Ireland[2]

This can be rather confusing, especially when one has to use adjectives of nationality.

4 - British? Irish? English? Scots? Welsh?

All citizens of the United Kingdom are British, whether they live in England, Northern Ireland, Wales or Scotland (and hold a British passport). But British citizens (alternatively “The British” or “Britons”) often tend to define themselves according to their national origin.

[2] But note that in international competitions, such as the Six Nations Tournament (England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France, Italy) or the Rugby World Cup, the British and Irish Lions do not play.

Nation	*Nationality*	*Noun*
England	English	The English an Englishman an Englishwoman
Wales	Welsh	The Welsh a Welshman a Welshwoman
Scotland	Scottish[3]	The Scots a Scot, a Scotswoman
Ireland	Irish	The Irish, an Irishman, an Irishwoman

It is not quite simple as it looks with Ireland, as the island is partitioned into two: the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, *aka* the Province of Northern Ireland. Citizens of the Republic are Irish, but what of the residents of Northern Ireland holding a British passport? Some insist on being called only "British", but many of them also call themselves "Irish" as well, while others think of themselves as simply "Irish". The political situation can make things very complex in this part of the United Kingdom.

5 – The smaller isles

As for the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, their status is quite particular (they are "Crown dependencies"), as they enjoy a greater degree of autonomy and have their own institutions and parliaments, often derived from their Nordic past. The Isle of Man and the Channel Islands are not members of the European Union but are associated to it.

The other islands do not enjoy such a status, although the Western and the Northern Isles, off the coast of Scotland, would like to enjoy more autonomy. Orkney and Shetland in particular often look to Norway as the ancient and former motherland[4].

[3] The adjective "Scotch" is normally used only for Whisky made in Scotland.
[4] Orkney and Shetland were possessions of the Norwegian, then Danish Crown, until 1470, when they were annexed by Scotland.

II – Peoples

The UK and the Republic of Ireland in the 21st century are becoming multicultural, multi-ethnic countries. And yet, immigration from former British colonies and from other countries all over the world is not a new phenomenon. After all, the Isles were peopled by successive waves of migrant population coming mostly from continental Europe.

The first settlers?

Little is known of the earliest inhabitants in the Isles, whether they were "native" or had migrated from somewhere else. They left however very impressive monuments, mostly standing stones or stone circles (Stonehenge in the South of England, the Ring of Brodgar on mainland Orkney), as well as chambered cairns or tombs scattered in many different regions, as well as early settlements. There again, the islands of Orkney, just off the North coast of Scotland, offer several examples of such monuments, with Maeshowe, near the Ring of Brodgar, the settlement of Skara Brae and the chambered tombs on the isle of Rousay being among the most interesting.

Picts, Celts, Britons, Gaels...

Celtic immigrants started settling in the Isles from 800 BC. But Celts were not a homogeneous people: they were divided into different tribes, often at odds with each other. The difficulty is that nowadays such words as "Celts" or "Celtic" are often misused. We should therefore remember that there were, roughly speaking, two main Celtic peoples in the Isles:

- the Britons
- the Gaels

The difference between both can be observed through linguistics. The Britons spoke varieties of "P-Celtic", the Gaels varieties of "Q-Celtic", all varieties being Indo-European. (Thus, the word for "head" in P-Celtic is "pen", but "ceann" in Q-Celtic; see document below, p.14 and 15). In the present day, Welsh, Cornish (spoken in Cornwall, south-west of England) and Breton (spoken in Brittany, western France) are P-Celtic varieties, whereas Irish, Gaelic and Manx are Q-Celtic varieties.

Before and after the Roman invasion (AD 43), the Greater Isle (today's Britain) was peopled mostly by P-Celtic-speaking peoples, and the Smaller Isle (today's Ireland), by Q-Celtic-speaking ones, mostly Gaels. Some Gaels settled on the Greater Isle, on the west coast of today's Wales in particular, but nowhere as successfully as in the west of today's Scotland, where one Gaelic people, the Scots, established a few small or "petty" kingdoms, sometimes at odds with their P-Celtic neighbours, the Picts and the Britons of Strathclyde (the name of an actual region of western Scotland). The Scots eventually joined forces with the Picts and founded the embryo of the Scottish nation.

It should be noted that in today's Scotland, the term "Pict" is enjoying a new popularity, notably on car stickers. The question of who the Picts were is still problematic, as the term "Pict" (adjective "Pictish") is used for the Celtic peoples who

lived in the north and north-west of today's Scotland, while in the far north of Scotland and the northern isles (Orkney and Shetland), the Picts were probably non Indo-European settlers and their language, or whatever we know of it, has not been clearly identified. It should also be remembered that not all of Scotland was "Celtic": the south-east (today's Edinburgh and Borders) was part of the Saxon kingdom of Northumbria.

The Germanic element

If the Romans did not actually settle in large numbers in Britain (and almost certainly not at all in Ireland), they left however some traces: roads, towns (Chester, Bath, Cirencester), place-names, and the two walls (Hadrian's, between Carlisle and Newcastle in the north of England, and Antonine's, between the Firth of Clyde and the Firth of Forth in central Scotland) built to keep off the "barbarians" coming from the Highlands of Scotland into Roman Britain.

Germanic immigrants had a much deeper impact on the Isles, not least in linguistic terms: the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes, from today's northern Germany and southern Denmark invaded the Isles (AD 410) and pushed the Celts westwards and northwards, not without encountering resistance (the legendary King Arthur is reputed to have fought the Saxons). They were divided into small kingdoms (Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria...) and there was little assimilation of the neighbouring Celts.

The Scandinavians

The Viking raids on the island of Lindisfarne, off the coast of Northumberland, in AD 789, and on the island of Iona[5], off the West coast of Scotland (between 795 and 806), marked the beginning of a series of attacks by the Scandinavians, as well as of more peaceful settlements. The Danes seemed to have preferred eastern England ("The Danelaw"), while the Norwegians extended their domain in the North and West of Scotland[6], as well as in Ireland and the North-West of England (the Lake District). Place-names give us precious indications on these different settlements.

Descendants of Danish and Norwegian Vikings, the Normans, from Normandy in today's northern France, also invaded England in 1066, after the battle of Hastings, won by William the Conqueror, himself descendant of Rolf of Møre – a key date to remember). The Normans established a new monarchy, strengthened the feudal system and introduced a variety of French as one of the languages spoken in England (the legendary Robin of Locksley – Robin Hood – is reputed to have been a Saxon knight defending his people against Norman oppression).

Contacts, emigration

Contacts between all these different peoples were often warlike, but the Germanic element came to dominate the Celtic one, so that for years, the Welsh, the Cornish, the Irish, and the Gaels of Scotland were regarded as "inferiors". Many Irish and Scots, Gaels or not, started to emigrate in the 18th century, notably to North America and today's Australia and New Zealand (emigration from the UK and the Rep. of Ireland is still common). There are still Welsh-, Irish- or Gaelic- speaking communities, throughout the world, notably in Nova-Scotia (Eastern Canada), with a

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[5] Both Lindisfarne and Iona were holy islands, with monks and monasteries, whose treasures attracted the Norse raiders.

[6] The Inner and Outer Hebrides remained a Norwegian possession until 1263, the Northern Isles a Norwegian, later Danish, possession until 1470.

substantial numbers of Gaelic speakers, and Argentina, with a small Welsh-speaking community.

The Celtic renewal started in the 19th century, together with Romanticism, although it took different forms in the three main Celtic nations (Ireland = *Eire*, Wales = *Cymru*, Scotland = *Alba*). Yet for many in the outside world and even in the UK, there was hardly any distinction between the United Kingdom and England, the two becoming almost synonymous.

New immigrants

While people emigrated from the Isles, others came to try and find a better life in the big cities of the UK (London, Liverpool, Birmingham, Glasgow): many wanted to escape political oppression and/or poverty, and came from Central or Eastern Europe (Poles, Russian Jews), or the Mediterranean (Italians). Many Irish also immigrated to the UK (Liverpool and Glasgow have substantial Irish communities – remember the "Celtic" football team in Glasgow).

Since the last years of the British Empire and the post WWII period there has been an influx of immigrants from the West Indies (the Caribbean), Africa, the former British India (from 1947: Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Burma/Myanmar, later Bangladesh) and southeast Asia. More recently, following the political turmoil in different parts of the world (central Africa, the Middle-East, central and eastern Europe), there have been new waves of immigrants (asylum-seekers, political refugees, economic migrants).

Integration

The integration of peoples with different religions, traditions and cultures, into British society (the phenomenon being much more recent in the Republic of Ireland) has not always been easy. As early as the 19th century, the Irish Roman Catholic communities of English and Scottish big cities with a predominantly Anglican or Presbyterian population were ostracised. Later, the Italian communities were regarded as suspect when Italy entered the war against the UK in 1940. In the 1950s, there were violent incidents in the areas of London with a substantial West Indian[7] population, which were to be repeated throughout the second half of the 20th century (Brixton riots). The Notting Hill Carnival in London offers a contrast to these incidents and gives the image of a multicultural Britain, while in the Outer Hebrides, or "Western Isles", off the West coast of Scotland, a few Asian shopkeepers have settled and opened shops – and learnt Gaelic.

Identities

The problem of national identity or identities in the UK is quite complex (Northern Ireland being apart). Many residents, whatever their origin, will call themselves "British", especially those who wish to integrate British society. But in Wales and Scotland, a great number of people will be "Scots" or "Welsh" and nothing else, not even "British", while the problem of "English" identity is being debated.

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[7] "West Indian" refers to people from the Caribbean (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago…). "Asian" refers to people from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

III – Religions

Religions in the Isles can be divided between Christian and non-Christian denominations. If attitudes to religious life and church attendance are not very different in the UK and the Republic of Ireland from the rest of western Europe, the divide between Protestants and Roman Catholics is still visible in places like Northern Ireland and parts of Scotland and testifies to the past religious conflicts in the Isles. These conflicts have marked the formation of the two independent states (the UK & the Republic of Ireland), not just in the struggle between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics, but also between the different Protestant denominations (e.g. the Presbyterians and the Anglicans in Ireland). Religious history in the Isles is essential in order to understand the conflict in Northern Ireland as well as the Victorian period and imperial expansion.

Before **Christianity** was introduced to the Isles, the various Celtic and Germanic peoples had their gods and religious rituals and before them, the Neolithic builders of Stonehenge and Brodgar (see handout 2) had their own beliefs, some of which may have been taken up by incoming Celts. With the coming of Christianity (between the 4th and 7th centuries) also came the choice of a model church, eventually the Roman Catholic model, with local Celtic churches having to comply (Synod of Whitby, 663). The last great wave of invasion, by the Scandinavians, brought Germanic beliefs back, but Christianity eventually prevailed, although in some parts of the Isles non-Christian religious traditions survived, either for their own sake or by being integrated in the new religion in one form or another.

Judaism came to the Isles in the wake of the Norman conquest, in the 11th century and has been one of the religions in the Isles, despite the interdiction of residence in England made to Jews by King Edward I (Edward "Longshanks" in the film *Braveheart*) in 1290 until they were allowed back in the mid 17th century.

With immigrants from the Empire and later the Commonwealth, new religions have recently found their way to Britain and, to a lesser extent, Ireland (**Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism**).

Henry VIII - The Reformation

In 1534, the "Act of Supremacy" made King Henry VIII of England the head of the **Church of England**. This had less to do with religious differences than to Henry's will to be the master of his own house (and country), without having to depend upon the Pope's authority. Therefore, the Church of England is not very different from the Roman Catholic Church – henceforth RC Church – thus named because acknowledging the authority of the Pope of Rome and also in order to differentiate it from the "Anglo-Catholic" wing of the Church of England (see below).

There is, however, a marked difference between the high church (Anglo-Catholic), still very similar to the RC Church, and the Low Church, more Protestant-

inspired. Some Anglicans wanted to "purify" the Church of England from any Roman influence and they became known as "Puritans" (see below).

In Scotland, however, the Reformation was inspired by Calvinism and led to far greater changes, as well as political confrontation between John Knox (the man who remains the symbol of the Protestant faith in Scotland) and Mary Queen of Scots, a Roman Catholic monarch. The **Kirk**, or Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) was the established church from 1690 to 1921 when it ceased to be linked with the state (in Scotland). It experienced several rifts, leading to the creation of the Free Church of Scotland in 1843. When the Free Church was joined by other groups seceding from the Church of Scotland to form the United Free Church in 1900, some of its members decided to secede in turn and continued to call themselves the Free Church of Scotland (*aka* the "Wee Free Church"). The United Free Church eventually reunited with the Church of Scotland in 1929, but the Free Church ("Wee Free") still exists and is stronger in the west of Scotland. There is also a Scottish Episcopalian Church, but "Episcopalian" in Scotland (as in the US) refers to the same faith as in the Anglican Church of England.

Furthermore, several different Protestant sects came to existence in England and Wales, notably the Baptists and the Quakers in the 17th century, and the Methodists in the 18th (enjoying a certain following in Wales in the English Midlands). The Puritans, mostly Congregationalists (insisting on the independence of each Christian congregation, hence their name) and English Presbyterians recently united to form the United Reformed Church in 1972 (England and Wales).

The Roman Catholic Church

After the Reformation, Roman Catholics were subjected to several restrictions, not just related to the practice of their religion, but also to land property, as well as the holding of civil and military offices. Roman Catholics in Britain could not be elected to Parliament, and could not even vote in Ireland. (Ireland still had it own Parliament then). By the end of the 18th century, however, some of these restrictions were relaxed: Roman Catholics were allowed to own real property (land), both in Britain and Ireland. They were also allowed to practice their religion freely in both countries, while in Ireland they also gained access to civil offices. In the 19th century, thanks to the efforts of Daniel O'Connell in Ireland, Roman Catholics became eligible to Parliament (there was only one parliament for both Britain and Ireland after the Act of Union of 1801) and they were admitted to most civil offices (Emancipation Act, 1829). But they had to wait until 1871 to see the universities open to them. One official position, however, is still closed to them: no Roman Catholic can become Queen or King.

The Christian Churches in the Isles

Denomination	*Faith*	*Country*
Church of England	Anglican	England
Church In Wales	Anglican	Wales
Church of Ireland	Anglican	Ireland (Rep. & N.I.)
Episcopal Church	Anglican	Scotland
Church of Scotland	Presbyterian	Scotland
Free Church of Scotland	Presbyterian	Scotland
United Reform Church	Congregationalist & Presbyterian	England & Wales
Baptist Church	Baptist	UK & Rep.Irl.
Quakers	Quakers	UK & Rep.Irl.
Methodist Church	Methodist	UK & Rep.Irl.
Salvation Army	(Protestant)	UK & Rep.Irl.
Roman Catholic Church	Roman Catholic	UK & Rep.Irl.

Non-Christian religions in the Isles

Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs. The latter three are more recent, linked to immigration from former British imperial possessions (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, west, central and east Africa). It is to be noted that most Christian churches undertook missionary work in Asia and Africa during the colonial period but the number of converts in British India remains very small, whereas there are significant Christian communities in former British Africa.

IV – Languages

If English, a Germanic language, is spoken by an overwhelming majority of the population in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (as well as the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands), it is not always the native tongue of some of the inhabitants. It should be remembered that languages other than English were banned, some were eradicated to the point of extinction, and some are now dead. Before taking a look at the situation in each part of the UK and in the Republic of Ireland, we should note that the terms "language", "dialect" and "accent" must be used with caution.

Language, dialect, accent…

It is traditionally held that "languages" are divided into "dialects" and that there are "nice" versus "ugly" accents. But these ideas come from a misunderstanding between the purely linguistic and the social (and political) aspects of language. The English language is itself divided into several regional and social varieties (Cockney, Estuary, Brummie, Scouse, Geordie, West Country, etc.), although the language taught in schools is supposed to be "standard" throughout England (and the UK in general).

If we say then that English (i.e. the so-called "standard English" which non-native students are supposed to learn) is a language while Geordie (the linguistic variety spoken in Newcastle) is a dialect, we often assume that the former is superior to the latter. But this superiority is due to the more prestigious status of Standard English compared to the lower status of Geordie. Both varieties, however, are valid linguistic systems: Geordie is not linguistically inferior to Standard English. We can therefore say that Standard English and Geordie are two varieties of English.

Each variety is marked by a specific pronunciation: the accent. But it also marked by:

- a specific lexicon (ex.: "bairn" for "child", in Northern England and Scotland)
- a specific grammar (ex.: in some varieties the past of the verb "to know" is "knowed", and double-negatives are frequent, as in "I didn't see nothin'").

Accent affects pronunciation only, so that in some regions of the UK, speakers use a variety close to Standard English, with a non-standard accent. This is frequently the case in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. Accents and dialects are also regarded as indicators of social status, with educated speakers using Standard English (but not necessarily the "Received Pronunciation", or RP accent), while less educated speakers tend to use non-standard varieties.

It should be remembered that apart from English and its local, regional or national varieties (Scottish English, Irish English…), other languages (themselves with their own varieties), not comprehensible for speakers of English, are used in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. These languages are briefly mentioned below.

1 – England:
- Cornish: a P-Celtic language, once spoken by the inhabitants of Cornwall (south-western England), this language came to the point of extinction but has been recently revived and is spoken by a small number of enthusiasts, though as far as we know it has no official status.

2 – Wales:
- Welsh: a Celtic language ("P-Celtic"), Welsh has a large number of speakers compared to other Celtic languages in the UK and the Rep. of Ireland; it is used as a teaching medium and is taught in schools; with Welsh-speaking radios and TV channels, the language has an official status.

3 – Scotland:
- Gaelic (pronounced "galik", also called "Scottish Gaelic"): another Celtic language ("Q-Celtic"), though different from Welsh; it came under attack in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries; it is still spoken in the west/north-west of mainland Scotland, some of the Inner Hebrides and all of the Outer Hebrides (*aka* Western Isles); it enjoys official status, is used as a teaching medium, is taught in schools and universities, with Gaelic-speaking radios and a few programmes on BBC-TV and private TV channels
- Scots: should not be confused with "Scottish English", which is a more or less standard English with a few scoticisms as well as a specific pronunciation; Scots has a common ancestor with English and has suffered a lot since the political Union between the two countries (1707), being often presented as a "corrupted" or "debased" variety of English; it is however, the language of a vast number of Scots (especially in the south and east of Scotland), but it is rarely taught at school or used as a teaching medium; it is also divided into several local varieties and has no unified written standard; it has received some limited official recognition since the Scottish Parliament was established, but there are problems with finding a unified written standard.

4 – Northern Ireland:
- Irish (also called Gaelic, or Irish Gaelic, pronounced "geylik"): spoken by a small number of people in the Province and recently given official status, in the wake of the "Good Friday Agreement"
- Ulster Scots: a variety of the Scots of Scotland (many settlers came to Northern Ireland from Scots-speaking areas in Scotland), it has also benefited from the recent political evolution and has been given official status, along with Irish; also called "Norn[8] Iron" (for "Northern Ireland).

5 – the Republic of Ireland:
- Irish is one of the two national languages of the Republic, together with English; it has roughly the same number of speakers as Gaelic in Scotland, but it is compulsory if you want to become a Civil Servant or teach in a state school; Irish played a very important part in the nationalist movement in the 19th and 20th centuries, along with sport, poetry, music; nowadays, it is spoken mostly in the south-west, the west and the north (Donegal) of the Republic.

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[8] "Norn Iron" should not be confused with "Orkney and Shetland Norn", or "norroent mál", the now extinct Norse variety spoken in the Northern Isles until the mid-19th century.

6 – the Isle of Man; the Channel Islands

- Manx Gaelic, or Manx, is a cousin to Irish and Gaelic; although its last speakers died in the 1970s, linguists had had time to record them, so that enthusiasts can learn the language, which, like Cornish, is being revived; it is interesting to note that the spelling of Manx is very different from the spelling of Irish or Gaelic and certainly easier for learners
- because of their proximity with France, the Channel Islands have kept their own varieties of French (similar to those still spoken in the western part of Normandy).

"Community" languages

In addition to these "native" languages, we must also mention the languages of the different new communities in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (although far fewer in numbers in the latter). These communities, at least in the UK, demand that their languages be recognised and taught at school. In some urban areas, local information is available in several languages beside English, such as:
- Urdu
- Hindi
- Bengali
- Chinese
- Arabic
- Turkish

With recent developments in Eastern Europe and the influx of asylum-seekers and refugees, the needs of Serbo-Croat and Albanian speakers are beginning to receive attention. The Centre for Information on Language Teaching (CILT in England, with a Scottish CILT in Stirling, and offices elsewhere in the UK) also gives recognition to the Sign language.

Languages and accents/dialects in the UK and the Rep. of Ireland have been part of the social and political landscape for centuries, and they are ever more present in the early years of the 21st century in the context of devolution within the UK, as well as of European integration. It is not surprising that the European Bureau For Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) has offices in Dublin as well as in Brussels.

Q-Celtic and P-Celtic languages

Goidelic			**Brythonic**		
Irish	**Gaelic**	**Manx**	**Welsh**	**Cornish**	**Breton**
1 - *ceann*	*ceann*	*kione*	*pen*	*pen*	*penn*
2 - *ceathair*	*ceithir*	*kiare*	*pedwar*	*peswar*	*pevar*
3 - *mac*	*mac*	*mac*	*map*	*map*	*mab*

(1 : head – 2 : four – 3 : son)

Adapted from Abalain (1998)

Similarities between Celtic languages

Goidelic			Brythonic		
Irish	**Gaelic**	**Manx**	**Welsh**	**Cornish**	**Breton**
1 - *abha*	*abhainn*	*awin*	*avon*	*avon*	*avon/aven*
2 - *inis*	*innis*	*innys*	*ynys*	*enys*	*enez*
3 - *tonn*	*tonn*	*tonn*	*ton*	*ton*	*tonn*

(1 : river – 2 : island – 3 : a wave)

Adapted from Abalain (1998)

Websites:

www.cilt.org.uk

www.scilt.stir.ac.uk/index.htm (with links for Gaelic and Scots)

www.eblul.org

http://speaknorniron.8m.net

http://daltai.com/home.htm (on Irish)

http://homepages.enterprise.net/kelly (on Manx)

www.cornish-language.org

V – The Making of the United Kingdom

For many years, the history of the United Kingdom was written from an English point of view. Edward I between 1277-83 had subjugated the Welsh, Ireland had been half-conquered in 1171, Scotland had had to fight for its independence from the 12th century. When the English and the Scottish parliaments were united in 1707, the new political state of "Great Britain" came into existence, under the dominance of the English. Almost one century later, with the union of the Irish and British Parliaments in 1801, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland came into existence. After WWI and the Anglo-Irish war (1918-1921), Ireland was partitioned into the Irish Free State (a dominion of the British Empire, with a status similar to that of the other dominions[9]) and the Province of Northern Ireland, which has so far remained united to Great Britain, hence the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

England

From King Alfred of Wessex to Henry II "Curtmantle", the different Saxon and Scandinavian territories came to be united as "England" in the 10th century, with Edward the Elder, Athelstan and Edgar being the first kings of England. The unification of England was strengthened notably thanks to William the Conqueror and the Normans in the 11th/12th centuries. From then on, the English monarchs attempted to become masters or overlords of their predominantly Celtic neighbours, but they also extended their possessions across the English Channel, in Normandy, Anjou, Aquitaine (north-west, west and south-west of modern France).

From the 16th century, English ambitions would reach overseas, across the Atlantic, beyond the Indian Ocean, up to the Pacific. After having integrated Wales, subdued Ireland and associated with Scotland (between the 12th and the 18th centuries), English/British power reached it climax in the 19th century, but between the days of Queen Victoria and Prime Minister Tony Blair, the Republic of Ireland has come into existence, the British Empire has disappeared, the UK has joined the European Union, while Northern Ireland (NI), Wales and Scotland have now got their own assembly (NI, Wales) or parliament (Scotland). The situation in Northern Ireland, however, remains unsettled.

Wales – Cymru (Welsh for "Wales")

As early as 1157, the English King (Henry II) had forced his overlordship on the Welsh princes. But the conquest of Wales started with Edward I ("Longshanks" in the film *Braveheart*) and English common law was introduced in the "Statute of Wales"

[9] Canada, Australia, New-Zealand, South Africa.

(1284). Wales was divided into native principalities and Anglo-Norman possessions, while English settlers in Wales were given privileges and Welshmen were excluded from high offices. This resulted in the last Welsh uprising, led between 1399 and 1409 by Owain Glyndwr, with no significant change for Wales. A Welshman, Henry Tudor, even started a notable dynasty in England, and Wales became incorporated into England by the Act of Union (1543).

The Welsh language, however, was less endangered than Gaelic in Scotland in the 18th century. The New Testament and the Prayer Book were translated into Welsh in 1567, the Bible in 1588. The Welsh language was thus preserved and has fared better than Gaelic and Irish, not to mention Manx and Cornish. Wales has now its Welsh Assembly and a First Minister (Government of Wales Act, 1998), with a certain number of powers devolved from the central government in London.

On the web: www.wales.gov.uk

Scotland – Alba (Gaelic for "Scotland")

Scotland before the 8th century was divided into several kingdoms and peopled by Celts (Picts, Scots, Britons), Angles (Anglo-Saxons) and, from the 8th century, Scandinavians (probably coming from the West Coast of Norway). By mid 9th century, the Scots and Picts were united under Kenneth MacAlpin, and at the end of the century, King Donald II called himself "Rí Alban", "King of Alba". The kingdom came under threat from the powerful Norse Earls in Orkney, who controlled not just the Northern Isles (Orkney and Shetland) but also the Western Isles (Inner and Outer Hebrides) and part of the Highlands (as well as the Isle of Man). The greatest threat, however, came from the English kings. Scotland had to fight hard to preserve its independence and the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries saw a series of cruel wars against its southern neighbours.

Scotland developed its trade with the Low Countries, Scandinavia, the Baltic, and became an ally of France against the English. The Scottish Crown managed to win the Western Isles from the Norwegian Crown (battle of Largs, 1263 – treaty of Perth, 1266) and annexed the Northern Isles in 1470, where the royal lands had been pledged by King Christian I of Denmark in 1468 and 1469. Then in 1603 King James VI of Scotland became King of England as James I. This was the Union of the Crowns, followed one century later by the Union of Parliaments (1707). This Union, however, did not go all that well with the Scots: the supporters of the Stuart dynasty (the "Jacobites", named after King James VII/II's son, the "Old Pretender" to the Crowns of Scotland and England, against William of Orange), rebelled on four occasions between 1708 and 1745. The last Jacobite uprising, led by the "Young Pretender", better known as "Bonnie Prince Charlie" ended on Culloden battlefield in 1746 (last battle fought on British soil) with a Jacobite defeat. The Highland clan structure was destroyed, symbols of Highland culture forbidden (kilt and bagpipe, until the creation of the first Highland Regiment of the British Army), while Gaelic was partly eradicated from the Highlands and has managed to survive only in the West and the North of mainland Scotland, as well as in some of the Inner Hebrides and in all of the Outer Hebrides. Scotland became the weaker partner in the new state of Great Britain, although the Scots did participate in the conquest, building and ruling of the British Empire, either willingly by serving in the Armed forces or the Civil service, or less so by emigrating to Canada, Australia, New-Zealand, South Africa.

The 1997 referendum gave a 71% yes in favour of devolution and with the Scotland Act (1998), the Scottish Parliament came to a new life, nearly 3 centuries after the Union.

On the web: www.scottish.parliament.uk + www.scottish.gov.uk

Ireland – Eire (Irish for "Ireland")

The case of Ireland will be studied separately, but it should be remembered that Ireland had its own Parliament until 1801, when it was united with Great Britain until 1921, when the Government of Ireland Act established 2 parliaments: one for the 6 counties of Northern Ireland (Stormont, in Belfast), the other (the Dáil, in Dublin) for the "Irish Free State", which was a dominion of the British Empire until 1949 when it became a fully independent state, the Republic of Ireland.

Northern Ireland has remained British, but the Province, as it is also known, has suffered a bitter conflict since the 1970s. The situation has improved with the "Good Friday Agreement" in April 1998 but remains fragile.

On the web: http://www.ni-assembly.gov.uk/

VI – The British political system
A few notions

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is **a parliamentary monarchy**. It is a **democracy** with a **multi-party system**, where individual freedom is protected, although there have been restrictions with recent anti-terrorist legislation.

Contrary to the US, Norway or France, Britain has no **entrenched constitution**, which means that constitutional rules find their origin in several sources, and not in one, single, text. These sources are:

- statute law (Acts of Parliament)
- common law or "judge-made" law
- conventions and traditions
- ancient documents (Magna Carta, for example)
- EU law.

As a consequence, constitutional rules can be changed by a vote of Parliament and are therefore more flexible, whereas constitutional changes in France for instance are a lengthy process.

The British political system is divided into the three powers: executive, legislative, judicial. But whereas these three powers are strictly separated in the US, the separation is not as strict in Britain.

1 - The executive

The **Monarch** (Queen or King) is the **Head of State**. As such, the present monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, has no power, but only a constitutional role ("The Queen reigns but does not rule"). She receives advice from **the Privy Council** (for example, from Cabinet Ministers). She is the Head of the Armed Forces, of the Church of England, and, last but not least, of the Commonwealth.

The Prime Minister (PM) is traditionally appointed by the Queen after a General Election, from the party, of which he/she is the leader, with the greatest number of votes and a majority in the House of Commons. The PM is the **head of government**, and as such, has strong power.

The Cabinet is a small group of senior ministers (chosen by the PM, usually 21 in numbers), presided over by the PM, who is "first among equals", meaning the PM has the last word. Some of these Cabinet ministers have specific titles: the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister), the Lord Chancellor (Justice Minister). The Cabinet (sometimes referred to as "10 Downing Street", or "No 10", or "Downing Street"), decides government policy. Cabinet Ministers have a collective responsibility to the decisions taken by the Cabinet, and an individual responsibility to

their individual department. They are answerable to the Parliament, where they have to answer questions put to them by Members of Parliament (MPs).

The Civil Service is the collective name for the Government departments/ministries. Civil servants must remain politically neutral.

2 – The legislative (Parliament)

Often referred to as "Westminster", the Parliament comprises **the House of Lords**, whose members (known as "peers and peeresses") are **not elected**, **the House of Commons**, whose members are elected in a **General Election**, and the monarch (remember that after a **bill** has been approved by both houses, it has to receive the "royal assent" in order to become an **Act** and have force of law). Note: a **bill** is a proposal for a law, to be debated, examined, amended and possibly passed (=approved) by Parliament. If passed and after receiving the Royal Assent, it becomes an **Act**. If a newspaper article refers to a "bill", it means it is probably being discussed; if it refers to an "Act", it means it has been passed and is now a law.

The Parliament can make, abolish or change laws. It votes credits to the Government, examines Government's policies and European Union legislation.

The maximum "life" of a Parliament is 5 years. A new House of Commons comes as the result of a **General Election** held in the whole of the United Kingdom (minimum voting age: 18). If a member of the HC dies or resigns, another is elected: it is a "by-election".

The House of Lords (Upper House) consists now mostly of life peers/peeresses (selected by political parties and an independent Appointments Commission). Remember that the future of the House of Lords is uncertain, as there is public demand for changes (some peers/peeresses being elected, for instance). So far, the Government's plans for such a change have been unsuccessful.

Also remember that up until 1911, the House of Lords was much more powerful and had an unlimited veto over bills passed by the House of Commons. But in 1911, in order to pass Home-Rule legislation for Ireland (which had been so far vetoed by the Lords), the government managed to appoint enough peers in its favour to reduce the veto to 2 years (Parliament Act). This veto was later reduced to one year (Parliament Act, 1949). The HL cannot delay a financial bill.

The House of Lords has an important job to do with revising, criticising, amending bills. Many of the life peers/peeresses are former Prime Ministers, Ministers, diplomats, etc, and they have experience and knowledge. But the HL is also criticised for being undemocratic and obsolete.

The House of Commons has 659 members. Each member is elected in a general election and represents a **constituency**. The electoral system is known as the **first past the post system**. This means that in order to be elected, the winning candidate has to have the greatest number of votes cast (but not necessarily a majority of votes representing more than 50% of votes cast, as is the case in other countries).

Example: 6 candidates in a constituency – candidate A receives 35% of the votes cast, candidate B 28%, candidate C, 22%, candidate D 10%, candidate E 3%, candidate F 2%. Candidate A is elected because he/she has received the greatest number of votes cast, but he/she does not represent the majority. This system is criticised because it gives a majority in the House of Commons which does not necessarily represent the majority in the country.

The main political parties in the UK are:

- the **Labour Party**; very moderate social-democrat party; its present leader Tony Blair is criticised by left-wing members of Labour for his liberal economic policies and his unconditional support of George W. Bush
- the **Conservative Party** (the Conservatives are also called "Tories – the Tory party", especially by their opponents); right-wing party, finds it difficult to find its strength back after the fall of Margaret Thatcher (former Conservative PM, now Lady Thatcher, peeress) and the initial success of Tony Blair

NB: these two parties are the "main" parties, although they also have to reckon with:

- the **Liberal-Democrats**; centre left, in favour of constitutional reforms, have opposed British participation in the war in Iraq.

Other parties:

- the **Scottish National Party** (SNP), 2nd party in Scotland, after Labour
- **Plaid Cymru** (Welsh National Party)
- the parties in Northern Ireland (see chapter VIII on Northern Ireland)
- smaller parties: the **Greens** (defence of the environment), UK Independence (against the European Union), British National Party (far-right, anti-foreigners).

Legislation passed by Westminster applies to the whole of the UK (national issues). Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland however, have their own institutions for purely Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish matters. The Scottish Parliament ("Holyrood") is by far the most powerful of these three regional elected bodies, compared to the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly. Also see the handout on Northern Ireland.

There is no specific parliament for England. Legislation affecting England (and often Wales as well) is debated and passed by Westminster. Example: the ban on fox-hunting is a specifically regional issue. Fox-hunting was banned in Scotland by the Scottish Parliament months before it was banned in England and Wales by Westminster. Also note that issues such as primary/secondary education are regional, not national issues, Scotland and Northern Ireland having always kept their own school system.

3 – the judiciary

Remember that the organisation of courts is different throughout the UK, where there are indeed three different systems:

- English and Welsh courts
- Courts in Northern Ireland
- Scottish courts

Example: if a person is arrested for a crime committed in Scotland, that person will be tried and judged in a Scottish court, and any appeal may go to the High Court of Justiciary in Edinburgh. But someone arrested for a crime committed in England or Wales will be tried by an English/Welsh court and any appeal may go to the House of Lords to be heard by the **Law Lords**.

Also note the following:

- law in England & Wales is divided into **civil** law (when a "plaintiff" serves a claim on a "defendant"; example: a dispute between two individuals over a financial matter) and **criminal** law (for crimes or offences against the laws of the state); there are, therefore, **civil courts** and **criminal courts**

- for professional disputes, matters are referred to **tribunals** (example: medical malpractice, teaching malpractice, etc); tribunals are different from courts (see above)
- professionals of the law are **judges** (presiding over courts), **barristers** (giving legal advice and also appearing in court as advocates for the defence or the prosecution in criminal cases, for the plaintiff or the defendant in civil cases), and **solicitors**, whose functions are similar to barristers' but they specialise in different areas of law; judges are usually chosen from senior barristers – also note that some successful barristers may be given the title "Queen's Counsel" (as in, for example: "Defence counsel Mr Owen, QC"), meaning they can claim higher fees and stand good chances of becoming judges…

Finally: the three powers are not as strictly separated in the UK as they are in the US. One of the most striking examples is the **Lord Chancellor**, who is:

- Minister of Justice (Cabinet Minister): member of the executive
- Member of the House of Lords: member of the legislative
- One of the Law Lords: member of the judiciary.

VII – Ireland

The island of Ireland was not affected by the Roman conquest like its neighbour Britain. Peopled by Gaels (Q-Celtic speaking tribes), it was a collection of petty kingdoms (tuatha), grouped into five "fifths" (Meath, Leinster, Munster, Connaught and Ulster), each competing for the high kingship of Ireland (*árd rí Éireann* = high king of Ireland). In the 5th century AD, the Ulster kingdom of the Scots of Dalriada extended into the country whose name was to be derived from theirs (Scotland).

Ireland was converted to Christianity between the 4th and 7th centuries, notably by **St Patrick**, patron of Ireland (and honoured every year on 17 March). Irish monks contributed to Christianise the pagan tribes of the neighbouring islands (in particular St Columba, founder of the monasteries of Lindisfarne, off the Northumbrian coast in North-Eastern England, and Iona, off the isle of Mull in Western Scotland). St Columba also contributed to founding monasteries in France and Italy, while other monks may have travelled as far as the Faeroe Islands and Iceland, to live in isolation. Irish monks left several manuscripts, thus contributing to the preservation of the Irish language (among others, the "Book of Kells[10]", on display at Trinity College Library, in Dublin).

The Scandinavian impact

The Vikings started raiding Ireland in the late 8th century. They founded or fortified coastal settlements (like Dublin) and started trading with the native Irish. They never managed to dominate the island however and were progressively assimilated after the battle of Clontarf (1014), where they allied themselves to the Irish king of Dublin, only to be defeated by High King **Brian Boru**, who had a few other Vikings as his allies. (Brian Boru's harp is on display at Trinity College Library, Dublin).

The Normans and the English

The division of Ireland into several petty kingdoms, even under a high kingship, was a source of conflict among the petty kings, but also with the High King. In the 12th century, the king of Leinster called an Anglo-Norman noble to help him against the High King and Eastern Ireland became Norman territory, while Henry II of England from 1171 gradually imposed his rule over Ireland, all the more since he had been granted "the lordship of Ireland" by Pope Adrian IV in 1155, in order to bring the

[10] The motifs in "Book of Kells" served as inspiration for the decorations at the top of the supporting pillars inside Urnes Stavkyrkje.

church in Ireland in line with the authority of Rome. In the 13th century, King John of England established a civil government, and English law was introduced, with the country divided into administrative counties.

A Parliament was created in 1297, representing the Anglo-Irish (Anglo-Norman settlers) and not the native Irish. But the Anglo-Normans, as the Vikings before them, became increasingly Gaelicised, so that the English, by the Statute of Kilkenny (1366), created two geopolitical areas: the Pale (English-controlled), and the rest of Ireland, left to the native Irish, while intermarriages were forbidden.

In the 15th century, actual power in Ireland was held by a few great nobles, but by the end of the century, King Henry VII's commissioner, Sir Edward Poynings, made the Dublin Parliament pass a statute which subjected all Irish legislation to be approved by the King of England ("Poynings' Law").

The 16th & 17th centuries

The 16th century saw one of the earliest rebellions by the Anglo-Irish against the English monarch, together with opposition to Henry VIII's breach with Rome and the Pope's authority. Henry VIII, who had been recognised "King of Ireland" by the compliant Irish Parliament (Kings of England had heretofore been "Lord of Ireland"), confiscated monastic and rebels' property. The Anglo-Irish and the Gael Irish were now on the same side. Roman Catholicism was briefly restored under Queen Mary (1553-58), but under Elizabeth I, the Anglican Church was established in Ireland ("Church of Ireland"). This was followed by three unsuccessful rebellions, with rebel lands forfeited and given to English settlers (the "Plantation").

Ireland had now become more than a purely Irish/English affair: the Spanish and later the French were to support the Roman Catholic Irish against their Protestant English masters, making it all the more necessary for the English to control the island. Under James I of England & Ireland (James VI of Scotland), the "Plantation" of Ulster started in earnest, with Protestant immigrants from Lowland Scotland and from England. These immigrants (40,000 by 1640) were not just landowners but also tenant farmers and labourers, who actually settled *on* the land and stayed, thus forming the embryo of the Protestant (with Anglicans and Presbyterians) community in the North of Ireland.

Under Charles I and during the English Civil Wars, most Roman Catholics and some Anglicans supported the King against the Parliament. But after the King's defeat, Ireland was occupied by **Cromwell** and his troops, who left bitter memories of repression and massacres. Land was given to English landowners; Roman Catholic landowners having remained faithful to the Parliamentary cause were forced to exchange their lands for estates in Connaught (the West of Ireland, least fertile part of the island).

The restoration of King Charles II brought little change to Ireland, but his successor James II (James VII of Scotland) was a Roman Catholic monarch, who wanted to give back their lands to Roman Catholic landowners. In the ensuing war between RC James and Protestant William III (**William of Orange**), James's forces were defeated at the battle of the Boyne (celebrated every year in Northern Ireland by Orange marches, often the cause for violent clashes with Roman Catholics), and the battle of Aughrim (1690). The Treaty of Limerick the following year secured the "Protestant Ascendancy" over Ireland.

The 18th century & the union

The Protestant Ascendancy meant that only the Anglicans (*aka* Episcopalians) could rule Ireland. The Presbyterians, although Protestant, were excluded from power and so were the Roman Catholics. The latter were allowed their own faith but forbidden to hold public religious services; they could not own land, or hold public offices.

But Ireland's subjugation to England and its lack of autonomy in trade led to discontent. During the American war of independence, Irish Protestants (Henry Flood, Henry Grattan) managed to obtain an amendment to Poynings' Law (see above) and the Roman Catholics were admitted to some civil offices (1793), while the Maynooth seminary was founded for the training of RC priests. Furthermore, some Presbyterians allied themselves to middle-class Roman Catholics under the leadership of a Protestant, **Wolfe Tone**, who founded the United Irishmen. In 1798, they took to open rebellion with French military support, and although the United Irishmen were defeated, they put the Irish question on the agenda of the Prime Minister, William Pitt, who managed to unite the British and Irish Parliaments and the kingdoms of Ireland and Great Britain into one political entity, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in 1801[11]. William Pitt also tried to ease the restrictions imposed upon the Roman Catholics, but King George III opposed any change.

The 19th century

The emancipation of the Roman Catholics

For the Irish Protestants such as Henry Grattan and the Irish Roman Catholics, the Union meant the end of any form of Irish autonomy, however limited. The United Irishmen rebelled again in 1803, with Robert Emmet, without success. The Act of Union still excluded non-Anglicans (Presbyterians and Roman Catholics) from Parliament by the British Test Act. Things were to change, however with **Daniel O'Connell**, a Roman Catholic lawyer who, using non-violent methods, founded the Roman Catholic Association in 1823, stood illegally as a candidate in a by-election[12] in 1828 and was nevertheless elected to Parliament. The British government allowed him to take his seat and passed the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 against Tory (=Conservative) opposition, while repealing (=suppressing) the Test Act. The Presbyterians, however, were suspicious of this RC victory and now sided with the Anglicans (Episcopalians, of the Church of Ireland).

O'Connell, however, did not stop and carried on non-violent agitation and mass demonstrations against the Act of Union, until he called off a meeting in 1843. The "Young Ireland" movement, with Charles Gavan Duffy, resorted to more drastic action, attempting a rebellion in 1848, which failed, its leaders being deported or having to escape.

The potato famine – the Fenians

The blight affecting the potato crop in 1845[13] and in the following years was the cause of a drop in the population of Ireland (8.5 million in 1845, 6.5 million in 1851), caused by death and emigration, mostly to the United Sates (see Gerald O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*, as well as Sergeant-Major O'Rourke and Sergeant Quincannon in the trilogy by John Ford – see below), but also to the industrial cities of Britain (London, Glasgow, Liverpool...). Tenants unable to pay their rents were evicted,

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[11] It is from this date that the British flag is made of three superimposed national flags (St George's cross for England, St Andrew's cross for Scotland, St Patrick's cross for Ireland).

[12] A by-election is held when one representative only is to be elected (after resignation, death or any other cause for the seat becoming vacant).

[13] The potato failure also affected parts of Scotland.

while landowners unable to collect their rents had to sell their estates (see the film *Far & Away*, by Ron Howard).

The Fenian movement (later to be called the Irish Republican Brotherhood, IRB) started among Irish exiles in America and in France ("Fenian" from the Irish *Fianna* = warriors, in ancient Ireland) and aimed at liberating Ireland from British rule by all means, including rebellion (which failed once again, in 1867). By then, the British Prime Minister William **Gladstone** (Liberal) realised that drastic measures were necessary in order to pacify a turbulent Ireland: he disestablished the Church of Ireland (=suppressed the official position) in 1869 and passed the 1st Irish Land Act (giving security of land-tenure). At the same period the Home Rule League was founded by a Protestant and 60 of its members were elected to Parliament. One of them, **Charles Parnell**, a young Protestant landowner, joined Michael Davitt's Land League and forced the Irish question onto the political agenda by obstructing parliamentary debates. He was very popular in Ireland (as well as with the American-Irish) and was nicknamed the "Uncrowned King of Ireland". In 1886, Gladstone introduced a **Home Rule** Bill, defeated by Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, followed by a second Home Rule Bill, defeated in the House of Lords.

The 20th century

Home Rule

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Irish Nationalists were united by John Redmond, while nationalism manifested itself also in a Gaelic cultural revival (Gaelic sports, Gaelic language), with the IRB (see above) still active and a new political movement, the *Sinn Fein* (literally: "Ourselves" in Irish), led by **Arthur Griffith**.

In 1906, with the Liberals back in power, the Home Rule question came again on the agenda and coincided with a conflict between the Government (Asquith, Prime Minister, Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer[14]) and the House of Lords, whose veto could block any legislation, including on taxation. The Parliament Act of 1911 reduced the House of Lords veto to 2 years and the next Home Rule Bill was introduced in 1912, while Protestants in Ulster under the leadership of Sir Edward Carson decided to resist Home Rule at all costs (with support from British Unionists and some Army officers) and founded the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). The Irish nationalists riposted by creating the Irish Volunteers and both organisations started gathering weapons and training their troops.

As expected, the Home Rule Bill was vetoed by the Lords in 1912 but passed in 1914 by the Commons and delayed until the end of the war (WWI), which broke out in August. The Irish nationalists, unhappy with John Redmond's loyalty to the government, prepared themselves, once again, for insurrection.

The Easter Rising – The Anglo-Irish War

At Easter 1916, forces from the Irish Volunteers under **Padraig Pearse** and the Irish Citizen Army of **James Connolly** (Socialist) took the General Post Office in Dublin and occupied several other buildings and public places in the city. They were forced to surrender 5 days later to the British forces and the leaders were executed. Their death caused a movement of sympathy and in the general election of 1918, the Sinn Fein party, led by an Easter Rising survivor, **Eamon de Valera**, won 73 of the 106 seats for Ireland. Sinn Fein MPs refused to sit in London and formed the Dáil Éireann, or Irish Assembly, in Dublin, while the Irish Republican Army with **Michael Collins**

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[14] Finance Minister in the British government.

waged a guerrilla war on the British authorities, who retaliated with the police and army forces (the infamous "Black & Tans", so called because of their blak trousers and khaki jackets; they were often demobilised soldiers with fighting experience).

The Partition of Ireland – the Republic of Ireland

The British government finally passed the Government of Ireland Act in 1920, partitioning Ireland into 2 areas, each with its own self-government, the 6 counties of the North East with a Protestant Unionist majority and the remaining 26 counties with a Catholic Nationalist majority. The Northern Ireland Parliament (Stormont) was opened in 1921, while negotiations started between Lloyd George and De Valera. The Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in 1921 by Lloyd George and, for the Irish side, Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. The 26 counties formed the "**Irish Free State**", with a status of dominion[15] within the British Empire.

But the Treaty was denounced by some Republicans, including De Valera, who took arms against the pro-Treaty Dáil. This state of civil war lasted until De Valera called for an end of Republican resistance in 1923. In the elections of the same year (men and women voting), the pro-Treaty party got a majority, with William Cosgrave as president of the executive council, enforcing public safety measures against any resurgence of Republican violence. In 1932, however, De Valera's party, *Fianna Fail* ("warriors of destiny") came to power with Labour support. De Valera introduced a new constitution in 1937, with an elected president instead of a governor-general. The Irish Free State became "**Eire**".

Eire remained neutral during WWII, which did not prevent Irishmen to volunteer and join the British forces. At the general election in 1948, the *Fine Gael* ("family/tribe of Irish") party came to power with John Costello, who ended the Irish membership of the Commonwealth a year later. The 26 counties had officially become the **Republic of Ireland**, recognised by Britain. The Six Counties of **Northern Ireland** could join the Republic, but only with the consent of their Assembly. This has not been the case so far.

A few books…

- *Dubliners* – James Joyce (1914) – this collection of 15 short stories depicts several characters in different situations in pre-WWI Dublin; Joyce was sympathetic to the nationalist cause, with some reservations, and he portrays Dublin as a colonial city, paralysed and without much hope of change; in "Ivy day in the committee room" the fate of Parnell is evoked.
- *The Informer* – Liam O'Flaherty (1925) – a novel set in Dublin in the 1920s, during the guerrilla war between the IRA and the British forces; Liam O'Flaherty came from a Fenian family and took part in the Republican rebellion against the Free State forces in 1922.
- *Insurrection* – Liam O'Flaherty (1950) – a novel following a young Irishman volunteering to join the insurgents in the 1916 Easter Rising.
- *Strumpet City* – James Plunkett (1969) – a novel set in pre-WWI Dublin.

[15] By the 1920s, the dominions of the British Empire were Canada, Australia, New-Zealand and South Africa. Dominions had their own constitution and political institutions but their head of state remained the British monarch.

- *A Star Called Henry* – Roddy Doyle (1999) – a novel following the young Henry Smart from his birth in the Dublin slums to his involvement in the 1916 Easter Rising, the guerrilla against the British and the Irish civil war; by the author of *The Snapper* and *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors.*

A few films...

- *Gone with the Wind* (1939), by Victor Fleming; although this classic film gives a very biased view of the Southern States of the US and the American Civil War, and is therefore not set in Ireland, it should be noted that Scarlett O'Hara's father, Gerald O'Hara, speaks fervently of the Irish love for land, of which so many Irish Roman Catholics had been deprived.
- *The Quiet Man* (1952), by John Ford; a great classic, with John Wayne as an Irish-American coming back to Ireland, where he is going to find himself a wife (Maureen O'Hara); her brother (Victor McLaglen) and her husband will have a memorable fight – lots of stereotypes, but highly enjoyable.
- *Ryan's Daughter* (1970), by David Lean; set in the West of Ireland during WWI, evokes Easter Rising Ireland (1916), with support for the "rebels" starting to grow; splendid photography of the West coast; also note the scene of the storm, when boxes of German weapons and ammunition are washed ashore and gathered by the local villagers who lend assistance to a nationalist leader – note the performance by actors John Mills, Trevor Howard, Sarah Miles and Robert Mitchum.
- *Far and Away* (1992), by Ron Howard; the story of a young Irish Roman Catholic (Tom Cruise), who flees Ireland, poverty and the law, with a young Irish Protestant girl (Nicole Kidman) in the late 19th century; both reach the United States and eventually grab their own land in the Oklahoma territory, just opened to settlers in 1894.
- *Michael Collins* (1996), by Neil Jordan; evocation of the life of an Easter Rising survivor who led the fight against the British forces in Ireland, then against the Republicans opposed to the Anglo-Irish treaty, from 1918 to 1922, when he was shot dead in an ambush – great performances by Liam Neeson (also plays in *Rob Roy* and *Schindler's List*) and Alan Rickman (also plays the evil Sheriff of Nottingham in *Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves*).

The American film-maker John Ford (1895-1973 – his real name was Sean Aloysius O'Fearna, of obvious Irish origin), famous for his western films with his favourite actors (John Wayne, Victor McLaglen, Maureen O'Hara), was very keen on Ireland. In his trilogy *Fort Apache, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, Rio Grande*, respectively 1948, 1949 and 1950, John Wayne always plays an officer with Irish connections, flanked by a sergeant (Victor McLaglen) whose accent and love of Whiskey make him a caricature of an Irishman.

A few songs and some music…

Many Irish bands and solo artists sing songs from the numerous Irish rebellions. Among others:

- the Dubliners
- Tommy Makem and the Clancy Brothers
- Christy Moore
- The Wolfe Tones

The traditional band The Chieftains are not singers but instrumentalists and some of the tunes they play may be associated with Irish history ("The Battle of Aughrim", fought in 1690, "The March of the French", in reference to the French landings in Ireland in 1798 – "The Wild Geese", named after the Irish soldiers who fled Ireland and fought in continental armies after 1800 – "The Home Ruler", a possible reference to Parnell).

VIII – Northern Ireland

A few terms…

- **Ireland**: the island west of the island of Britain
- **Ulster**: one of the four ancient provinces of Ireland, the other 3 being **Leinster** in the East, **Munster** in South and South-West and **Connacht** (also spelt **Connaught**) in the West; Ulster consists of 9 counties, with 6 forming **Northern Ireland** (see below) and the remaining 3 part of **the Republic of Ireland** (see below)
- **the Irish Free State**: autonomous state created by the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921-22), with Dublin as its capital; the Irish Free State was a dominion of the British Empire and later British Commonwealth (like Canada, Australia, New-Zealand, South Africa); it consisted of the 26 counties having voted for home-rule (the remaining 6 counties form "Northern Ireland", see below)
- **Eire**: the Irish name for "Ireland", replacing "Irish Free State" in the new constitution of 1937
- **the Province of Northern Ireland**: the 6 counties that have remained part of the United Kingdom; at the time of the Anglo-Irish Treaty (see below), there was a 65% majority in favour of the union with Great Britain (the **Unionists**, overwhelmingly Protestant) and a 35% minority in favour of a unified Ireland (the **Nationalists**, overwhelmingly Catholic)
- **the Republic of Ireland/Eire**: the new official name of the former Irish Free State adopted in 1948/49, when the Republic of Ireland left the Commonwealth.

A short chronology…

Before WWII
1922: Anglo-Irish treaty – Ireland partitioned in two: the Irish Free State (Dublin) + the Province of Northern Ireland (Belfast), each with their own parliament (Dáil in Free State, Stormont in NI)
1934-37: sectarian violence in NI, caused partly by economic difficulties and unemployment

For the ruling Unionists (see below, "Political Parties in Northern Ireland"), it was necessary to keep a united front, as if the union (with Great-Britain) was still

under threat; if the working-class section of their electorate felt the union was secure, then voters might be tempted to vote Labour, thus weakening the Unionists and opening the way to other political parties (Nationalists, Socialists, other Unionists) coming to power in NI and possibly negotiating a settlement with the South.

According to the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 (ratified by the Irish Parliament – the Dáil Éireann – in 1922), the island of Ireland was divided into two distinct areas (see chapter VII, Ireland), the Irish Free State (capital: Dublin) and Northern Ireland, aka "The Province" (capital: Belfast). Each had its Parliament (Dáil in the Free State, Stormont in Northern Ireland).

The Irish Free State, with Eamon de Valera, evolved towards complete independence. In 1937, the new constitution removed the office of Governor-general in favour of an elected President, paving the way for the Republic. Some of its articles should be noted:

- *Article 2 said that "The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and territorial seas".*
- *Article 3 said, however, that laws passed by the Irish Parliament would apply only to the 26 counties of the Free State (renamed: Eire), "pending the re-integration of the national territory" (i.e. the 6 counties of Northern Ireland)*
- *Article 8.1.: "The Irish language as the national language is the first official language"*
- *Article 8.2.: "The English language is recognised as a second official language"*[16]
- *Article 41.: "The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society [and] guarantees to protect the Family welfare of the Nation and the State. The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack. No law shall be enacted providing for the grant of a dissolution of marriage"*
- *Article 44.: "The State recognises the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church as the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of the Citizens."*

The articles quoted above could do little to encourage Protestants in Northern Ireland to accept a possible future re-unification. As a matter of fact, sectarian violence (Protestants vs Catholics) marked the 1930s when unemployment reached particularly high levels in the Province. In Eire, on the other hand, Protestants were very few in numbers but were not ostracised by the Catholic majority (although the former were not necessarily happy with articles 41 or 44 of the Constitution). It should be noted that Eire had one the poorest economies in Europe, which cannot have made it very attractive even to the Catholics of the North.

During WWII

1939-45: Eire (ex-Irish Free State) remains neutral during the war (but gives humanitarian assistance to Northern Ireland); suffers from food and fuel shortages.

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[16] In *Ireland Since the Famine* (1971), Lyons notes the importance of the article "a", which means that not just English but other languages could be given a similar status of second official language. In reality, native Irish-speakers were in a minority compared to native English-speakers in the Free State.

Post WWII

After the war and with the introduction of the Welfare State in the United Kingdom (with social policies in health and education), the gap between the Republic and the Province became greater.

The IRA, however, had not abandoned the idea of armed struggle in order to re-unify the country, but its campaign in the late 1950s came to nothing and enjoyed little support from the Roman Catholics in the North.

In the Province, the Protestants remained in control but the Catholics' growing discontent at being evinced from power (see the chronology above and below) led them to opt for protest marches which prompted the Protestants to react violently. With the arrival of British troops in the Province, followed by the IRA back into action, the cycle of violence began (see chronology below) until the opening of difficult negotiations and a fragile truce in the 1990s.

1948: Welfare State in the UK – the Republic of Ireland (ex-Irish Free State) has one of the poorest economies in Europe
1956-62: IRA campaign in the North, receiving little support from Roman Catholics in NI
1960s: growing concern about inequality and discrimination against Roman Catholics in NI

- major industries concentrated in predominantly Protestant areas (north and east of the Province)
- law and order: the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary) has a higher proportion of Protestants than Roman Catholics (6 P – 1 RC)
- politics: dominance of the Ulster Unionist Party; inequality of representation on the constituencies:
    * example of Londonderry/Derry: 14,000 R.Catholics represented by 8 nationalists councillors, 9,000 Protestants by 12 councillors
    * right of vote based on property ownership, with a majority of Protestant ratepayers (paying property tax); this system was abolished in Great-Britain after WWII, but retained in NI
- housing: local councils allocated houses according to religious beliefs
- education: second university built in Coleraine (small Protestant town) and not in Londonderry/Derry (protests by R.Catholics *and* Protestants)

1968: Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), protest marches against discrimination, angry reactions from Protestants
1969: NI Prime Minister Terence O'Neill resigns in face of growing unrest; British troops are called in to protect Roman Catholics from Protestant violence and rioting – IRA split into Official IRA and the Provisional IRA (see below *"Paramilitary Organisations"*)
1970: IRA comes back (split between Official and Provisional) to defend Roman Catholics
1971: internment of suspects without trial
31 January 1972: Bloody Sunday, 14 nationalist demonstrators killed by British troops in Londonderry/Derry
1972: NI parliament suspended, direct rule from London – Official IRA declares a ceasefire
1973-74: Sunningdale conference (Nationalist and Unionist politicians meeting with UK and Rep. of Ireland representatives)

1975: Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), splitting from the Official IRA, launches a terrorist campaign
1976: no political prisoner status for paramilitary prisoners
1979: Lord Mountbatten (last Viceroy of India in 1947) killed by IRA
1980: hunger strikes by republican (IRA) prisoners
1981: Sinn Fein takes part in elections/IRA continues fighting – Bobby Sands, hunger striker, elected MP, dies
1984: IRA bomb at the Tory conference in Brighton
1985: Anglo-Irish agreement (UK & Rep. of Ireland) on cross-border cooperation
1987: Enniskillen bombing (IRA), 11 dead
1990s: talks between all parties in NI for a Peace Process
1991: 31 victims of Ulster Freedom Fighters' violence (UFF, see below *"Paramilitary Organisations"*)
1992: 5 R.Cath. killed by UFF
1993: 10 dead (incl. bomber) in Belfast
1994: paramilitary ceasefires
1995: Joint Framework Document for peace talks (international commission, US Senator George Mitchell)
1996: bomb in London docklands (IRA) and Manchester – violence during Orange marches – but peaceful elections in NI – NI Forum
1997: Tony Blair new PM, Bertie Ahern new Taoiseach (=Prime Minister of the Republic, pronounced "teeshuk"), Mo Mowlam new NI Secretary in the British Cabinet

- UUP (Trimble) carries on with peace talks, DUP (Paisley) pulls out
- Sinn Fein (Adams) carries on with peace talks, but Provisional IRA split (Real IRA, continuing the armed struggle)

1998: GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT (support from Bill Clinton) – 29 dead in Real IRA bombing in Omagh (NI) – David Trimble (UUP) and John Hume (SDLP) awarded Nobel Peace Prize

The Good Friday Agreement

- *a new Northern Ireland Assembly with 108 members to be set up. All key decisions require the consent of both communities in the Province*
- *a North-South Council of Ministers also to be set up, made up of members of the New Assembly and ministers from the Republic*
- *the Irish government to remove Articles 2 and 3 of its constitution, which claims the North as part of its territory (subject to a referendum of the people of the Republic)*
- *review of policing in Northern Ireland*
- *early release for paramilitary prisoners promised*

1999: the Republic of Ireland abandons claims to sovereignty over NI – NI Assembly starts business, in spite of no decommissioning of weapons by IRA
2000: NI Assembly suspended – reforms of NI police – international observers for decommissioning – unrest during Orange marches
2001: Real IRA bomb outside BBC, London –
2002-03: NI Assembly suspended, re-established – some weapons decommissioned – incidents in Belfast when R.Catholic schoolgirls are prevented from going to school by Protestants – unrest around Orange marches...

The Assembly was suspended on 14 October 2000 and dissolved 28 April 2003. The recent elections, held 26 November 2003, have given more seats to the DUP whose leader Ian Paisley (see below "Political Parties in Northern Ireland") refuses to cooperate with the Sinn Fein. The situation, therefore, remains fragile. But recent developments have seen paramilitary organisations realising that violence is even less acceptable now, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks (in America, Spain, Indonesia, the Middle-East). The IRA and the UDA could be on their way to renounce violence for good. Furthermore, George W. Bush, shortly after he was re-elected, telephoned Ian Paisley and Gerry Adams to try to encourage them to cooperate when the authority of the Northern Ireland Assembly is restored. There may be reasonable hope for and end to violence, but the constitutional question remains open…

Political parties in Northern Ireland

While the political parties in mainland Britain are Labour, Conservative and Liberal (plus the Scottish National Party in Scotland and the Plaid Cymru – nationalist – in Wales), the situation in Northern Ireland is different, since there is a fundamental divide between Nationalists (in favour of a united Ireland) and Unionists (in favour of the union with Great Britain).

Nationalists

- Social & Democratic Labour Party (SDLP): peaceful, not linked to paramilitary organisations – key names: John Hume (co-laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize 1998), Seamus Mallon (appointed deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland after the Good Friday Agreement)
- Sinn Fein (pronounced "shin feyn"): republican party, also active in the Republic, with links to the IRA – key names: Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness

Unionists

- Ulster Unionist Party (UUP): peaceful, the largest unionist party in Northern Ireland – key names: David Trimble (co-laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize 1998, appointed First Minister after the Good Friday Agreement), Ken Maginnis
- Democratic Unionist Party (DUP): another unionist party, with hard-line views, less likely to cooperate with non-Unionist parties – key name: Ian Paisley
- Ulster Democratic Party (UDP): a smaller party, political wing of the Ulster Freedom Fighters (see below) – key name: Gary McMichael
- Progressive Unionist Party (PUP): another smaller party, political wing of the Ulster Volunteer Force (see below) – key name: Billy Hutchinson

Other parties

- The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI): committed to expressing the views of those who do not feel represented by either Nationalists or Unionists – key names: Sean Neeson, Colm Cavanagh, David Ford

Paramilitary organisations

- Irish Republican Army (IRA): originally founded after 1918 in order to fight the British in Ireland (see chapter 7); later opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921/22 and fought the armed forces of the Irish Free State until 1923 – split in 1969 between the cautious "'Official" IRA and the active

"Provisional IRA" (whose members were know as the "provos") – after the Good Friday Agreement, the Provisional IRA split into "splinter groups" like the "Real IRA" whose members want to carry on with violent action

- Irish National Liberation Army (INLA): a smaller republican group that came into existence in 1975 after splitting from the Official IRA
- Ulster Defence Association (UDA): formed in 1971 to defend loyalist areas (as the Provisional IRA is supposedly doing for republican areas), banned in 1992 but carries on under the name of Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF)
- Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF): created by Unionists before 1914 in order to resist Home-Rule, revived in 1966 and subsequently banned

Two websites:

- The Northern Ireland Assembly: www.niassembly.gov.uk/
- The Northern Ireland Executive: www.nics.gov.uk/

A few books…

- *Shadows on Our Skins,* Jennifer Johnston – 1977 (set in Londonderry/Derry in the 1970s, a friendship between a Roman Catholic boy and a young Roman Catholic schoolteacher whose fiancé is a British soldier stationed in Germany)
- *Cal,* Bernard McLaverty – 1983 (set in Northern Ireland during the 1970s, a love affair between a young IRA man and a Protestant widow whose husband, a Royal Ulster Constabulary officer, was killed by the IRA)
- *Lies of Silence,* Brian Moore – 1990 (set in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, the story of man who is involuntarily involved with the IRA)

A few films…

- *Cal* (1984), by Pat O'Connor, with John Lynch and Helen Mirren – (a screen adaptation of the novel)
- *Hidden Agenda* (1990), by Ken Loach, with France McDormand and Brian Cox – (an American journalist is killed in Northern Ireland; a senior police officer is called from Britain to investigate)
- *Patriot Games* (1992), by Philip Noyce, with Harrison Ford, Richard Harris, Anne Archer, Patrick Bergin, Sean Bean, James Earl Jones – (an ex-CIA operative is involved in a criminal attempt by an Irish Republican splinter group and fights to protect his family)
- *The Crying Game* (1992), by Neil Jordan, with Forest Whitaker, Miranda Richardson, Stephen Rea – (set in Northern Ireland and Britain in the 1970s, the story of an unlikely friendship between a young British soldier captured by the IRA and one of his captors)
- *In the Name of the Father* (1993), by Jim Sheridan, with Daniel Day-Lewis, Pete Postlethwaite, Emma Thomson – (inspired by the "Guildford four", when four young people of Irish origin were arrested and wrongly convicted for the bombing of a pub in London in 1974, until they were re-tried and found not guilty after 14 years in jail)

- *Nothing Personal* (1996), by Thaddeus O'Sullivan, with Ian Hart and John Lynch – (sectarian violence in Northern Ireland; how it breaks up communities, and how violence feeds violence).

IX – Education in England: the public schools

In his *British Civilization, An Introduction*, John Oakland explains that there are three different school systems in the UK: one for England & Wales, one for Northern Ireland, one for Scotland. He also uses the terms "high, grammar and public schools" (p.192) when referring to the schools of England & Wales in the 19th century. The term "public school", however, is misleading. Public schools in England, and this also applies to the late 20th and early 21st centuries, are not to be mixed with state schools. Initially, they used to cater for the education of the upper-middle and upper-class children and Oakland writes: "[public schools] were created (often by monarchs) to provide education for the sons of the rich and aristocratic." (p.198). He adds, however, that "Entry today is competitive, normally by an entrance examination, and is not confined to social class, connections or wealth, although the ability to pay the fees is important."

Public schools are indeed private (or "independent") institutions, but please note that this term applies to England & Wales. In order to avoid any confusion, we ought to remember that the term "public school" refers only to a certain type of private, fee-paying, elitist secondary school in the English education system. In Scotland, we should say "private" or "independent" (but not "public", to avoid any possible confusion) schools as opposed to "state schools". The distinction between "private" or "independent" and "state" schools can be made in England as well as in Scotland. When using the term "public school", therefore, we refer only to the English context.

Since the first half of the 19th century, English public schools have provided the UK with a vast number of politicians, soldiers, civil servants, businessmen... Their image has changed over the last two centuries, but they have kept some of their earliest characteristics up to today.

In this chapter, we shall examine a few passages from 19th and 20th century novels, as well as from non-fiction works on education.

1 – In literature…

From *Tom Browne's Schooldays*, by Thomas Hughes (1857)

Tom Browne is "a new boy" at the highly selective public school of Rugby in the 1830s. Shortly after his arrival, his "house" plays and wins a game of "rugby football". Following the game, Brooke, a senior boy, delivers a speech in which he praises "house spirit" as superior to "school spirit"...

> I know I'd sooner win two School-house matches running than get the Balliol scholarship any day-(frantic cheers).
>
> Now, I'm as proud of the house as any one. I believe it's the best house in the school (…) But it's a long way from what I want to see it. First there's a deal of bullying going on (…) [addressing the younger pupils] You'll be all the better football [understand: Rugby football] players for learning to stand it [bullying], and to take your own parts, and fight it through. But depend on it, there's nothing breaks up a house like bullying. Bullies are cowards, and one coward makes many; so good-bye to the School-house match if bullying gets ahead here (…) Then there's fuddling about in the public houses [=pubs], and drinking bad spirits, and punch, and such rot-gut stuff. That won't make good drop kicks or chargers of you, take my word for it. You get plenty of good beer here, and that's enough for you; and drinking isn't fine or manly, whatever some of you may think of it.

It is interesting to note that Brooke, considered a "good" student, encourages the "new boys" to be good at games (he means very probably the early form of Rugby football, from which the Rugby Union and Rugby League games are derived). He makes no mention at all of academic studies, or reading classics or learning and working hard. What matters to him is the glory of the "house". This is something that is echoed in the *Harry Potter* novels, where Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is divided into four houses, each competing to win the Quidditch Cup[17]. Brooke puts sport above studies, even above a scholarship to Balliol College, one of the most prestigious colleges of Oxford.

Brooke also warns the new students against two perils: bullying (=mobbing – "nothing breaks up a house like bullying") and drinking. The latter would mean that the pubs in England in the early 19th century were rather lax with underage customers, but also that public schoolboys could drink beer at the school (unthinkable in the present day).

Bullying, alas, is still a problem in schools, independent or state ones, and not just in England. And yet, the system of "boazers" and "fags" as described by Roald Dahl in *Boy* (1984 – see the chapters "Boazers" and "Fagging") looks very much like institutionalised bullying, where "prefects" (senior students in charge of discipline) "had the power of life and death over us junior boys" (*Boy*). What Roald Dahl means is that "boazers" could inflict corporal punishment on younger students for a great variety or reasons.

What seems to matter, then, to public-school students of the early 19th century – at least according to Thomas Hughes, himself a former student of Rugby public-school – is loyalty to a group ("the house"), exemplified in team-spirit in order to bring glory to the house.

From "An Unsavoury Interlude", by Rudyard Kipling (1899), in *The Complete Stalky & Co.*

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[17] See footnote 22, p. 42.

Stalky and his class-mates attend a preparatory school (2nd half of the 19th century), based on the United Services College at Westward Ho! (the exclamation mark is part of this place-name) in Devon, where Kipling was educated from 1878 to 1882 before returning to India, where he was born. In this short story, Stalky and his friends put the rotting corpse of a cat in the dormitory of another "house", so that the smell becomes unbearable… The following passage gives us an insight into this school's mentality when it comes to games. Mr Prout, a young teacher and new 'house-master', reproaches Stalky and his mates with not attending a 'house-match'…

> 'I'm sorry to see any boys of my House taking so little interest in their matches (…) Very sorry, indeed, I am to see you frowsting [=rotting] in your studies (…) Why can't you three take any interest in the honour of your House?'
>
> [about two of Mr Prout's fellow-masters]
> In the infinitely petty confederacies of the Common-room, King and Macrea, fellow House-masters, had borne it upon him [Mr Prout] that by games, and games alone, was salvation wrought. Boys neglected were boys lost…

The tone of *Stalky & Co.* is more caustic and the stories more critical of the public school system than *Tom Browne's…* As a matter of fact, Stalky and his friends M'Turk and Beetle (the latter being a fictional equivalent of Kipling himself) spend most of their times playing practical jokes and sometimes rather nasty tricks to the masters as well as their fellow-students. It is worthy to note that for the young master, Mr Prout, "the honour" of "the House" is a fundamental value, while games are once again put forward as the only means of "salvation". It should be noted that by "games", both Hughes and Kipling mean team sports, like cricket, football or rugby. Individual sports, like fencing or tennis, however practised by public-school students are rarely mentioned.

From *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, by James Joyce (1914-15)

In this largely autobiographic novel, James Joyce evokes his days at Conglowes Wood College, a famous Jesuit school in Ireland, which he attended from the age of 6, in 1888, until 1891. The fact that this school is Irish and Roman Catholic did not spare its students the corporal punishments evoked by Hughes and Kipling. In the two following passages, Stephen Dedalus, wonders about the pain caused by flogging and is later punished himself for having broken his glasses…

> The fellows laughed; but he [Dedalus] felt that they were a little afraid. In the silence of the soft grey air he heard the cricketbats from here and from there: pock. That was a sound to hear but if you were hit then you would feel a pain. The pandybat [presumably the instrument used to administer corporal punishment] made a sound too but not like that. The fellows said it was made of whalebone and leather with lead inside: and he wondered what was the pain like. There were different kinds of pains for all the different kinds of sounds. A long thin cane would have a high whistling sound and he wondered what was that pain like. It made him shivery to think of it and cold…
>
> Stephen closed his eyes and held out in the air his trembling hand with the palm upwards. He felt the prefect of studies touch it for a moment at the fingers to straighten it and then the swish of the sleeve of the soutane [the black robe worn by RC priests] as the pandybat was lifted to strike. A hot burning stinging tingling blow

> like the loud crack of a broken stick made his trembling hand crumple together like a leaf in the fire: and at the sound and the pain scalding tears were driven into his eyes. His whole body was shaking with fright, his arm was shaking and his crumpled burning livid hand shook like a loose leaf in the air. A cry sprang to his lips, a prayer to be let off. But though the tears scalded his eyes and his limbs quivered with pain and fright he held back the hot tears and the cry that scalded his throat.
> - Other hand! shouted the prefect of studies.

James Joyce gives here an almost clinical description of the pain caused by the "pandybat". There is none of Thomas Hughes's respect for the school, or of Kipling's slightly ironic view. Reflecting on the punishment he has just been administered, the young Dedalus finds it, as well the prefect of studies (who is a priest), "unfair and cruel". And even if he manages to explain to the rector (the headmaster) that he had broken his glasses by accident, the memory of the pain stays with him and dominates his impressions and souvenirs of this school which, although based in pre-WWI Ireland, is not very different from its "public schools" counterparts in England.

From *Boy*, by Roald Dahl (1984)

At the age of nine, in 1925, Roald Dahl was sent to St Peter's preparatory school, in Weston-super-Mare, south-west England. When he was twelve, he went to Repton public school, near Derby. Most of his memories are rather unpleasant and the adults (masters and staff in general) are unfavourably portrayed. In the two following passages, Roald Dahl remembers his first day at St Peter's and he gives his personal opinion of the Headmaster at Repton…

> [Roald has just arrived at St Peter's with his mother; they meet the Headmaster – words in italics in the Penguin edition]
> An English school in those days was purely a money-making business owned and operated by the Headmaster. It suited him, therefore, to give the boys as little food as possible himself and to encourage the parents in various cunning ways to feed their offspring by parcel-post from home.
> 'By all means, my dear Mrs Dahl, *do* send your boy some little treats now and again,' he would say. 'Perhaps a few oranges and apples once a week' – fruit was very expensive – 'and a nice currant cake, a *large* currant cake perhaps because small boys have large appetites do they not ha-ha-ha… Yes, yes, as *often* as you like. *More* than once a week if you wish… *Of course* he'll be getting plenty of good food here, the best there is, but it never tastes *quite* the same as home cooking, does it? I'm sure you wouldn't want him to be the only one who doesn't get a lovely parcel from home every week (…)
> 'Right,' he said to me. 'Off you go and report to the Matron.' And to my mother he said briskly, 'Goodbye, Mrs Dahl. I shouldn't linger if I were you. We'll look after him.'
> My mother got the message. She kissed me on the cheek and said goodbye and climbed right back into the taxi.
> The Headmaster moved away to another group and I was left standing there beside my brand new trunk and my brand new tuck-box. I began to cry.
>
> [Roald Dahl remembers the Headmaster of Repton, the public school he attended after St Peter's, as being a sadistic man who flogged pupils with a cane]
> Do you wonder then that this man's [the Headmaster] behaviour used to puzzle me tremendously? He was an ordinary clergyman at that time as well as being Headmaster, and I would sit in the dim light of the school chapel and listen to him

> preaching about the Lamb of God and about Mercy and Forgiveness and all the rest of it and my young mind would become totally confused. I knew very well that only the night before this preacher had shown neither Forgiveness nor Mercy in flogging some small boy who had broken the rules.
> So what was it all about? I used to ask myself.
> Do they preach one thing and practise another, these men of God?
> And if someone had told me at the time that this flogging clergyman was one day to become the Archbishop of Canterbury[18], I would never have believed it.

It is difficult to believe that Roald Dahl remembers every word the Headmaster of St Peter's said on his first day at school. Still, Dahl is consistently critical of the preparatory and public school system in England in the 1930s, devoting the greatest number of chapters of *Boy* to his misadventures at Llandaff Cathedral School (Wales), St Peter's and Repton (England). His opinion of the adults in charge is very negative. All three headmasters (Llandaff, St Peter's and Repton) are presented as hypocrites as well as sadistic enthusiasts of corporal punishment. Teachers fare hardly any better: either fear-inspiring like Captain Hardcastle at St Peter's or harmless but inefficient like Corkers at Repton, they contribute to giving English public schools a very poor image (with the exception of the teacher who introduced Dahl to photography).

Yet, one of the very few good memories R. Dahl seems to have kept from Repton is sports.

> A boy who is good at games is usually treated with great respect by the masters at an English Public School. (…) Because I loved playing games, life for me at Repton was not totally without pleasure. Games-playing at school is always fun if you happen to be good at it, and it is hell if you are not.

Last, it is also worth noting that Roald Dahl went straight from Repton to the Shell Company. It was then possible for a young man with no experience of business (Dahl was eighteen) to join a prestigious company without first attending a business school. Such was the prestige of the public schools that having been a pupil was an asset when applying for a job. There was also, and there still is, a certain sense of solidarity between former public-school students, especially if they had attended the same institution.

From *Jennings Goes to School*, by Anthony Buckeridge (1953)

Jennings and Darbishire attend the fictional Linbury Court Preparatory School in the1950s. At the end of their first day, they are about to spend their first night in a dormitory with three other boys who have been at the school for a couple of terms. The two "new chaps" are anxious to know about the school and the masters…

> "You sleep in this bed, Jennings," said Venables, "and you're next to him here, Darbishire. Go on, you've only got ten minutes to get into bed."
> The dormitory was a small one. There were five beds, with a chair beside each; three washbasins by the window and a large mirror in a dark corner of the room.
> Jennings was still enthralled [=captivated] by the novelty of this new method of living one's life, but to Darbishire, the sparse furnishing of the dormitory compared

[18] Together with the Archbishop of York, the Archbishop of Canterbury is one of the highest authorities in the Church of England, whose head is the monarch (the King or Queen). The Archbishop of Canterbury and other religious dignitaries of the Church of England sit in the House of Lords.

> unfavourably with the comfort of his bedroom at home, and the sight of his pyjamas, sponge bag and Bible lying on his hard iron bed in this unfamiliar room was too much. He gulped twice and swallowed hard.
> “What on earth’s the matter with you, Darbishire?” asked Temple.
> “Nothing,” said Darbishire through misty spectacles. “Well, nothing much, except I don’t like this place. When I’m at home my father always comes and talks to me when I’m in bed and – well, it’s all different here, isn’t it?”
> “Oh, I don’t know,” said Jennings philosophically, “we’ll probably get used to it in three or four years.”
> “You’ll have a smash-on lot to get used to,” said Venables. “Wait till you get into the Head’s Latin class; it’s spivish ozard[19], isn’t it, Atki?”
> “Yes, rather,” said Atkinson ghoulishly. “He made me write out the passive of ‘Audio’ twenty-five times once; it nearly killed me[20].”
> “And if you stop,” added Temple, determined to make the worst of it, “if you take a breath even, when you’re going through a verb, you get a stripe [=demerit]. I got fifty-seven stripes for Latin last term and I’m the best in the form.”
> Darbishire paled slightly, but Jennings was undaunted.
> “What are the other masters like?” he demanded.
> Venables, Temple, and Atkinson considered. They were all very happy at Linbury; they all liked the masters, and they knew the rules of the school were made for their own good and their own enjoyment. But one couldn’t possibly admit all this, and only by making out that the school was one degree removed from a concentration camp, and that the school rules would have been condemned by the Spanish Inquisition on compassionate grounds – only by such colouring of the truth could one hope to avoid cramping one’s style, and hold the attention of an audience.

This passage from the highly enjoyable series *Jennings* offers a different view of preparatory and public schools. Firstly, we find an explicit mention of an academic topic (Latin), but no reference to sport, at least in this passage, although football and cricket are present in all the *Jennings* books, along with Latin, maths, geography, history. Secondly, the seasoned students (Atkins, Temple, and Venables) are “very happy” at their school, even if it is not done to admit it and much more enjoyable to scare the poor Jennings and Darbishire (see the references to a concentration camp and to the Spanish Inquisition). But while the latter is visibly uncomfortable with the Spartan conditions of his new life, Jennings is “undaunted” (=still determined, unimpressed), showing the kind of spirit (“pluck”) expected from a preparatory or public school student.

The context of the 1950s may contribute to explaining why the students at Linbury seem to have reached a balance between sports and academic topics. This is no longer the 19th century, where a public school was supposed to supply the British Empire with decent gentlemen with a sense of justice and honour. All schools have had to adapt to the modern world, especially in the aftermath of the Second World War, when Britain sees its imperial power[21] rapidly fading.

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[19] Pupils at Linbury use their own slang. “Spivish” could come from the now dated “spiv” (“a man, esp. well-dressed in a way that attracts attention, who makes money dishonestly – *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*). “Ozard” (bad, awful, terrible) is the opposite of “wizard” (good, excellent, terrific). Both terms are probably derived from the film *The Wizard of Oz*, by Victor Fleming (1939).

[20] Atkinson and his school-mates learn Latin, which, together with ancient Greek, is part of “the Classics”. ‘Audio’ is the Latin for ‘I hear’.

[21] In the early 1950s, the former British colonies in South Asia have been independent since 1947 (India, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka, Burma, which is the former name of Myanmar). British colonies in Africa are about to become independent.

We should also note that, in contrast to Kipling's not always favourable views on public schools, Anthony Buckeridge sounds more positive (see the views of Atkins, Temple and Venables in the passage above). Buckeridge himself had been a pupil at a boarding school and later became a master in a preparatory school, where he found inspiration for the *Jennings* series.

From *Down with Skool* (1953), in *Molesworth*, by Geoffrey Willans and Ronald Searle

Nigel Molesworth attends the fictional preparatory school of St Custard's (early 1950s). He keeps a detailed record of his not always school-oriented activities (with illustrations). He also describes school-life at St Custard's. Molesworth uses school slang, as well as a very personal spelling. In the first passage, he gives examples of "short speeches for headmasters". In the second passage, out of a chapter entitled "BOO TO SIT or ARE MASTERS NESESSESSARY?" (in Molesworth's spelling), he gives a rather irreverent description of masters.

> We hav twelve weeks ahead of us and i want you to cram as much aktivity into them as you can in work and pla (…) We expect grate things at football this term. grabber ma is captain. We shall be a young side but do not forget david and goliath (…) a good little 'un is better than a good big 'un (…) a terrier can worry a st bernard.
>
> Masters are a shapes and sizes. Some are thin, some hav got an enormous pot on them some smoke cigs some smoke pipes poo gosh which ponk like anything and narly ALL hav a *face like a squashed tomato.*
> PROPOSITION: *All Masters are Weeds and Love the Kane.*
> PROOF: The job of masters is supposed tot be to teach boys lessons e.g. geog lat fr. div hist bot. arith algy and geom.
> Aktually most of them prefer BEER and PUBS.
> [capital letters and italics in the Penguin edition]

The tone is more sarcastic than in *Jennings* and the Headmaster of St Custard insists on games. The *Molesworth* series is in general more critical than *Jennings*. The whole school-life, seen through the eyes of Nigel Molesworth, is nearer the sombre description made by Venables, Atkins, and Temple in *Jennings Goes to School* – ozard! But both academic topics and sports are on the curriculum. St Custard's, like Linbury, have had to adapt to a different world.

From *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, by J.K Rowling (1997)

Harry Potter is a young orphan wizard who attends Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He has just arrived at the school and, together with the other first-year students, he is about to be sorted by the Sorting Hat and placed in one of the four "houses" of Hogwarts. The ceremony takes place in the Great Hall. After the ceremony, students and teachers all sing the school song…

> Harry had never imagined such a strange and splendid place. It was lit by thousands and thousands of candles which were floating in mid-air over four long tables, where the rest of the students were sitting. These tables were laid with glittering golden plates and goblets. At the top of the Hall was another long table where the teachers

> were sitting. Professor McGonagall led the first-years up here, so that they came to a halt in a line facing the other students, with the teachers behind them. The hundreds of faces staring at them looked like pale lanterns in the flickering candlelight. Dotted here and there among the students, the ghosts shone misty silver. Mainly to avoid all the staring eyes, Harry looked upwards and saw a velvety black ceiling dotted with stars. He heard Hermione whisper, 'It's bewitched to look like the sky outside, I read about it in *Hogwarts, a History*.'

The spectacular world-wide success of the *Harry Potter* novels can be explained in many ways, not least by a cleverly organised advertising campaign. J.K. Rowling has cunningly used the setting of a typical boarding-school to great effect (see in the passage above the layout of the tables in the Great Hall). Hogwarts is very similar indeed to an English public school, with its organisation and its four "houses", its prefects of studies (the "boazers" at Repton, see above the notes on *Tom Browne's Schooldays*). Detention and corporal punishment (see vol. 5, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*) are part of school-life at Hogwarts, as well as games (see the passages on Quidditch[22] practice and matches).

In the scene depicted in the above passage, Harry finds himself in the Great Hall, where meals are taken in common by students and teachers. This scene is reminiscent of the film *If…*, by Lindsay Anderson (1968).

The *Harry Potter* novels, with their specific atmosphere of magic and danger, mixed with humour and romance, have a specific appeal which can be partly traced to the "boarding-school" story tradition in English literature. Hogwarts, however, presents specific characteristics which set it apart from the non-fictional Rugby and Westward Ho!, as well as the fictional Linbury and St Custard's: it is a mixed school and the topics are magical. Furthermore, even if many students are keen Quidditch players or supporters, others, like Hermione, take their studies very seriously. The school song stresses the importance of learning:

> *Hogwarts, Hogwarts, Hoggy Warty Hogwarts,*
> *Teach us something please,*
> *Whether we be old and bald*
> *Or young with scabby knees,*
> *Our heads could do with filling*
> *With some interesting stuff,*
> *For now they're bare and full of air,*
> *Dead flies and bits of fluff,*
> *So teach us things worth knowing,*
> *Bring back what we've forgot,*
> *Just do your best, we'll do the rest,*
> *And learn until our brains all rot.'*

Like Linbury and St Custard's, Hogwarts students concentrate on academic topics as well as games (and practical activities like taming magical creatures, slaying trolls, making pineapples tap-dance…). In that regard, Hogwarts is different from the public schools of the 19th century, as we shall see with the following quotes and passages from Corelli Barnett's *The Collapse of British Power* (1972).

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[22] A magical sport, whose rules are explained by Kennilworthy Whisp (and J.K Rowling, with a foreword by Albus Dumbledore) in *Quidditch Through the Ages* – London: Bloomsbury, 2001.

2 – The headmasters' point of view…

J.E.Welldon, Headmaster of Harrow (1899):

> An English Headmaster, as he looks to the future of his pupils, will not forget that they are destined to be the citizens of the greatest empire under heaven; he will teach them patriotism not only by his words but by his example…
> …He will inspire them with faith in the divinely ordered mission of their country and their race; he will impress upon their young minds the convictions that the great principles upon which the happiness of England rests – the principles of truth, liberty, equality, and religion – are the principles which they must carry into the world: he will emphasise the fact that no principles, however splendid, can greatly or permanently affect mankind, unless they are illustrated by bright personal examples of morality.

In: Wilkinson, Rupert, *The Prefects, British Leadership and the Public School Tradition*. OUP, 1964 – quoted in Barnett (1972)

Harrow is one the most prestigious English public schools, together with Eton and Winchester. At the very end of the 19th century, it becomes very clear that public school pupils are future "citizens of the greatest empire under heaven", an empire, however, which has now to compete with new industrial powers such as the USA and the German empire, while British troops suffer a number of defeats in the initial stages of the Boer War[23] in South Africa. These citizens have a "divinely ordered mission": uphold, defend and possibly expand the British empire (but note that J.E. Welldon refers to "the happiness of England", not "Britain"). Public school students belong to an elite, "the greatest empire…", and a superior race. It is in this context that the importance of the "school spirit" or "house spirit" as well as team games must be understood.

Dr Cyril Norwood, Headmaster of Harrow (1928):

> For what has happened in the course of the last hundred years is that the old ideals have been recaptured. The ideals of chivalry which inspired the knighthood of medieval days, the ideal of service to the community which inspired the greatest of the men who founded schools for their day and for posterity, have been continued in the tradition of English education which holds the field today. It is based upon religion; it relies largely upon games and open air prowess, where these involve corporate effort…

In: Norwood, Cyril, *The English Tradition in Education*. London: John Murray, 1929 – quoted in Barnett (1972)

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[23] The Boer War (1899-1902) was fought in South Africa between British and imperial troops, and "Afrikaners" or "Boer" (Dutch-speaking white settlers). The British suffered initial setbacks at the hands of the Boers and it took Britain up to 400,000 men to subdue the inferior numbers of their opponents. Boer civilians also suffered, as they were eventually rounded up and imprisoned in concentration camps, with a loss of 28,000 lives.

Dr Norwood is probably more explicit than J.E. Welldon: public school students are modern knights serving “the community”, i.e. the British Empire and its interests. This may be a reference to the sacrifices of the First World War, when Britain had originally declared war upon Germany in order to defend the neutrality of Belgium, thus flying to the rescue of a small nation attacked by a major military power.

According to Norwood, the two pillars of public school education are religion and games, provided that these games “involve corporate effort”, i.e. working as a team, or a “house”. In 1928, the British Empire (and this include the UK as well) is increasingly under threat: Ireland, with the exception of the six counties of the North, has become the Irish Free State and a rather reluctant member of the British Commonwealth. In India, the Indian National Congress works relentlessly for independence, under the leadership of Gandhi. In the UK, the Labour Party and the Trade Unions are now a political force to be reckoned with, while in continental Europe, dictatorial regimes create a potentially explosive situation.

> [writing about his experience as a grammar school student]
> I do not think that there was any clear presentation to us of the ideal of service so much as a call not to let the other schools or other people beat us. We were trained to face the full rigours of competition, and left for the most part with a real determination to get on in the world. That this was so, was due to the fact that the religious appeal was largely absent from our lives…
>
> (*ibid*)

According to Dr Norwood, grammar schools may have been keener on training their students for the realities of a world where the British have to compete with other powers, but also for the realities of business and competition for markets. He seems to deplore this aspect of grammar-school education, since it lacks “the ideal of service" and “the religious appeal” characteristic of a public-school.

Herbert Spencer (1861), philosopher:

The English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) coined the phrase “survival of the fittest.” Quoting from *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online:

> Although Spencer's development of a theory of evolution preceded publication of Darwin's ‘Origin of Species', Spencer is today regarded as one of the leading social Darwinists of the 19th century. The theory, based on Darwin's conclusions, suggests that people and societies are subject to the same laws of natural selection as plants and animals are in nature. Spencer is remembered today as author of ‘Social Statics' (1851), in which he argued that it is the business of government to uphold and defend natural rights. Beyond this, government should not interfere with the economic functioning of society at all.

http://search.eb.com/ebi/article-9277171?query=herbert%20spencer&ct

Here are the quotes from Spencer:

> That which our school-houses [public schools] leave almost entirely out, we thus find to that which most nearly concerns the business of life. Our industries would cease,

> were it not for the information which men begin to acquire, as best they may, after their education is said to be finished.
>
> …it is one thing to approve of aesthetic culture as largely conducive to human happiness; and another to admit that it is a fundamental requisite to human happiness. However important it may be, it must yield precedence to those kinds of culture which bear directly upon daily duties.

In: Spencer, Herbert, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1861 – quoted in Barnett (1972)

Long before Dr Norwood's criticism of grammar school, Spencer points out that public school education is disconnected with what "concerns the business of life", i.e. more practical activities than studying ancient Greek and Latin (the classics). In fact, Roald Dahl could be an example of those men having acquired information "after their education is said to be finished", since he was trained by the company he had joined (Shell – see *Boy*).

Spencer even goes as far as saying that aesthetic culture (see below the quote by Rev. Thring) is secondary "to those kinds of culture which bear directly upon daily duties", reiterating his previous criticism of public school education being not practical-oriented. Spencer may have realised that Britain would one day be faced with competition from other powers and then may not necessarily be "the fittest" to survive, hence the need of men educated and trained to face "the business of life" and the "daily duties".

Rev. Edward Thring, Headmaster of Uppingham (1883 to 1888):

> …the highest education must work in the region of the highest life. Now literature is the highest thought of the highest men, in the most perfect shape. It is the life of the highest men transmitted.

In: Thring, Edward, *Theory and Practice of Teaching*. CUP, 1910 – quoted in Barnett (1972)

This short quote by Rev. Thring sheds light on the type of academic knowledge public-schools valued above all else, and against which Herbert Spencer wrote in 1861. Let us not forget that the focus of public school education was on "the classics" (ancient Greek and Latin languages and literature). Many public schoolboys were to carry on at the prestigious universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where the emphasis was also on the classics. In *The Collapse of British Power*, from which these quotes are taken, Corelli Barnett writes:

> The Class One examinations for the civil, foreign, Indian civil and colonial services provided a documentary record of the biases and myths of the later Victorian academic mind. In 1870 possible marks for Greek or Roman studies were twice the totals for French or German studies[24] or political economy – and taken together, a third more than allotted to the field of science.

[24] At a time when France is Britain's main competitor in Africa and Germany's industrial power is becoming a threat to British industries.

Lord Simon, Liberal Cabinet minister, 1930s:

> I think poorly of a public schoolboy who does not feel warmly for his school, for this system of communal life in youth, with loyalties to a fine institution to which all alike belong and with the making of many close companionships, some of which last through life, seems to me to have many virtues. It teaches a small boy…that he must denounce injustice wherever he sees it inflicted on others and stand for fair play all round. A British schoolboy's sense of honour and of justice is a very fine quality.

In: Simon (Viscount), *Retrospect*. London: Hutchinson, 1952 – quoted in Barnett (1972)

As we can see from this quote from a politician of the 1930s, the traditional public school values of "school spirit", "justice" and "fair play" echo "the ideals of chivalry" of Dr Norwood. What seems to matter is not brilliant academic achievement but the adherence to a certain code of honour and a sense of solidarity with one's fellow-pupils (the "close companionships" supposed to last "through life"). This, of course, is far from ignoble, but it also means that in the first half of the 20th century, even if academic topics have been reinforced, what should remain of a public school education is a certain attitude and philosophy instantly recognisable as the mark of the former public schoolboy, not to forget the public-school solidarity, sometimes characterised as "old boy" or "old school-tie[25]" network.

In *The Collapse of British Power*, Corelli Barnett has rather harsh words for the public schoolboys of Lord Simon's generation:

> And the generation of boys who were to reach leading places in British life in the 1920s and the 1930s were the products of the public school at this period of greatest regimentation, stuffiest self-satisfaction and conformity, and most torpid intellectual life (…) Although their ignorance and lack of understanding of their own epoch might be repaired, in an intellectual sense, in later life [see the first quote by Spencer], true sympathy with it seldom grew. For every aspect of public-school life had set the boy apart, confining him in the social isolation of an upper class. In a world spawning with conflicting ideas and ideologies, school had accustomed him to a single, common and unquestioned outlook (…) Where continued British success and survival depended on innovation and open-mindedness, [public] school admired conservatism and conformism – loyalty to what existed.

Public schools in the early 21st century have adapted and no longer rely exclusively on the classics or on games as "salvation", as in Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* But they are still part of the educational system and have a long tradition which cannot be neglected when studying the history of England, its expansion through the Isles and the world.

It is worth noting, as a conclusion, that the present Prime Minister Tony Blair (Labour Party, centre-left) is a former pupil of a prestigious Scottish independent school, Fettes College, which is very similar to the public schools of England. This has not been the case of all previous Prime Ministers in the recent years (James Callaghan – Labour, PM from 1976 to 1979 – left school at 14; John Major – Conservative, PM from 1990 to 1997 – left school at 16).

For your information, you may want to visit these websites:

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[25] Former students can wear a tie with the colours of their former public-school.

www.etoncollege.com

www.harrowschool.org.uk

www.rugbyschool.net/

www.fettes.com
www.uppingham.co.uk

www.winchestercollege.org

www.clongowes.com/

www.ukstudentlife.com/Course/Boarding.htm

And a few films…

- *If…* (1968), by Lindsay Anderson, with Malcolm McDowell – (a handful of students at an English public school in the 1960s take arms against the institution – the film was made in 1968, a very significant year of students' unrest in the US, France, Germany, Czechoslovakia)
- *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* (1983), by Nagisa Oshima, with David Bowie, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Tom Conti – (although set in a POW camp in Japanese-occupied Java during WWII, there are a few scenes of bullying at an English public school before 1939 in one of the flashbacks)
- *Dead Poets Society* (1989), by Peter Weir, with Robin Williams, Robert Sean Leonard – (although set in a New-England preparatory school, the atmosphere is very similar to that of an English prep. school)
- *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001), by Chris Columbus, with Richard Harris, Daniel Radcliffe, Maggie Smith, Alan Rickman – (Harry's arrival at Hogwarts and his first year as a student of wizardry; like the novel, the film is well in the tradition of public-school inspired literature).

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A short introduction to British imperial history

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Prologue

In 1937, George VI was crowned "King-Emperor" of an Empire which covered one fourth of the globe, with nearly 400,000,000 inhabitants. When his daughter became Elizabeth II in 1953, she was crowned "Queen", but not "Empress". In the sixteen years between both coronations, the British Empire had practically ceased to exist. South Asia, formerly "the British Raj", had become independent and seen the emergence of four independent states, India, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka (ex-Ceylon) and Burma (now Myanmar). Canada, Australia, New-Zealand and South Africa, the four "white" dominions, had been autonomous (becoming eventually independent) for more than half a century, although retaining the British monarch as head of state. Colonies in Africa were on their way to independence, and so were the protectorates of the Far-East.

We could think that decolonisation took a very short time compared to the nearly 450 years of imperial expansion and rule over territories as different as, for example, Canada, India, Jamaica, the Fiji Islands, the Falkland Islands, Nigeria, Malta, Palestine… But decolonisation took in fact more than the 16 years between the coronations of George VI and Elizabeth II. It started indeed as early as 1776 in North America, when the 13 British colonies refused to accept the authority of the King and the Parliament in London and eventually became the United States of America. If the way to home-rule, then to dominion status, and eventually independence, was a relatively smoother one for Australia, New-Zealand and Canada (despite the Métis rebellion in today's Province of Manitoba in 1869-70 and turbulent French-speaking subjects in Québec), South African history in the late 19th century was marked by war between the Zulu and the British, and later between the British and the mostly Dutch-speaking white settlers known as "Boers".

Decolonisation was also synonym of a long and bitter struggle in the colony nearest to Britain, i.e. Ireland, finally ending in 1921/22 with the Anglo-Irish treaty (followed in 1949 by full independence for the Republic of Ireland). The independence of the South Asian nations after WWII was also the result of years of long political campaigning, and more was to come, together with fighting, in Kenya, in Malaya (today's Malaysia), in the Middle-East, in Austral Africa.

Yet, the British Empire was not the only one where decolonisation was marked by violence. It is interesting to note that the French Empire, second only to the British, saw violent and cruel wars of independence, especially in two of its most valued possessions, Indo-China (today's Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) from 1946 to 1954, and Algeria from 1954 to 1962, possibly the most tragic episodes of the decolonisation of the European[26] Empires overseas.

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[26] After WWI, the European Empires were Britain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Belgium and Italy. The latter lost its colonies in Africa in the early years of WWII.

The Commonwealth, however, may be regarded as a positive legacy of the British Empire, with most ex-colonies and dominions as member-states (with the notable exception of Ireland and Burma/Myanmar), whereas the “Union Française” (“French Union”), which was to be a French counterpart to the Commonwealth, was short-lived.

It would be far too simple to see the British Empire as one compact and homogeneous collection of overseas territories all conquered, subjugated and ruled by mere force. To take the example of Canada and Nigeria, these two imperial possessions were different, but not just in terms of climate, size or economy: the presence of white people and its extent in comparison with the native, non-white, population (white majority in Canada but minority in Nigeria) is also significant. To take another example, Jamaica, one of the oldest colonies, and Palestine, a territory under British control only from 1918 to 1948, were part of the British Empire, but each under a very different status.

It is therefore essential to distinguish between the different types of imperial possessions and to study the different phases of expansion and decline that mark British Imperial history in order to understand the nature of such a complex phenomenon.

Colonies: from trading posts to mandates

A few definitions...

* <u>a colony</u>: ***- a country or area controlled politically by a more powerful and often distant country (after a colonising process)***

and also... *- a group of people who leave their own country to live and work in another one but still officially belong to their own country*

- a group of people with a shared interest or job who live together in a way that is separate from other people

- a group of animals, insects or plants of the same type that live together

+ colonial (adj.), to colonise (alt. spelling: colonize), colonisation (alt. spelling: colonization), a colonialist, colonialism

* <u>a settlement</u>: ***- the process of people from a country or region to establish new places where to live***

- a place where people live during a period of history

and also... *- an arrangement to end a disagreement involving a law having been broken, without taking it to a court of law*

+ to settle, a settler

Colonisation is not a recent phenomenon and it pre-dates the British Empire. The Romans in particular colonised vast territories after military conquest and often brutal subjugation of the natives and destruction of native cultures, in order to use these territories for the settlement of former Roman soldiers, as well as for trading and military purposes. They were placed under the authority of Rome, represented by a governor. By contrast, Greek colonies usually became autonomous and were not subjugated to the mother country. This distinction, noted by Lloyd (1996) should be kept in mind when considering the British colonies in North America, as well as the

"white" colonies (colonies ruled by a white majority, or minority in the case of South Africa).

Very few colonies were conquered peacefully, apart from places like the Faeroe Islands and Iceland, which were very probably uninhabited but by a few Irish monks when the first Norse explorers and settlers landed.

European colonisation overseas started as early as the 16th century, in the wake of explorers and sailors like Magellan, Vasco da Gama, Barents and Christopher Columbus. The Portuguese and the Dutch, in particular, rounded the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean, opening sea routes to South and South-East Asia, as well as the Pacific. The purposes of these early voyages may vary from exploring and charting the coasts of Africa, America and Asia, as well as the waters of the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans, to bringing the Christian faith to heathens, as well as establishing trading posts on the coasts or at the mouth of rivers.

In fact, trading posts can be regarded as the earliest form of colonisation by Europeans. But from as early as the 16th century, these trading posts were to be found mostly in Western Africa and South Asia, while a more substantial European presence took the form of settlements and plantations in North America and the Caribbean. Trading posts, especially in West Africa, were to evolve into colonies of exploitation and expand inland, especially in the 19th century[27], while settlements became organised as colonies[28]. But colonies, whether of settlement or exploitation, were far from homogeneous:

1 – colonies of exploitation:

- often started as trading posts (also now as "factories") or fishing stations
- were ruled and administered by a small number of British officials, with support of locally recruited soldiers[29], often relying on the local traditional hierarchies (as in Nigeria)
- evolved into "Crown colonies", before becoming independent, for most of them, between the 1950s and the 1960s and joining the Commonwealth

2 – colonies of settlement:

- started as settlements by Europeans (example of the American colonies), seeking fortune overseas or fleeing religious or political persecution; in some cases like Australia, these settlements were initially populated by deported convicts; in others, like New-Zealand, emigration was planned and organised in Britain
- European settlers subjugated native populations (Indians and Inuit in Canada, Aborigines in Australia, Maoris in New-Zealand, Xhosa and Zulu in South Africa…), when not exterminating them utterly (some Indian tribes in North America, Tasmanians in what was known as "Van Diemen's land"), resulting in "white colonies", i.e. colonies with a white majority (but not in the case of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia[30] and Kenya)
- the three "white colonies" (Canada, Australia, New-Zealand) and South Africa became dominions (autonomous states with their own constitution but with the British monarch as head of state) in the second half of the 19th

[27] This is the case, among others, for the Gold Coast (today's Ghana).
[28] This is the case for the English settlements on the North American Atlantic seaboard.
[29] Known in the 19th and 20th centuries as "Askari" (in British colonies), they were formed into regiments (like the famous King's African Rifles) with British officers and native non-commissioned officers (NCOs: ranks of sergeant and corporal).
[30] Today's Zimbabwe.

century; they became fully independent after 1926 but still retained the British monarch as head of state); Ireland also became, albeit reluctantly, a dominion (see below)

3 – protectorates:

- officially not "colonies" like e.g. Kenya, protectorates were territories with their own form of government and administration, "accepting" the protection of the British flag (the Malay states, Southern African kingdoms, Egypt), more or less imposed upon them; the whites were usually in a minority of officials, soldiers and administrators
- protectorates became independent after the 1950s and many joined the Commonwealth (but not Egypt, nor the Persian Gulf Emirates)

4 – mandates:

- mandates were ex-German and Ottoman dependencies; after WWI, these territories were entrusted by the League of Nations (forerunner to the United Nations) to the care of the victorious powers whose mission it was to lead them to eventual independence; in fact, mandates were an extension of the existing colonial empires or of their zone of influence
- only Iraq was given its independence by its mandating power, Britain, before WWII, in 1930 (Iraq was still in the British orbit during WWII, but it did not join the Commonwealth)
- the British mandates in Africa (parts of Togo and Cameroon, the ex-German East Africa[31]) became independent in the 1960s[32]
- Palestine, another British mandate, was abandoned by the British after the founding of Israel in 1948, the subsequent war and Palestinian refugees crisis

5 – Ireland:

- the case of Ireland is specific, since the country was represented at Westminster (the British Parliament), from 1800; nevertheless, it was a colonial situation where native Irish were dispossessed of their land, which was given to English and Scottish settlers, as well as of their rights to representation, at least until 1829, when Roman Catholics were emancipated
- Ireland became a dominion in 1922, as the "Free State of Ireland" (but not including the Province of Northern Ireland, still part of the UK) after a long series of rebellions, and severed all links with the British Empire and Commonwealth when becoming a fully independent republic in 1949

6 – India:

- "the jewel in the imperial crown", India was conquered, ruled and exploited by the East India Company until the Great Mutiny in 1856/57; henceforth until independence in 1947, it was ruled by the Indian Civil Service, in fact a British administration; regarded by London as a different type of colony from e.g. Nigeria, it was nevertheless a colony of exploitation where millions of Indians were ruled by a few hundred thousands British (see below); "the British Raj", or imperial British India was certainly one of the most potent symbols of the British Empire

7 – the "informal" empire:

- the notion of "informal" empire has been defined by historians like Cain and Hopkins; it concerns independent countries like Chile, Argentine, Uruguay,

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[31] Today's Tanzania. This is where Roald Dahl was posted when he started working for the Shell Company (see *Going Solo*).

[32] South Africa had been given a mandate over the ex-German South-West Africa (today's Namibia) but independence was to come much later.

Turkey, Persia (today's Iran), China: although not conquered or ruled by the British, they were part of a diplomatic sphere of influence as well as important trading partners over which a form of British control was deemed necessary by London.

A SHORT HISTORY

A – from exploration to first war of independence, 1480-1783

The English (the British from 1707, date of the Union of Parliaments between England and Scotland) were not the only Europeans to embark on colonial conquests. The Portuguese, the Dutch, the Spaniards, the Danes, the French, the Russians were eager to explore and discover new territories, new trade routes, possibly annex new lands and dominate other populations.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the English followed three different directions: West and North-West across the Atlantic, South towards Africa and East towards Asia. On the American continent, the English established either trading stations (Hudson Bay in Canada, 1610), fishing-stations (Newfoundland, on the east coast of Canada) or colonies (Virginia 1607, New-England 1620). In the Caribbean, the English confronted the Spaniards, often raiding Spanish ships[33] and later conquering some of the Caribbean islands from the Spanish.

The East India Company was founded in 1600 in order to trade with Persia and India and it faced competition by the Portuguese and the Dutch while the first English trading station was established in West Africa in 1631. The only English settlements then were Virginia, Maryland and New-England, all in North America.

The early colonial economy was based on agriculture (tobacco, sugar cane) and trade (gold, furs, spices and slaves). The commercial exchanges between Europe and Africa, Africa and America, America and Europe were to become known as the triangular trade:

- European-made goods were traded in Africa for native human beings, the latter being enslaved, to be sold and bought as other commercial goods
- the African slaves were then transported across the Atlantic in terrible conditions[34] to be sold to planters in the Caribbean islands and the settlements in North America
- tobacco and sugar from these plantations worked by slave labour were shipped to England for the English market or for re-export.

Colonisation, therefore, did not go without violence: against Africans, but also against other natives (the islanders of the Caribbean, the Indians of America...) and between European powers. If the Dutch, the Portuguese and the Spaniards were

[33] Such raiders were called "privateers", inspiring many "swashbuckling" Hollywood films in the 1930s and 1940s, like *The Sea Hawk* and *Captain Blood* (and more recently *Pirates of the Caribbean*).
[34] Evoked, for instance, in the film *Amistad* (1997).

eventually to give way (while retaining non negligible portions of territory in South America, Africa and East-Asia), the English/British – were soon faced with a more dangerous competitor: France.

The French had settled territories north and west of the New England colonies, while in India *La Compagnie des Indes* was competing with the East India Company. This led inevitably to military clashes, both in America and India, where natives were involved in these wars between European rivals. But the outcome was favourable to the British and the Treaty of Paris (1763) confirmed Britain in its supremacy in India and North America (with a sizeable proportion of French-speaking subjects in the latter, notably in Québec and Acadia, in today's eastern Canada).

The British Empire, however, met its first challenge and subsequent defeat (at least in military terms) when some of the settlers in the 13 North American colonies demanded a form of representation (1776) and become fully independent in 1783. We have noted earlier the difference in ancient times between Greek colonies becoming autonomous and independent from their mother-city, and Roman colonies ruled by Rome. This difference could also be found between Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and French colonies, all under the authority of their respective monarch and without any form of local representation, and British colonies in North America, all of which had some form of local government, with a governor representing the monarch, as well as representative assemblies. It is not entirely surprising, therefore, that these colonies eventually demanded a greater say in their own affairs, particularly in financial matters[35]. Britain had lost this first colonial war, but the young American republic remained an important trading partner and carried on absorbing British emigrants, in particular Scots and Irish evicted from their homes, or fleeing poverty and persecution.

The American war of independence was to provide the opponents of colonisation with a strong case: was the price of colonising (and fighting to keep colonies) worth paying? After independence, Britain remained America's first trading partner and some British (notably Richard Cobden, a 19th century advocate of free-trade, nicknamed "little Englander" by his adversaries) started questioning the conquest of vast territories, especially in terms of economy and profit. It should be noted that the moral aspects of colonial conquest were hardly taken into consideration, although slave trading and slavery in the British Empire were abolished respectively in 1807 and in 1833. By that time, Britain was strong enough to send Royal Navy squadrons on patrol in West African waters in order to enforce abolition.

B – Empire-building in India, from 1763 to 1857

After eliminating French competition[36], the East India Company (EIC) had conquered Bengal (Calcutta and the eastern part of India) and started controlling an ever-increasing portion of Indian soil, either by military conquest or by treaties with Indian rulers. The EIC had its own army and administration, but the British government retained a certain control over its activities.

The British achieved supremacy by the 1850s, having eliminated or subdued the Marathas and the Sikhs in Punjab. Not unlike the Scottish Highlanders who

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[35] Hence the slogan "No taxation without representation" (at Westminster).

[36] The French threat briefly resurfaced during the Revolution and under Napoleon I. The French were to keep 5 trading stations in India, until independence in 1947. The Portuguese also kept one station in India.

enrolled in the Highland Regiments after the last Jacobite Rising was crushed in 1746, Indians, especially from warring nations (Sikhs, Rajputs), enlisted in the regiments of the EIC, under the command of British officers. The Indian army was born, and its reputation was going to leave a notable imprint on British Imperial history.

Yet, British supremacy in the 19th century came under threat from the Russians[37], who were conquering large parts of central Asia and infiltrating Persia as well as Afghanistan, with a view to getting access to the Indian Ocean[38]. The North-West frontier (evoked in films like *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, 1935, and *North-West Frontier*, 1959) became the most fragile sector of British India, with volatile tribes always ready for rebellion and raids. The British found the Afghans to be fierce opponents and some campaigns turned into disasters, especially the first Afghan war, 1839-1842, when nearly an entire British-led Indian army was compelled to retreat to India in bitter winter, with very few survivors.

By mid-19th century however, the British had become masters in India, increasingly trying to introduce Western ideas, culture, technology and religion. Such efforts may have contributed to the Great Mutiny (1857-58) when some Sepoys (Indian troops) rebelled against their British officers, and massacred Europeans. Allegedly, the Mutiny was sparked by the introduction of a new type of cartridge which soldiers had to open by biting one of its ends; but the paper enrobing the cartridges was greased with cow fat (sacrilegious to Hindus) and pork fat (forbidden to Muslims). What both Hindus and Muslims feared was a threat of forced Christianisation, while some Indian princes were dreaming of regaining control over their respective principalities under the overlordship of an Indian emperor... British and loyal Indian soldiers eventually suppressed the mutiny and the repression was as ferocious as the rebellion.

The Great Mutiny left a very strong memory with both Indians and British. It was marked for the British by tragic incidents like the massacre of Cawnpore, or epic episodes, like the siege and relief of Lucknow. It put an end to the EIC's rule: in 1858, India came under the direct control of the Crown and was administered by the Indian Civil Service, with British staff. The British monarch (Queen Victoria) was represented by an official: the Viceroy.

C – India, informal empire, the Far East, Africa, 1857 to 1914: building the empire

India

India was divided between British provinces (eleven before WWII) and princely states (600 before WWII), allied to the British, but controlled by them. Each Indian ruler was advised by a British resident, often an officer from the Army. As David Cannadine (2001) points out, the British in India tended to rely on what they saw as a social order similar to what they knew in Britain, with aristocrats (maharajas, rajas, nawabs…) and gentlemen at the top, although with the democratisation of Britain in

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[37] Russia too was a colonial power, expanding to the east and south-east. One of the objectives of Russian policy was to obtain access to the sea without being constrained by the control of foreign powers (as was the case with Ottoman-held Dardanelles straights, commanding passage from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean, or the Kattegat straights from the Baltic into the North Sea, held by the Danes and the Swedes).

[38] The rivalry between the British and the Russians and the spying activity that went with it became known as "The Great Game" inspiring R. Kipling with one of its most famous novels, *Kim* (1901).

the 19th century, this social order was starting to erode in the mother country, however slightly. According to Cannadine, “this contemporary vision of ‘timeless’ India also represented Britain’s better (but vanishing) past to itself, and seemed to hold out the prospect that this treasured yet threatened society still had a future overseas.” (Cannadine, 2001) In fact, British writer Somerset Maugham made a similar observation while attending a dinner-party for British expatriates in a Chinese port in the 1920s: “There was about the party a splendour which had vanished from the dinner tables of England.” (Maugham, 1922). But he also noted that

> China bored them [the British expatriates] all, they did not want to speak of that; they only knew just so much about it as was necessary to their business, and they looked with distrust upon any man who studied the Chinese language. (*ibid*)

Cannadine thus argues that colonial societies in the British Empire tended to be divided along social rather than racial lines, and that the British ruling class found in India (as well as in other colonies) room for a form of autocratic, non-representative rule, which was no longer the norm in Britain. Indian princes were therefore treated as allies, honoured[39], fêted and entertained. British officials went hunting tigers with their Indian friends from the elite, while young Indian princes were sent to Britain to be educated in the best English public schools and universities. But the sentiment of white racial superiority was nevertheless very strong, as recalled candidly by some British veterans of the British Raj:

> [a British officer in the Indian army speaking] I am sorry to say that by that time I had become affected by the mentality of the ruling class in India and I said to the station-master, “I want to have the gentleman [an Indian] ejected.” (…) But you have to remember that in those days [probably early 20th century, before 1947] army officers did not associate with Indians of any class other than the servant class, to whom they just gave orders. I think that one of the chief reasons for the curious attitude of the British towards Indians – it may have been quite unconscious – was the fact that they were regarded as a subject race. (Allen, 1975)

Still, the British were always in fear of another mutiny and secured the friendship of the princes by associating them to imperial glory, while educated, often urbanised, Indians contributed to the birth of Indian nationalism (the Indian National Congress[40] was founded in 1885). As for the vast majority of Indians, land-labourers, they had little say in Indian politics, if any at all.

India was nevertheless “the Jewel in the Crown”, and Queen Victoria was crowned Empress of India in 1877, the title having been created for her. In very many, sometimes unexpected, ways, British India, *aka* “The Raj” has affected Britain, and not just by making curry one of the most popular dishes. It is partly thanks to the Raj that British female doctors started practising, as Hindu and Muslim women were very reluctant to accept treatment from male doctors. Although Queen Victoria herself was opposed to female doctors in Britain, she supported their being sent to India in order to attend to native female patients as well as to train Indian women.

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[39] To the Order of St Michael and St George was added the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India in 1861, and in 1878 (when Queen Victoria became Empress of India) the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire and the Imperial Order of the Crown of India were established. All these specifically Indian orders were open to British and Indian elites alike.

[40] Gandhi and Nehru were the main leaders of the Indian National Congress after WWI. The term “Congress” should not be confused with the US Congress, in which the legislative power is vested.

The informal empire; the Far-East

Empire-building, however, did not necessarily mean territorial conquest: after the collapse of the Spanish Empire in Central and South America, newly independent states like Argentina, Chile and Uruguay became trading partners of Britain and the Royal Navy made sure that British interests and subjects were always protected. Turkey and Persia, regarded as "buffer-zones" designed to protect India from Russian threat, were also part of the informal empire. In the Far-East, China was forced to open its markets to foreign trade (including opium) by the British and the French (the "opium wars" of 1839 and 1856, with British acquisition of Hong Kong in 1842) and became part of the informal empire, although the British were not the only ones with interests in China: the French[41], the Portuguese, the Germans and the Russians were given concessions on Chinese soil, while the Americans too obtained some privileges[42]. Neighbouring Japan had also been forced into accepting foreign trade by the Americans (1853), but the Japanese wisely passed treaties with foreign powers thus preserving the integrity of their country. They, too, were interested in Chinese trade and they were to play a significant role in the collapse of the British Empire in Asia.

Parts of this informal empire eventually became more formally integrated into the official British Empire as protectorates: thus Malaya (today's Malaysia and Singapore) and Sarawak (North-West Borneo) in 1873, the Fiji islands (in the Pacific) in 1874.

The Scramble for Africa

By the second half of the 19th century, Africa was not entirely colonised. The interior remained unexplored and uncharted but began to open when explorers (Livingstone, Burton, Speke, Grant, Brazza, Stanley) started going inland, followed by soldiers, missionaries, traders, in some regions farmers and planters... But apart from North Africa with its French, Spanish, Italian and Maltese settlers, and Southern and Eastern Africa with British, Dutch and German ones, Africa was not a destination for European emigrants. This did not prevent older colonial empires (Britain, France, Portugal, Spain) and more recent ones (Germany, Italy, Belgium) from sharing the continent between themselves, regardless of native political and tribal boundaries, and not without rivalries; at the conference of Berlin in 1885, colonial powers reached a fragile agreement about the carving up of Africa. Still, French and British interests nearly provoked a war between the two countries.

In the last decade of the 19th century, the French already held substantial parts of West Africa – not to mention Algeria in the north – as well as a small territory, Djibouti, in the East. Their ambition was to create an unbroken line of French-controlled territories from Senegal in the West to the Horn of Africa in the East, thus crossing a vast region known as the Sudan[43]. At the same time the British, prompted by adventurers like Cecil Rhodes in Southern Africa, were dreaming of their own

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[41] The French conquest and control of Indochina can be partly explained by the fact that France hoped to find a way of access into southern China (Yunnan) via the Mekong River. When it was found unfit for navigation, the French moved into Tonkin (today's northern part of Vietnam) in order to control the Red River.

[42] Among other things: exemption from Chinese jurisdiction, rights of patrol for American (as well as French and British) gunboats on Chinese waterways and coasts.

[43] The term "Sudan" in the late 19th century covered a huge territory in central Africa. Today's Sudan is an independent state south of Egypt.

unbroken line, from Cairo in the north (Egypt being then a British protectorate) to Cape Town in the south. A French mission led by a Capitaine Marchant proceeded eastwards in order to ascertain France's rights over the territories it passed through. But on arriving at Fashoda, on the banks of the Nile in 1898, the French were stopped by the British army commanded by Kitchener and forced to retrace their steps westwards. Although not a single shot was fired and French and British officers behaved in a gentlemanly fashion, it was nonetheless a humiliation for France[44]. And yet the British were not able to realise their dream, as the way from Cairo to the Cape was blocked by yet another, more recent and ambitious colonial competitor: Germany. The Germans had entered lately into the colonial race and secured control over Tanganyika (today's Tanzania) and the future states of Rwanda and Burundi, as well as in West (today's Togo and Cameroon) and South-West Africa (today's Namibia).

Africa was an important source of minerals, wood, agricultural products as well as cheap labour and its conquest was not peaceful. The British fought against the natives (the Asante of West Africa, the Zulus of South Africa), but also against other whites (the Boer wars, when, after two bitter conflicts, the British defeated the two independent white states of Orange and Transvaal, 1899-1902). Other European powers fought the natives in their colonies: the French had to suppress a nationalist uprising in Algeria in 1870, the Italians suffered a terrible defeat at Adowa in 1896at the hands of the Ethiopians, the Germans nearly exterminated the Herero in German West Africa in 1904-05 and had to fight the "Maji-maji" rebellion in German East Africa in 1905-06. The British themselves were soundly beaten at Isandlwana (1879)[45] by the well-organised forces of the Zulu king Cetewayo. Later, one of the most famous imperial heroes, General Charles Gordon, was sent to Egyptian Sudan in order to evacuate the Egyptian garrisons, threatened by a Muslim rebellion led by the Mahdi. Besieged in Khartoum, Gordon held until the Madhists overwhelmed his forces, killing him in the final assault (1885). The death of Gordon, a devout Christian who had fought slavery in the Sudan years before and had served the Emperor of China, provoked a strong popular reaction in Britain in favour of intervention. The attempted relief of Khartoum in 1885 had failed to save Gordon and only the subsequent intervention led by Kitchener in 1898 put an end to the Madhist rule[46].

When it came to the Africans, however, the attitudes from most whites tended to vary from paternalism to outright contempt. The natives were regarded as inferior and capable only of a limited development. An example of this attitude can be observed in a work of fiction by the Scottish writer John Buchan, in his novel *Prester John* (1910), which tells the story of a native rebellion overcome by courage, "pluck" and wit. The protagonist (and narrator), recounting the final campaign to put down the last rebels, thus explains "the meaning of the white man's duty":

> That is the difference between white and black, the gift of responsibility, the power of being in a little way a king; and so long as we practise it, we will rule not in Africa alone but wherever there are dark men who live only for the day and their own bellies. (Buchan, 1910)

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[44] During WWII, the pro-Nazi French regime of Vichy used this incident in its anti-British propaganda.
[45] Five years before Isandlwana, the US troops led by Custer had been defeated at the battle of Little Big Horn by a coalition of American Indians.
[46] Both campaigns provided the background for a later imperial novel by A.E.W. Mason, *The Four Feathers* (1902), adapted no less than six times for the screen (1915, 1921, 1929, 1939, 1977, 2002).

Later in the same novel, he refers to the work of a rich diamond mine-owner – a white man of course – who "laid down a big fund for the education and amelioration of the native races", which permits "the establishment (…) of a great native training college." But such training as provided by this college is specifically designed for non-whites:

> It was no factory for making missionaries and black teachers, but an institution for giving the Kaffirs [a derogatory name for the Africans] the kind of training which fits them to be good citizens of the state. There you will find every kind of technical workshop, and the finest experimental farms, where the blacks are taught modern agriculture They have proved themselves apt pupils, and today you will see in the glens of the Berg and in the plains Kaffir tillage which is as scientific as any in Africa. (*ibid*)

By 1914, only two African states were independent: Ethiopia, already under Italian threat, and Liberia.

D – WWI and the first cracks, 1914 to 1939

In 1914, Great-Britain was no longer the greatest industrial power on earth: the U.S.A. and Germany preceded it, and it had to rely more and more on the Empire. Given the experience of 1776 in America, some of the colonies had been granted a certain form of autonomy as well as constitutions between 1847 and 1867. These colonies became self-governing dominions but only four of them had obtained this status by the end of the 19th century: Canada, Australia, New-Zealand and the Cape Colony (soon to be included in the dominion of South Africa), also known as "white colonies", where coloured people (natives or immigrants – mostly from India) were excluded from power.

Coloured soldiers, however, were not excluded from the battlefields of Flanders and Northern France, Mesopotamia (future Iraq) and Africa, and together with their white fellow-soldiers from the dominions, they contributed to the Allies' victory in 1918[47]. Yet, some white officials and settlers, whether German, British, French, Belgian or Portuguese, were not all that happy to see Black African soldiers, normally entrusted with keeping order in the colonies, now killing enemy white soldiers on African soil.

WWI was also the "coming of age" for the dominions. For the Australians and New-Zealanders, the tragic campaign of Gallipoli (1915-16) contributed to their national identities: "Citizens of an only recently federated country in 1915, they [the Australians] went as soldiers of six separate states. They came back, it is often said, members of one nation." (Keegan, 1998) The Canadians' capture and subsequent holding of Vimy Ridge in Northern France in 1917 was what Hew Strachan describes as "a national triumph for Canada" (Strachan, 2003). But if India provided one a half million men for the whole conflict, the British only made promises of political changes, to be discussed after the war.

The German colonial Empire in Africa and the Pacific, as well as the Ottoman Empire in Asia Minor were dismantled and their former possessions handed over as mandates to the victorious powers. Britain thus inherited German East Africa (Tanganyika, today's Tanzania) as well as Palestine and Iraq, while South Africa

[47] Many white officers saw to it that coloured soldiers were not taken care of by white female nurses.

received the former German South-West Africa (today's Namibia). But in the aftermath of WWI, colonised peoples were growing increasingly restless and the British Empire began cracking. If the African mandates were integrated in the Empire with little difficulty, the British found it much more delicate to re-draw the map of the ex-Ottoman Middle-East after 1918. Winston Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, wanted to reduce the costs of military occupation of Mesopotamia (today's Iraq) by setting a British-friendly Iraqi government and administration, whose military forces, trained and commanded by British officers, would replace the costly British battalions whose task it had been to suppress a popular revolt in 1920 and were still stationed around Bagdad, Mosul and Basra. Churchill, acting notably on the advice of T.E. Lawrence, better-known as "Lawrence of Arabia"[48], managed to create two new states, Transjordan[49] and Iraq, and to have appointed as their respective rulers King Abdallah and King Feisal, the latter having fought alongside the British against the Ottomans from 1916 to 1918. This solution devised by Churchill in the name of purely British interests (i.e. to alleviate the burden of the British taxpayer) did not take account of the different populations the new kingdom of Iraq was to include (Arabs, Assyrians, Kurds, with Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, Christians…). The consequences of this artificial creation can still be seen today.

Reducing military expenditure was however a priority for Britain, as the Empire was becoming restless in other, more ancient possessions: Ireland and India. The former obtained its status of "Free State" in 1921 after long years of rebellion and armed struggle, leaving the island partitioned, as well as a potentially dangerous situation in the North (see the chapter "Ireland", p.23). India, with Gandhi, Nehru**,** and the Indian National Congress, demanded a dominion status, which was eventually offered in 1929, with certain restrictions[50]. This did not stop nationalist demonstrations and campaigns, which were often violently suppressed by the British, as in Amritsar in 1919, when troops under the command of General Dyer fired on an unarmed crowd of demonstrators, killing more than 400 people. Discontent was also high in the Middle-East, besides Iraq, with Egyptian nationalists resentful of British domination[51] and Palestinians unhappy with the increasing numbers of Jewish immigrants. In 1926, the independence of the dominions was fully recognised and the "British Commonwealth of Nations" created (Statute of Westminster, 1931).

If the British Far-East remained apparently calm (which was not the case for French Indo-China), Western powers were concerned by the growing ambitions of Japan, which were to prove fatal after 1941. But the feeling of white racial superiority blinded many westerners as to the extent of Japanese military strength and it contributed to the disasters of Pearl-Harbor and Singapore in the early years of WWII. It should be remembered that Japan, having fought Germany during WWI (and taken German possessions in China and the Pacific), had demanded the inclusion by the League of Nations (forerunner of the United Nations) of a clause on racial equality, which had been refused. This must have contributed a powerful argument to later anti-Western Japanese propaganda.

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[48] "Lawrence of Arabia" is one of the most intriguing figures of the British Empire. In 1917, he helped Arab tribesmen to take arms and wage an effective guerrilla war against the Ottomans, by then allied to the Germans.

[49] Today's Jordan, minus the West Bank of the river Jordan, at present under Israeli control.

[50] The British could not allow India as a dominion to become neutral in case of conflict, while the Irish Free State had made it clear that it would not fight for Britain.

[51] Egypt was vital for British interests, with the strategic zone of the Suez Canal, a key link on the route between Britain and India.

E – WWII and the way to decolonisation, 1939 to the 1960s

As in 1914, Britain relied on the Empire for the war effort. Australians and New Zealanders (the ANZAC troops), Indians, Canadians, West Indians, South Africans, West and East Africans all contributed to the final victory[52]. But the Irish remained neutral[53], the Egyptians were reluctant to enter the conflict, while Indian nationalists carried on with the "Quit India" campaign. In fact, Britain had to rely more and more on the USA, especially after 1940, when the British Empire stood alone against the Axis forces in Europe and Africa. Yet, the attitude of the Americans towards colonial empires, whether British, French or Dutch was lukewarm if not hostile, and the US had no intention to help these powers, even if they were their allies, to regain their colonial possessions and thus preserve their imperial status.

In the Far-East, British prestige was shattered in 1942 by the fall of the reputedly "impregnable" stronghold of Singapore to the soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army, in inferior numbers. Indeed, Western powers had failed far too long to recognise that the Japanese were certainly not lagging behind in technology and fighting spirit. British military experts had dismissed the potential threat posed by the Imperial Japanese Army whose ruthless and brutal campaigns in China, beginning as early as 1931, could leave no doubt as to its capacity to inflict severe and even fatal blows even to British and US forces. The American academic Gerald Horne quotes several British superior officers describing the Japanese as "myopic creatures… incapable of night-fighting, lacking in automatic weapons, inferior in the air" (Horne, 2004). G. Horne further quotes official British propaganda alleging that "because of their slant eyes, Jap [*sic*] pilots would not be able to bomb accurately" (*ibid*). Yet, the Japanese effectively showed the whole world in general and Asian peoples in particular that the Europeans (and the Americans, after Pearl-Harbor) were not invincible[54] and they posed as liberators of their fellow-Asians[55], whereas their own rule proved even harsher than the colonial rulers'. A few Indians and Burmese even collaborated with the Japanese, in the hope of eventually obtaining independence (which the Japanese indeed granted them, in Burma and the Dutch East Indies, today's Indonesia). Some Indian soldiers, prisoners of the Imperial Japanese Army, joined the Indian National Army, fighting against the Allied troops alongside their former captors, under the political leadership of Chandra Subhas Bose, former member of the Indian National Congress. In fact, part of the Japanese propaganda was aimed at the coloured people under white domination, not just in British Africa, in the Caribbean or in India, but also the Aborigines in Australia, the Maoris in New-Zealand and the East-Asian communities in Canada and in the US. The Japanese also targeted the Black Americans and the American Indians, arguing that if western powers fought in the name of democracy and freedom, it hardly applied to non-whites. The American academic Gerald Horne notes that

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[52] It is no surprise to find that the seven chapters of *The British Commonwealth and Empire* (see bibliography) were written between 1941 and 1943, date of publication of the whole volume.
[53] It did not prevent Irish citizens to enlist in British forces.
[54] Japan had already dealt a severe blow to the myth of white invincibility by defeating the Russian Imperial fleet at Tsushima, in 1905.
[55] The Imperial Japanese propaganda spoke of the "Sphere of Co-prosperity in Asia", but it actually meant exploitation and in some cases enslavement of the local populations, as well as horrendous massacres, notably in China, Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines.

> Washington, and especially London, faced tremendous constraints in coping with Japan's "race war". At that desperate moment they had to distinguish themselves not only from Japan's racial policies – but also had to distance themselves from their own racial practices. London had to proclaim the exalted aims of democracy of the Atlantic Charter, while seeking to deny democracy to their Asian and African colonies. (*ibid*)

The fall of Singapore had further consequences, as it left Australia under threat of a Japanese attack. The fact that Winston Churchill gave priority to the war in Europe and Africa (where Australian and New-Zealander troops were engaged) embittered the relations between Britain and its two former colonies, which had now to rely upon the US for protection. In fact, the alliance between Britain and the US was ambiguous, since President F. D. Roosevelt was not at all willing to commit American troops to the defence of the British, Dutch or French colonial empires. US attitude changed after the war, however, when the fight for independence, especially in South-East Asia, passed under Soviet and Chinese-backed communist leadership.

In 1945, the colonial powers in the Far-East (Britain, France, the Netherlands) found it difficult to come back to a pre-1941 status. If the Dutch in Indonesia and the French in Indo-China embarked on long and bloody conflicts against nationalists and communists, the British opted for negotiation in India and sent Lord Louis Mountbatten as the last Viceroy to prepare the way for independence. In the end, India was partitioned along religious lines, with a Muslim Pakistan, itself divided into West and East[56], a Hindu Indian Union, a predominantly Buddhist Ceylon (today's Sri-Lanka) and Burma (today's Myanmar), the latter refusing to become a member of the Commonwealth. But the partition had tragic consequences, with 11 millions refugees (Muslims fleeing India, Hindus and Sikhs fleeing Pakistan) and at least 500,000 dead in religious riots and violence. British responsibility in this tragedy has been evoked: was partition a consequence of a "divide and rule" imperial policy? In the chapter on India in *The British Commonwealth and Empire* (Turner ed., 1943), Sir Firozkhan Noon gives credit to Gandhi and the Indian National Congress, while later warning of the dangers of a Hindu-dominated India:

> The Indian Congress is the oldest, the most active and the most advanced political body in India. It is the Hindu political party, although it does include some Moslems. It has no doubt brought about a wonderful political awakening amongst the masses and Mahatma Gandhi will go down in history as one of the most remarkable men whom not only India but the world has ever produced. (Turner ed., 1943)

In the same chapter, Sir Firozkhan Noon also writes that "The working of the reforms in Indian Provinces where the Congress was in office has been the cause of a great many complaints by the Moslems", before stating that

> To-day the Indian National Congress wishes to have the power of drawing up the Indian Constitution through a constituent assembly. The Moslems, being a minority, object to this course in spite of the Congress' profession that the rights of minorities will be safeguarded. Wiser counsels are bound to prevail as they did in 1916, and once again Mother India will see her children smile. (*ibid*)

[56] East Pakistan became independent in 1971, becoming Bangladesh.

The “Wiser counsels” of 1916 may be an allusion to the possibility of India being entitled to “responsible government”, as stated by Secretary of State Edward Montagu in 1917. It is interesting to note, after Lawrence James, that “responsible government” had replaced “self-government”, thus allowing for a more restrictive interpretation. What Sir Firozkhan Noon probably means is that the best solution for India is a British one, lest the country become torn apart by religious and communal divisions.

No less than colonisation, decolonisation was indeed marked by violence: in Malaya (today’s Malaysia), the British fought against Chinese-backed communist guerrillas until 1957; Kenya saw the Mau-Mau rebellion (1952-1954), when landless peasants and unemployed workers formed a secret society intent on driving white farmers away, while the nationalist leader Jomo Kenyatta was imprisoned. But other British colonies in Africa acceded to independence more smoothly (Ghana – ex-Gold Coast – in 1957, Nigeria in 1960). By 1966, all former British colonies in Africa had become independent.

In the case of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), however, the ruling white minority under Ian Smith, determined not to share power with the black majority, declared a unilateral independence in 1965, not recognised by Britain. This led to a guerrilla war until 1979, when an agreement was reached and free elections held. Since then, Zimbabwe (becoming member of the Commonwealth in 1980 before being suspended in 2002 and leaving in 2003) has been ruled by Robert Mugabe’s party, while the question of land ownership is unsolved as yet.

In the Middle-East and Iran (where Britain had interests in oil), the British rapidly lost whatever influence they had managed to keep. British forces evacuated Palestine in 1948, leaving the region open to bloody conflicts opposing the new state of Israel to its Arab neighbours and the Palestinians. In 1956, Britain and France, with Israeli support, mounted a military operation against Egypt, in order to keep control of the Suez Canal, but after initial success on the ground, the whole affair became a diplomatic failure[57]. Under pressure from the Soviet Union and the US, Britain and France had to withdraw their forces. Britain was no longer a world power and passed more and more into the shadow of the US. From 1956, Britain reviewed its defence commitments east of Suez, while Australia and New-Zealand entered into an American-led alliance in the Pacific.

F – Post imperial days...

In 1950, the British Commonwealth of Nations became simply the Commonwealth, with the British monarch as head of the newly created organisation, but no longer the head of some its member-states[58]. Often thought to be an empty shell, it should be noted that the Commonwealth has fared better than its French counterpart, *l’Union Française*, a short-lived attempt at preserving links between France and its former colonies[59]. While Burma on becoming independent refused to keep any link with the

[57] The French had also their own agenda and wanted to punish the Egyptian leader, Colonel Nasser, for giving sanctuary and support to Algerian nationalists.

[58] Seventeen countries now have the Queen as head of state, out of 55 member countries.

[59] *La Francophonie*, on the other hand, with its meetings of heads of states and governments of countries where French is used (or simply taught), was initiated by African personalities after WW2; it includes former French colonies as well as partly French-speaking countries (Belgium, Switzerland, Canada) and countries where French still enjoys a certain popularity, like Romania.

Commonwealth, and Ireland abolished hers in 1949, most former British colonies have been members of the organisation since the beginning. Some, like South Africa and Pakistan decided to quit, the former in 1961 because of its racial policies being condemned by other Commonwealth members, the latter in 1972, after its eastern part had become the independent Bangladesh. Both eventually rejoined the Commonwealth. Other countries, like Nigeria, were suspended and later readmitted. More recently, the former Portuguese colony of Mozambique has become a member (see the list of Commonwealth countries in annex).

The Commonwealth is therefore more than just a club for colonial nostalgia. Many former colonies have based their political and judicial systems on British (English, in the case of a legal system) models. Cultural links, especially in Higher Education, remain strong, while Commonwealth countries meet for Commonwealth games on the Olympic model. Heads of States and Heads of governments meet on average every two years in different cities of Commonwealth countries, but the political significance of such conferences remains limited.

What now remains of the former largest empire in the world, after Hong-Kong was handed back to China in 1997, is a handful of small territories, mostly islands, scattered all over the globe (see appendix, p.79).

The Empire has unfortunately also left a legacy of conflicts throughout the world. Not only has Britain shown it was still ready to fight to protect what remains of its colonial possessions, as in 1982 in the Falklands, but we could also consider some of the present (or recent) day's wars or zones of tension:

- Israel/Palestine (Palestine given to Britain as a mandate after WWI, evacuated in 1947 leaving the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians unsolved)
- India/Pakistan (potentially dangerous confrontations for control of the province of Kashmir in Northern India between two nuclear powers – the history of military conflicts between both countries has been going on since the early years of independence, notably in 1971, when East Pakistan seceded and eventually became Bangladesh, with Indian support)
- India/China (potentially dangerous tensions between two nuclear powers for unresolved questions of disputed borders)
- Zimbabwe (question of land property a source of grave internal tension between Robert Mugabe's war veterans and white farmers)
- Iraq, which was artificially created by Britain after 1918, out of the dismembered Ottoman empire
- Last, but not least, Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, we should not forget that native non-white peoples of the former Dominions (Aborigines in Australia, Maori in New-Zealand, Indians and Inuit in Canada) are still fighting for their rights and only in the last years of the 20th century have they been offered apologies for their mistreatment at the hands of the white authorities. The long and cruel struggle in South Africa against the racist policy of the Apartheid can also be regarded as one of the bitterest legacies of the Empire, while the substantial black American community can also be regarded as a legacy of colonisation.

Finally, it is interesting to note that within the UK itself, the Empire has left notable contributions, however mundane, such as tea and curry. But Britain has also

attracted immigrants from the former colonies, especially from South and South-East Asia, the West Indies, Africa. Britain has been changed by its imperial past and may well undergo new changes with the constitutional evolution of the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly. After all, the Empire, before being British, was only English.

EMPIRE, LITERATURE & CINEMA

A non-negligible imperial presence…

Unlike French literature, which is rather poor in famous works inspired by France's colonial empire, the works by British writers like Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad or Somerset Maugham are among the best-known titles in British literary history.

Imperial and colonial themes are therefore to be found in a large number of novels, stories and poems, from the early days of the empire in North America up to contemporary Britain, either because they constitute the very topic and settings of the works themselves, or because the Empire is alluded to or its presence made unavoidable. But not all British authors were necessarily as enthusiastic imperialists as Kipling or John Buchan.

Yet, it would be unfair not to quote at least one of Rudyard Kipling's short stories. "The Bridge-builders", in *The Day's Work* (1898) tells the story of a British engineer building a bridge across the river Ganges. He finds himself stranded by a sudden flood on the banks of the river, together with his half-breed overseer. Both take opium in order to relieve their fever, and in a half-dream, see different creatures, men and beasts, gather near them and hold a council: they are the gods in the Hindu pantheon and they discuss the pros and cons of bridges and railways. While some gods advocate their destruction, others argue that if it is too late to destroy the white men's work, India remains eternal nevertheless, and the god Hanuman (often represented as a monkey) even says: "…it pleases me well to watch these men, remembering that I also builded [sic] no small bridge in the world's youth" (an allusion to the bridge Hanuman was supposed to have built between India and Ceylon). As in other works by Kipling, the message is twofold: the white men cannot be stopped, and their task is to improve the lot of the non-whites (as in this story, by building transport infrastructure). This is echoed in several other stories ("William the Conqueror", 1895; "The Tomb of his Ancestors", 1897), and not least in his well-known poem, "The White Man's Burden" (1898). Written for British as well as American imperialists[60], the poem is both an encouragement to serve the needs of the native people under imperial rule and a warning as to the unrewarding character of the task:

> Take up the White Man's burden –

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[60] In1898, the Americans had taken control of the Philippines, Puerto-Rico and the Pacific island of Guam from the Spanish.

Send forth the best ye breed –
Go bind your sons in exile
To serve your captives' need (quoted in Brooks and Faulkner, 1996)

In the poem's first lines, Kipling almost reverses the situation: colonising becomes a "burden", while white men ("the best") are bound "in exile", in order "to serve" the "captives' need". At the same time, he warns these well-meaning imperialists not to expect any reward for their efforts:

Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hope to nought.
(…)
Take up the White Man's burden –
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better
The hate of those ye guard – (*ibid*)

Kipling, therefore, presents imperial expansion as a mission for white men to improve the lot of the non-whites, while the only recompense will be the ingratitude of "those ye better".

References to the Empire and to India in particular, can also be only anecdotal. In *The Secret Garden* (1911), by Frances Hodgson Burnett, the first chapter serves as an introduction to one of the two main characters, Mary Lennox. This little girl is described in the very first lines as "the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen", with yellow hair and a yellow face. Born in India, the daughter of a man who "had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and ill himself", and of a woman "who cared only to go to parties", Mary becomes "tyrannical and selfish", using up one governess after another and insulting native servants. When her parents die of cholera, she is sent to Yorkshire in England and undergoes a spectacular transformation from a sickly, angry and difficult child into a healthy, pleasant and active young girl, even able to learn the Yorkshire dialect. In this novel, India is a symbol of sickness, ill temper and neglect of family values, whereas traditional country life in Northern England regenerates Mary and makes her a lovable character. The fact that Frances Hodgson Burnett left Britain for the United States may partly explain this not very favourable depiction of India, the Jewel in the Imperial Crown.

In *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) by Arthur Conan Doyle, we learn that Dr Watson has recently been invalidated out of the Army after being injured in the second Afghan war (1878-1880), "at the fatal battle of Maiwand … by a Jezail bullet", and rescued "from the hands of the murderous Ghazis" by his orderly. Dr Watson is then "removed, with a great train of wounded sufferers, to the base hospital at Peshawur[61]". In the annotated edition of this novel which sees the first encounter between Sherlock Holmes and Dr John Watson, Leslie S. Klinger notes that the references to the second Afghan war, the battle of Maiwand, the Jezail bullet and the Ghazis are quite accurate: Afghanistan was indeed the theatre of yet another British

[61] Alternative spelling for "Peshawar".

campaign in order to prevent the Russians to infiltrate the country, and Maiwand was a village where a force of 2,500 British soldiers was defeated by 25,000 Afghan warriors; a Jezail bullet was used in a jezail (the capitalisation in Conan Doyle's text is not accurate) musket; "Ghazis" were "veteran Muslim warriors" (Klinger, 2006).

In *The Sign of Four* (1890), the second Sherlock Holmes novel, the intrigue involves the daughter of a British officer in an Indian (British) regiment, while the last chapter ("The Strange Story of Jonathan Small") is set in the fortress of Agra during the Great Mutiny, and in the penal colony of the Andaman Islands in the Gulf of Bengal. Even more than in *A Study in Scarlet*, imperial history has left its mark on the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, although all Sherlock Holmes stories written by Conan Doyle have London and England for setting.

Other authors wrote for specific readers. George Alfred Henty (1832-1902), wrote for boys and young men, producing more than 100 historical novels and collections of press dispatches, although not all of them had the British Empire for background. Indeed, some of his titles are eloquent enough: *With Wolfe in Canada*, *With Clive in India*, *The Tiger of Mysore*[62], *On the Irrawaddy*[63], *To Herat and Cabul*, *Through the Sikh War*, *Maori and Settler*, *By Sheer Pluck: A Tale of the Ashanti*[64] *War*, *The March to Coomassie*[65], *The Young Colonists*, *A Chapter of Adventures: The Bombardment of Alexandria*, *The Dash for Khartoum*, *With Kitchener in the Soudan*, *With Buller in Natal*[66], *With Roberts to Pretoria*, *With the Allies to Pekin*. Henty covered most military campaigns, from the Franco-British rivalry in North America and India to the subjugation of Egypt and Sudan, the Boer War and the relief of the besieged foreign legations in Peking (now Beijing) in 1900 by a British-led international force (see the note on the film *55 Days at Peking* below). In this novel, as in most others written, the protagonist, Rex Bateman, is a boy aged between 15 and 20 whose heroic actions help the British column advancing on Peking. When the foreign legations are finally relieved, Rex tells how the battle was fought and describes the different foreign contingents in those terms:

> The Russians and French did not do much, but the Japs, the Americans and our fellows [meaning the British] had some very hard work (…) The allies, it must be confessed, did a lot of looting. The Japs, all agreed, behaved best; but the Russians, who had done practically nothing towards the taking of the town, acted in a most brutal way. (Henty, 1903)

This reflects the system of alliances set up by the British at the turn of the century: on the one hand, the Russians are the arch-enemy, always ready to threaten British India or British presence in the Mediterranean, while the French are still regarded as competitors in Africa and the Pacific, as well as allies of the Russians. On the other hand, the Japanese are shown in a favourable light because Britain was then allied to Japan, having entrusted the protection of British interests in the Far-East into the care of the Japanese in order to concentrate on the possible threats in India, Africa and Europe. The same goes for the Americans, who are regarded by the British, at least by Henty, as a more accommodating partner than the French or the Russians.

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[62] Mysore is a city in southern India.
[63] The Irrawaddy is a river that flows through Myanmar (formerly Burma).
[64] The Ashanti, or Asante, were a West African people who resisted British domination until the end of the 19th century in what is now Ghana.
[65] Coomassie, or Kumasi, was the capital of the Ashanti kingdom.
[66] Natal is a region of South Africa where the British fought the Boers in 1899.

Fourteen years later, the Russians and the French were allied to the British and about to confront the Germans, Austro-Hungarians and Ottomans in western, central and eastern Europe, as well as in Africa and Asia.

Pre-WWII: loyalty, duty and patriotism on the silver screen…

The British Raj inspired British as well as American film-makers in the 1930s and 1940s. In these days of fading imperial glory, economic recession and increasing threat from aggressive totalitarian regimes, such epics as *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, *Gunga Din*, *The Drum* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* painted British India in terms of heroism, sacrifice, sacred duty to Queen (or King) and country.

If *The Four Feathers* is not set in India but in England, Egypt and the Sudan, it is no less a praise of very same values. The protagonist, Harry Feversham, is a young English officer who resigns his commission when he learns his regiment is bound for war-torn Sudan. He is then sent three white feathers (symbolising cowardice) by three of his fellow-officers, to which his fiancée adds a fourth one. He will eventually redeem himself by going to the Sudan undercover on his own initiative and rescuing his friends from the desert and from prison and certain death.

The four films set in India quoted above have more than just heroism and patriotism in common: in all four of them, Indians are either loyal servants of the British Raj, mostly as soldiers, or treacherous and cruel opponents from the North-West frontier, colluding with Russian spies. In *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, the girl who tricks the young subaltern into the evil Mohammed Khan's camp is indeed Russian, while the no less evil Surit Khan in *The Charge of the Light Brigade* relies on his Russian adviser and later finds death on the hills of Balaklava in the Crimea, killed in revenge for his cruelty by the courageous British lancers. Loyal Indians, however, do not receive the same treatment in all films: the Indian officers and privates, as well as the servants, in *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* are merely secondary, nameless characters, always in the background. This may partly reflect the divide between British and Indians in the Indian (British) Army (see the quote from Allen, p.59). In *Gunga Din*, there is a marked contrast between the good-natured, obedient and brave water-bearer Gunga Din, who eventually gives his life to save his British masters, and the dark and implacable leader of the rebellious Indians, a small, bald, white-robed character who may well have been inspired by Gandhi. The fact that this leader is also a religious man gives strength to that interpretation, as Gandhi himself was a devout Hindu. *The Charge of the Light Brigade* shows Surit Khan and his warriors as cruel and barbaric, while the loyal Indian soldiers are depicted as brave men, but also loving husbands and fathers. In the massacre of the garrison, British and loyal Indians are at least mingled – in death.

In *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, by American director Henry Hathaway, three young subalterns in the 41st Bengal Lancers are involved in frontier intrigue when the evil ruler Mohammed Khan steals weapons and ammunition from the British. Captured by the enemy and imprisoned in their Afghan stronghold, the three men are tortured and one of them, the son of the stiff upper-lipped Colonel, betrays the regiment by giving details of the ammunition convoy route. But all three finally save the day and the disgraced son kills Mohammed Khan, while his best friend dies attacking the rebel warriors single-handed.

The opening images of the film reflect well the state of the British Raj, with different views of thick native crowds in bazaars or at prayer (with a soundtrack of oriental-sounding melodies), contrasted with the images of Army headquarters, neat, orderly, efficient, run by a small handful of British officials (with a bugle call in

the background). The threat to this imperial order comes, unsurprisingly, from the North-West frontier and the film is a hymn to military and manly values such as devotion to duty and soldier comradeship, but also to British rule in India. When one of the subalterns criticises the Colonel for not wanting to try and rescue his son who has just been kidnapped by Mohammed Khan, he is rebuked by the Major (second in command) in those terms:

> Have you never thought how, for generation after generation here, a handful of men have ordered the lives of three hundred million people? It's because he's here, and a few more like him [meaning the Colonel]. Men of his breed have made British India, men who put their jobs above everything. He wouldn't let death move him from it and he won't let love move him from it. When his breed dies out, that's the end. And it's a better breed of men than any of us will ever make.

When the film was released in 1935, these words could have sounded like a warning, or even a swan's song. The Major's lines are like a distant echo of Kipling's poem "Recessional" (1897), where the already famous writer and poet gives what could be understood as a warning to Great Britain, then at the climax of its imperial might and celebrating Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee:

> God of our fathers, known of old,
> Lord of our far-flung battle line,
> Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
> Dominion over palm and pine –
> Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
> Lest we forget – lest we forget! (quoted in Brooks and Faulkner, 1996)

In fact, India had known nationalist agitation for nearly two decades, Gandhi had represented the India National Congress at a Round Table conference in London in 1931, and at least home-rule, if not independence, seemed inevitable. But the Major's words could also be a call for future generations of Britons to carry on with their imperial duties and uphold imperial values.

Post-WWII: a more nuanced view…

In the history of the British conquest of Africa, two battles remain enshrined in the imperial memories: Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift (both in 1879). In the former, British forces were outwitted and outnumbered by the highly organised Zulu impi (fighting units), suffering 1,500 casualties. A few days later, not far from the site of Isandwlana, at Rorke's Drift, one hundred British soldiers – mostly Welsh – were relentlessly attacked by 4,000 Zulu warriors who could not overwhelm the tiny garrison and eventually retreated.

These two battles were recreated for the screen in two films, *Zulu* (1964) and *Zulu Dawn* (1979), both by Cy Enfield. But whereas the former depicts the British desperate but stubborn and eventually victorious resistance to the Zulu onslaught, the latter shows the arrogance and brutality of the British, and their careless contempt for a non-white opponent, ending in an imperial defeat and humiliation. One could wonder whether Cy Enfield wanted to give each side their due, although in both films the Zulu warriors are presented as highly-disciplined and very brave. It could also be understood that when filming *Zulu*, it was still acceptable to show the British

triumphant, whereas in the 1970s films were beginning to show the lesser epic sides of colonial wars[67].

This seems to be the pattern for post WWII cinema. Imperial themes have still inspired several films, but whereas before the war they glorified the Empire and its loyal servants while vilifying its treacherous opponents, the films from the 1950s on started to give a slightly more complex view. *North-West Frontier* (1959) still follows the pattern of "loyal vs. treacherous" Indians. But the film is already a bit more nuanced than its pre-war predecessors: British attitudes are – gently – criticised by an American governess, while the evil character is a Dutch-Indian Muslim Métis who explains his motivations and eventually dies for the cause he believes in. At the very end of the film, the young Indian prince who has been taken to safety by a stereotyped brave British officer thanks his rescuer but wonders whether one day he may have to fight him as well. Together with the images of a train full of massacred Indian civilians, victims of the cruel rebels, the question of the young prince may well reflect the state of post-WWII India, with the tragedy of the partition and its thousands of victims.

The films set in the Far-East during WWII bring a new development in Empire-inspired cinema. The vast majority of them, from *Three Came Home* (1950) to *Paradise Road* (1997) depict the appalling conditions in the POW and civilian internment camps, where thousands of European and American prisoners and internees under the Japanese died of brutal treatment, exhaustion, malnutrition and disease. Little attention is paid, however, to the fate of the Chinese, Malays, Philippinos, Indonesians, who suffered no less than the Whites, especially on the infamous "Railway of Death", where POWs and Asian civilians were used as slave labour by the Imperial Japanese Army to complete the railway line in the jungle between Bangkok (in Thailand) and Rangoon (in Burma, now Myanmar). Two of these films, *The Bridge Over the River Kwai* (1957) and *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* (1982), while showing the indisputably atrocious conditions for the allied POWs, also question the clash of cultures between Britain and the west in general, and Japan.

Yet, the epic genre is not entirely out of fashion. Films like *55 Days at Peking* (1963), *Khartoum* (1966) or *Farewell to the King* (1989) are in the tradition of the traditional action and adventure stories. And still, these three films bear the mark of history: at the very beginning of *55 Days…*, two Chinese elderly men listen to the cacophony of the different foreign military bands playing their respective anthems at the same time, which prompts one of the Chinese to say that "different nations say the same thing at the same time: we want China". At the end of the film, after the allied European, Japanese and American forces have relieved the besieged legations, the British Minister (Ambassador) tells the US Marines Major: "Listen to them. They're all playing different tunes again". As a matter of fact, all nations (except Spain) involved during the siege of the legations in Peking in 1900 were to find themselves at war with each other 14 years later, during WWI.

Still in the epic genre, *Khartoum* celebrates an imperial hero, but it also shows the British government deliberately sending General Gordon to his death as well as the unwillingness of Prime Minister Gladstone to commit troops to rescue him. The more recent *Farewell to the King*, which could be categorised as a "war" film, is

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[67] One could also think of the contrasts between the pre-1970 American western films, where Indians were usually depicted as cruel savages or paternalistically looked upon as inferiors to be civilised, with post-1970 films like *Little Big Man* or *Soldier Blue* (both from 1970), showing graphic and brutal images of massacres of Indians by the US cavalry.

nonetheless an illustration of the disillusionment of some Whites as to the future of the Empire. One of the protagonists, a British officer, says that the Australian will soon “recapture” Borneo, before correcting himself and using “liberate” instead. The other protagonist, an American deserter turned tribal chieftain, has few kind words for the Empire and the Allies, even if he lends a hand against the Japanese.

If the 1977 version of *The Four Feathers* is a rather unimaginative adaptation for television, the most recent one in 2002, if faithful to the novel and the previous films, shows the British troops in Sudan somewhat dismayed to discover that the natives they are supposed to deliver are in fact hostile, but also brave. The image of British officers arriving in a Sudanese village where children throw stones at them could well be an echo of the Palestinian *Intifada* and of the situation in Iraq at the present time.

Special mention should be made of Australian films like *Breaker Morant* (1980), and *Gallipoli* (1981), where the British are not shown under the best of light, ready to sacrifice brave Australian soldiers to superior political interests in the former, or stereotyped as upper-class snobs in the latter.

1 – A FEW BOOKS (list obviously non-exhaustive!)

- Rudyard Kipling: no bibliography of fiction inspired by the British Empire, however incomplete, should fail to mention Kipling. Born in India, he was a champion of the Empire and imperial ambitions. But he was also a keen story-teller and a poet.

  * *The Jungle Books* (1894-95)
  * 3 short stories, among many others (also see p.68): “The Bridge-builders”, in *The Day’s Work* (1898), “The Man Who Would Be King” and “On the City Walls” (both in 1888)
  * *Kim* (1901 – see above, footnote 38, page 58)

- Joseph Conrad: originally from Poland, Conrad was a sailor before he started writing in English, mostly sea-stories

  * *Lord Jim* (1900 – the story of a young man in Malaya)
  * “Heart of darkness”, published in *Youth: A Narrative; and Two Other Stories* (1902 – an evocation of the Belgian Congo, which later inspired Francis Ford Coppola for his film *Apocalypse Now*)

- John Buchan: a former Governor-general of Canada and another champion of the Empire, Buchan’s most famous book is *The Thirty-nine Steps*, which Alfred Hitchcock adapted for the screen. Buchan wrote mostly adventure stories and thrillers, set either in the Empire, in his native Scotland or in Europe.

  * *Prester John* (1910 – an adventure story in Southern Africa, with strong imperial overtones)

- Somerset Maugham: a master of the short story who travelled extensively throughout the Far-East and the Pacific. His fiction gives a rare insight into these less well-known corners of the British Empire.

  * volumes 1, 2 and 4 of his short stories (published between 1921 and 1952), though not all of them have an imperial setting (but see, among others, “Rain”, “The Pool” and “Before the Party” in vol.1, “The Force of Circumstance”, “Flotsam and Jetsam” and “Footprints in the Jungle” in vol.2, and all stories in vol.4)
  * *On A Chinese Screen* (1922 – notes taken during a journey on the Yang-Tze river in 1920)
  * *The Narrow Corner* (1932 – set in the Pacific during the colonial period)

- E.M. Forster: well-known early 20th century English novelist; a few of his books have been adapted on screen by the trio Merchant/Ivory/Jhabvala
  * *Passage to India* (1924 – the story of the ambiguous relationship between a young English girl and an Indian doctor in the 1920s – may also have inspired R. Jhabvala with her own *Heat & Dust*)
  * *The Hill of Devi* (1953 – an account of Forster's time in India in the 1920s, when he was employed as private secretary to an Indian ruler – may have inspired Ruth Jhabvala with the character of Harry in *Heat & Dust* - see below)
- George Orwell: well-known for *Animal Farm* and *1984*
  * *Burmese Days* (1934 – inspired by Orwell's own experience in the Indian Imperial Police)
- C. S. Forrester: British writer, better-known for his sea-adventure series, *Captain Hornblower*
  * *The African Queen* (1935 – set in East Africa during WWI and the campaign opposing the British and the Germans)
- Karen Blixen: celebrated Danish writer who evoked her own life in colonial British East-Africa in the following works:
  * *Out of Africa* (1937)
  * *Shadows on the Grass* (1960)
- Graham Greene: well-known 20th century English novelist whose novels often mix tragedy and comedy.
  * *The Heart of the Matter* (1948 – set in British West Africa during WW2)
  * *The Quiet American* (1955 – set outwith the British Empire, in French Indo-China during the war of decolonisation – 1947/1954 – shows the somewhat ambiguous American attitude towards the declining colonial powers)
- Alan Paton: white South-African writer whose powerful writings depict South-Africa under the apartheid
  * *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948 – the story of a young black accused of a killing)
  * *Ah, but your Land is Beautiful* (1981 – the early days of apartheid, seen by different characters)
- Nevil Shute: English airman turned writer who immigrated to Australia
  * *A Town Like Alice* (1950 – describes the horrendous conditions for civilian internees and allied POWs at the hands of the Japanese during WWII, as well as life in the Australian bush)
- Doris Lessing: a white writer from Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)
  * *The Grass is Singing* (1950 – the relationship between a poor white farmer's wife and one of their black servants)
- Nadine Gordimer: a South-African writer
  * *Six Feet of the Country* (1956-82 – a collection of short stories set in apartheid South Africa)
- Chinua Achebe: a Nigerian writer and now Professor of Languages and Literature in New-York
  * *Things Fall Apart* (1958 – the colonisation of West Africa seen through the eyes of an African)
- Ngugi: a Kenyan writer who writes both in English and in his native African language (Kikuyu)
  * *Weep not, Child* (1964 – set in the days of the Mau-Mau rebellion, the story of two children growing up during the turmoil of decolonisation in Kenya)

- Anthony Burgess: best-known for his *A Clockwork Orange*
    * *The Long Day Wanes* (1964 – trilogy set in Malaysia after WWII)
- J.G. Farrell: an Irish writer with a slightly ironic vision of the Empire
    * *Troubles* (1970 – set in Ireland during the Anglo-Irish war, 1919-1922)
    * *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973 – set during the Great Mutiny in India)
    * *The Singapore Grip* (1978 – set during the tragic fall of Singapore at the hands of the Japanese in 1942)
- Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: Polish-born writer, shares her life between India and America; she also writes for screenplays and has worked with the celebrated Merchant/Ivory team (British film-makers):
    * *Heat & Dust* (1975 – two parallel stories set in India in 1923 and in the 1970s; a fine evocation of the British Raj and of modern India and the cultural shock for western visitors (hippies among others)
- T. Coraghessan Boyle: contemporary American writer
    * *Water Music* (1982 – a fictionalised account of the journeys of Scottish explorer Mungo Park to West Africa in the 18th century)
- William Boyd: contemporary British writer
    * *An Ice-cream War* (1982 – set during WWI in East Africa, during the campaign opposing British and German colonial forces)
- Roald Dahl: the celebrated British writer had first-hand experience of the British Empire when he joined the Shell Company and was posted to Tanganyika in the late 1930s
    * *Going Solo* (1986 – the second part of Dahl's autobiography – after *Boy* – gives a very interesting and often funny vision of the pre WWII empire-builders as well as of Tanganyika, former German East-Africa, now Tanzania, under a British mandate after 1918)
- Giles Fodden: contemporary Scottish writer
    * *Ladysmith* (1999 – a well-documented fictionalised account of the siege of Ladysmith during the Boer War in South Africa)
- Hari Kunzru:
    * *The Impressionist* (2002 – the history of a young man, half-Indian, half-English, in 1920 India, England and Africa)

2 – A FEW FILMS (list obviously non-exhaustive!)

- pre-WWII:

* *The Four Feathers* (1915), silent film by J. Searle Dawley (inspired by the epic novel by A.E.W. Mason)
* *The Four Feathers* (1921), silent film by René Plaissetty
* *The Four Feathers* (1929), by Merian C. Cooper (who also directed the first *King-Kong* in 1933)
* *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935), by Henry Hathaway (see above, p.71)
* *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936), by Michael Curtiz; although celebrating an ill-fated cavalry charge during the Crimean war (1854-1856) most of the action is set in India and evokes the massacre of Cawnpore which in fact took place during the Great Mutiny in 1857
* *The Drum* (1938), by Zoltan Korda; an epic on the theme of the opposition between the treacherous and the loyal Indians
* *The Four Feathers* (1939), by Zoltan Korda

* *Gunga Din* (1939), by George Stevens; inspired by a poem by Kipling, again on the theme of the loyal vs. treacherous Indian

- post-WWII:

* *Three Came Home* (1950), by Jean Negulesco; one of the first evocations of the European, Australian and American civilian internees in the Far-East during WWII
* *The African Queen* (1951), by John Huston; an adaptation of the novel by C. S. Forrester
* *A Town Like Alice* (1956), by Jack Lee; an adaptation of the novel by Nevil Shute (without the final episodes in Australia)
* *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956), by Michael Anderson; an adaptation of the novel by Jules Verne, it illustrates British world supremacy at the end of the 19th century
* *The Bridge Over the River Kwai* (1957), by David Lean; made famous by its soundtrack, but also by Alec Guinness' brilliant acting, this film illustrates the humiliation of British and Allied troops at the hands of their Japanese captors after the fall of Singapore in 1942
* *North-West Frontier* (1959), by J. Lee Thomson; another epic of the "loyal vs. treacherous Indian" genre
* *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), by David Lean; Lean's masterpiece, on the career of T.E. Lawrence who was considered one of the last imperial heroes
* *55 Days at Peking* (1963), by Nicholas Ray; an epic account of the foreign legations under siege in Peking during the revolt of the Chinese "Boxers" in 1900
* *Guns at Batasi* (1964), John Guillermin; a remarkable film set during the decolonisation of Africa
* *Zulu* (1964), by Cy Enfield; the evocation of the defence of Rorke's Drift during the Natal campaign, opposing a few British soldiers to 4000 Zulu warriors – still imperial in tone but well-documented
* *Khartoum* (1966), by Basil Dearden; an epic evocation of the fate of General Gordon at Khartoum in 1885
* *Ryan's Daughter* (1970), by David Lean; a romantic and tragic vision of the West of Ireland during WWI
* *The Four Feathers* (1977), by Don Sharp (televised film)
* *Zulu Dawn* (1979), by Cy Enfield; the evocation of the battle of Isandlwana, a Zulu victory which preceded the successful British defence of Rorke's Drift
* *Breaker Morant* (1980), by Bruce Beresford; the trial of three Australian soldiers during the Boer war
* *Gallipoli* (1981), by Peter Weir; although an evocation of the Gallipoli campaign in 1915-16 where the British, the French and the ANZAC (Australian and New-Zealander Army Corps) tried to wrest control of the Dardanelles Straight from the Ottomans, it is a good illustration of the imperial contribution to WWI
* *Gandhi* (1982), by Richard Attenborough; a careful reconstruction of Mahatma Gandhi's life – as Attenborough admits, it is impossible to cover all aspects of one man's life in one film
* *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* (1982), by Nagisa Oshima; a more recent evocation of allied POWs in Japanese prison camps during WWII, provides an interesting comparison with *The Bridge Over the River Kwai*

* *Heat & Dust* (1983), by James Ivory, Ismail Merchant and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala; a brilliant adaptation of R.P. Jhabwala's novel
* *Passage to India* (1984), by David Lean; brilliant adaptation of Forster's novel
* *Out of Africa* (1985), by Sydney Pollack; inspired by the writings of Karen Blixen, depicts colonial Kenya, before, during and after WWI
* *Cry Freedom* (1987), by Richard Attenborough; a powerful film on apartheid in South Africa, evoking the murder of black activist Steve Biko
* *White Mischief* (1987), by Michael Radford; colonial Kenya in the early 1940s, an interesting contrast with *Out of Africa*
* *Empire of the Sun* (1987), by Steven Spielberg; inspired by British writer J.G. Ballard's experience as a young boy interned by the Japanese in Shanghai during WWII
* *Farewell to the King* (1989), by John Milius; an epic set during the Japanese occupation of Borneo and the allied campaign to recapture the island in 1945, evokes the beginning of the end for the British Empire
* *Mountains of the Moon* (1990), by Bob Rafelson; a remarkable evocation of two British explorers, Richard Burton and John Hanning Speke, who discovered Lake Victoria and the sources of the Nile in the 19th century
* *The Piano* (1993), by Jane Campion; set in 19th century New-Zealand, this film shows the conditions for British settlers and their relations with the Maori, in a very Victorian, repressed atmosphere
* *Amistad* (1997), by Steven Spielberg; the story of this slave ship at the beginning of the 19th century – it shows the terrible conditions in which Africans were transported from Africa to America, as well as the role played by the Royal Navy when fighting slavery
* *Paradise Road* (1997), by Bruce Beresford; the evocation of British, Australian, Dutch and American women interned by the Japanese on Sumatra during WWII
* *The Four Feathers* (2002), by Shekhar Kapur
* *The Sleeping Dictionary* (2003), by Guy Jenkin; a romantic story set in colonial Sarawak – British Borneo – in the 1930s.

APPENDIX

List of the Commonwealth countries (in 2004), with date of joining; the countries whose names are in italics are "Commonwealth Realms", i.e. they have the Queen as head of state.

Antigua and Barbuda (1981)
Australia (1931)
The Bahamas (1973)
Bangladesh (1972)
Barbados (1966)
Belize (1981)
Botswana (1966)
Brunei Darussalam (1984)
Cameroon (1995)
Canada (1931)
Cyprus (1961)
Dominica (1978)
Fiji Islands (1970)
The Gambia (1965)
Ghana (1957)
Grenada (1974)
Guyana (1966)
India (1947)
Jamaica (1962)
Kenya (1963)
Kiribati (1979)
Lesotho (1966)
Malawi (1964)
Malaysia (1957)
Maldives (1982)
Malta (1964)
Mauritius (1968)
Mozambique (1995)
Namibia (1990)
Nauru (2000)
New Zealand (1931)
Nigeria (1960)
Pakistan (1947)
Papua New Guinea (1975)
Saint Kitts and Nevis (1983)
Saint Lucia (1979)
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (1979)
Samoa (1970)
Seychelles (1976)
Sierra Leone (1961)
Singapore (1965)
Solomon Islands (1978)
South Africa (1931)
Sri Lanka (1948)
Swaziland (1968)
United Republic of Tanzania (1961)
Tonga (1970)
Trinidad and Tobago (1962)
Tuvalu (1978)
Uganda (1962)
United Kingdom (1931)
Vanuatu (1980)
Zambia (1964)

List of British overseas territories

Anguilla
Bermuda
British Antarctic Territory
British Indian Ocean Territory
British Virgin Islands
Cayman Islands
Falkland Islands
Gibraltar
Montserrat
Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands
St. Helena and Dependencies (Ascension and Tristan da Cunha Islands)
South Georgia
South Sandwich Islands
Turks and Caicos Islands

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