in current descriptions of the world, the major industrial societies are

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were built on the profits of that trade. Spices, sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco, gold and silver: these fed, as mercantile profits, into an English social order, over and above the profits on English stock and crops. It was still mainly, at that stage, a profit of trading: bringing goods from one kind of economy to another, though often with physical force to back this up. The country-houses which were the apex of a local system of exploitation then had many connections to these distant lands. But another process was already under way: another kind of 'improvement'. Demand for these valued and exotic commodities was steadily rising, and the European societies and their emigrant settlers were beginning to organise increased production. To do this, in tropical regions, they began organising 'labour'; that polite term for the slave trade from Africa—anything from three million slaves in the seventeenth century to seven million in the eighteenth. The new rural economy of the tropical plantations—sugar, coffee, cotton—was built by this trade in flesh, and once again the profits fed back into the country-house system: not only the profits on the commodities but until the end of the eighteenth century the profits on slaves. In 1700 fifteen per cent of British commerce was with the colonies. In 1775 it was as much as a third. In an intricate process of economic interaction, supported by wars between the trading nations for control of the areas of supply, an organised colonial system and the development of an industrial economy changed the nature of British society.

The unprecedented events of the nineteenth century, in which Britain became a predominantly industrial and urban society, with its agriculture declining to marginal status, are inexplicable and would have been impossible without this colonial development. There was a massive export of the new industrial production. Much of the trade of the world was carried and serviced by Britain, from its dominant position in shipping, banking and insurance, the new 'City' of London. Following these profitable developments, often to the exclusion of others that might have been possible, the economy by the middle of the nineteenth century was at the point where its own population could not be fed from home production. The traditional relationship between city and country was then thoroughly rebuilt on an international scale. Distant lands became the rural areas of industrial Britain, with heavy consequent effects on its own surviving rural areas. At the same time, the drive for industrial markets and the drive for raw materials extended the effective society across half the world. Already in the eighteenth century the most important of the colonies, in North America, had achieved independence and were eventually, and even more dramatically, to follow the same paths. From the 1870s, especially, there was intense competition between the rising industrial societies, for markets, raw materials and areas of influence. This was fought out in trade and in many colonial wars. It produced, in Britain, the formal establishment of new kinds of political control over the colonial areas: the British Empire in its political sense. In the twentieth century the same rivalry was fought out in its European bases, in the First World War.

The effects of this development on the English imagination have gone deeper than can easily be traced. All the time, within it, there was the interaction at home, between country and city, that we have seen in so many examples. But from at least the mid-nineteenth century, and with important instances earlier, there was this larger context within which every idea and every image was consciously and unconsciously affected. We can see in the industrial novels of the mid-nineteenth century how the idea of emigration to the colonies was seized as a solution to the poverty and overcrowding of the cities. Thousands of the displaced rural workers had already gone there. Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* ends in Canada, in a mood of rural idyll and escape as powerful as any of the earlier English images. In *Wuthering Heights*, in *Great Expectations*, in *Alton Locke* and in many other novels of the period there is a way out from the struggle within English society to these distant lands; a way out that is not only the escape to a new land but as in some of the real history an acquisition of fortune to return and re-enter the struggle at a higher point. Alexander Somerville and several of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, casualties of the crisis of rural society, ended their days overseas. Many of the casualties of the urban crisis, leading Chartists among them, went the same way. The lands of the Empire were an idyllic retreat, an escape from debt or shame, or an opportunity for making a fortune. An expanding middle class found its regular careers abroad, as war and administration in the distant lands became more organised. New rural societies entered the English imagination, under the shadow of political and economic control: the plantation worlds of Kipling and Maugham and early Orwell; the trading worlds of Conrad and Joyce Cary.

From about 1880 there was then this dramatic extension of landscape and social relations. There was also a marked extension of the idea of England as 'home', in that special sense in which 'home' is a memory and an ideal. Some of the images of this 'home' are of central London: the powerful, the prestigious and the consuming capital. But many are of an idea of rural England: its green peace contrasted with the tropical or arid places of actual work; its sense of belonging, of community, idealised by contrast with the tensions of colonial rule and the isolated alien settlement. We can pick up the force of this idea in many twentieth-century images of rural England.
The society from which these people had come was, after all, the most urban and industrialised in the world, and it was usually in the service of just these elements that they had gone out. Perhaps this worked only to deepen the longing and the idealisation. Moreover, in practical terms, the reward for service, though anticipated more often than it was gained, was a return to a rural place within this urban and industrial England: the 'residential' rural England, the 'little place in the country'; unless the service had been profitable enough to follow the older movement, to the 'country house', the real place. The birds and trees and rivers of England; the natives speaking, more or less, one's own language: these were the terms of many imagined and actual settlements. The country, now, was a place to retire to.

It is easy to see this in the generations of colonial officers, civil servants, plantation managers and traders. But within their own class these were the least successful. The landed aristocracy had lost much of its particular identity and its political power in the course of industrial and imperialist development. But its social imagery continued to predominate. The network of income from property and speculation was now not only industrial but imperial. And as so often before it was fed into a self-consciously rural mode of display. The country-houses of later George Eliot, of Henry James and of their etiolated successors are, as we saw, the country-houses of capital rather than of land. More significantly and more ritually than ever before, a rural mode was developed, as a cultural superstructure, on the profits of industrial and imperial development. It was a mode of play: an easy realisation of the old imagery of Pendhurst: field sports, fishing, and above all horses; often a marginal interest in conservation and 'old country ways'.

Meanwhile there was still, within Britain, a small rural proletariat, and the farmers, as we have seen, were in increasing numbers becoming owner-occupiers: adjusting, often with difficulty, to the subordinate position of home agriculture, but with increasing efficiency drawn from the resources of a scientific and industrial society. In a minor key, some of the old real images persisted. But they were now at last outnumbered by the new images, themselves transmuted by their changing functions. The quiet place to retire to, or the place in which to live in a country style: these, now, were the dominant ideas, in the literature as in the history.

Yet all the time, out of their sight, there was a huge rural proletariat, in the distant lands. As Orwell, who had seen some of them, wrote in 1939:

What we always forget is that the overwhelming bulk of the British proletariat does not live in Britain, but in Asia and Africa.

This, indeed, had been the developing system. Millions of slaves; millions of indentured and contracted labourers; millions of rural workers kept at wages so low that they could barely sustain life. Out of these 'country' areas there eventually came, through blood and struggle, movements for political independence. At various stages, to protect such an order, young officers from the country-houses led other Englishmen, and the expropriated Irish and Scots and Welsh, to the colonial battles in which so many died. It is a strange fate. The unemployed man from the slums of the cities, the superfluous landless worker, the dispossessed peasant: each of these found employment in killing and disciplining the rural poor of the subordinated countries.

It is often said now, in a guilty way, that the British people as a whole benefited from the system of imperialism. If we add up the figures of the movement of wealth we cannot doubt that this is true. The rise in the general standard of living depended, in large part, on the exploitation of millions who were seen only as backward peoples, as natives. Much of the guilt and hatred and prejudice bred through these generations was still there when, ironically, unemployment in the colonies prompted a reverse migration, and following an ancient pattern the displaced from the 'country' areas came, following the wealth and the stories of wealth, to the 'metropolitan' centre, where they were at once pushed up, overcrowded, among the indigenous poor, as had happened throughout in the development of the cities. Yet we have always to remember that the total wealth which came back, and which is still coming back, was not evenly distributed. London was at one of its peaks as an imperialist city when it created its desperate centre of poverty and misery in the East End. For wealth from the Empire, channelled through so few hands, was a critical source of the political and economic power which the same ruling class continued to exercise. The advantages of living in a developed industrial society, even at the lower ends of the scale, were of course more widely diffused. Even then, internally, these workers were directly exploited. But for many of these advantages British workers had to pay: with blood in repeated wars which had little or nothing to do with their immediate interests; and in deeper ways, in confusion, loss of direction, deformation of the spirit. It is the story of the city and the country in its harshest form, and now on an unimaginably complex scale.

It is now widely believed in Britain that this system has ended. But political imperialism was only ever a stage. It was preceded by economic and trading controls, backed where necessary by force. It has been effectively succeeded by economic, monetary and commercial controls which again, at every point that resistance mounts, are at once supported by political, cultural and military intervention. The
dominant relationships are still, in this sense, of a city and a country, at the point of maximum exploitation.

What is offered as an idea, to hide this exploitation, is a modern version of the old idea of 'improvement': a scale of human societies which theoretically culminates in universal industrialisation. All the 'country' will become 'city'; that is the logic of its development: a simple linear scale, along which degrees of 'development' and 'under-development' can be marked. But the reality is quite different. Many of the 'underdeveloped' societies have been developed, precisely, for the needs of the 'metropolitan' countries. Peoples who once practised a subsistence agriculture have been changed, by economic and political force, to plantation economies, mining areas, single-crop markets. The setting of prices, on which these areas specialised to metropolitan needs must try to live, is in the decisive control of the metropolitan commodity markets. Massive investment in this kind of supply, and in its kind of economic and political infrastructure, brings in from these specialised 'rural' areas a constant flow of wealth which then further accentuates the dominating interrelations. It is essentially the same whether the crop is coffee or copper, rubber or tin, cocoa or cotton or oil. And what is called 'aid', to the poor countries, is with few exceptions an accentuation of this process: the development of their economies towards metropolitan needs; the preservation of markets and spheres of influence; or the continuation of indirect political control—sustaining a collaborating regime; opposing, if necessary by military intervention, all developments which would give these societies an independent and primarily self-directed development. Much of the history of the world, in the middle years of the twentieth century, is this decisive relationship and its turbulent consequences. It is ideologically overlaid by the abstract idea of 'development': a poor country is 'on its way' to being a rich one, just as in industrial Britain, in the nineteenth century, a poor man could be seen as someone who given the right ideas and effort was 'on his way' to being a rich man, but was for the time being at a lower stage of this development. But the facts are that the gap is widening, and that its consequences are so extensive that they are deciding the history of the world.

Within this vast action, the older images of city and country seem to fall away. But some are still relevant; the history and the ideas are relevant. We can still, any day, find rural literature, of the most traditional kinds, but we have to go farther and farther afield for it. We find stories of distant lands, but we can then recognise in them some of our own traditional experiences. The local details are different, as is natural among different peoples, but many of the historical experiences are essentially similar. If we read Yashar

Kemal's fine novel of the migrant pickers in Anatolia, The Wind from the Plain, we can see a form of the experience which so many of our own people shared: a community that has become available labour for a speculative seasonal enterprise elsewhere: the hardships of the long walk; the familiar cheating at the end of it. We can read of the conflict between two kinds of people, two ways of rural life, in James Ngugi's The River Between (1965). There is the village world of Elechi Amadi's The Concubine (1966), and the riceland of Guyana in Wilson Harris's The Far Journey of Oudin (1961). There is the rural life of southern India in R. K. Narayan's Swami and Friends (1935), and the rural conflict of Mulk Raj Anand's The Village (1939).

Many of these stories include characteristic internal themes: struggles with landlords; failures of crops and debts; the penetration of capital into peasant communities. These, in all the varieties of different societies and traditions, are internal tensions that we can recognise as characteristic forms, often from very far back in our history. But their most pressing interest, for us, is when they touch the imperialist and colonial experience. In Britain itself, within the home islands, the colonial process is so far back that it is in effect unrecorded, though there are late consequences of it in the rural literature of Scotland and Wales and especially of Ireland. It has become part of the long settlement which is idealised as Old England or the natural economy: the product of centuries of successive penetration and domination. What is important in this modern literature of the colonial peoples is that we can see the history happening, see it being made, from the base of an England which, within our own literature, has been so differently described.

Thus there are bitterly remembered experiences at the receiving end of the process which made the fortunes that were converted, in England, into country-houses and that style of life: experiences on the sugar-plantations and in the slave-trade. There are many direct accounts of this developing process, at its most organised and expansive stage. We are already familiar with the work of Englishmen who experienced the tensions of this process: E. M. Forster's Passage to India, Orwell's Burmese Days, Joyce Cary's important African novels, Aissa Saved, The African Witch, Mister Johnson. Characteristically these are liberal ways of seeing the experience, in the critical and self-questioning generation after Kipling. But we have one to go across to the Indian and African and West Indian writers to get a different and necessary perspective. The tea plantation is seen from the other side in Mulk Raj Anand's Two Leaves and a Bud (1937), Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958) ends with a white man collecting material for a book on 'The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger', and this ironic challenge is telling
because we have all read such accounts, but now see the process from within a rural community as the white men—missionaries, district officers—arrive with their mercenary soldiers and police. What is impressive about Things Fall Apart is that as in some English literature of rural change, as late as Hardy, the internal tensions of the society are made clear, so that we can understand the modes of the penetration which would in any case, in its process of expansion, have come. The first converts to the alien religion are the marginal people of the traditional society. The alien law and religion are bitterly resented and resisted, but the trading-station, in palm-oil, is welcomed, as an addition to the slash-and-burn subsistence farming of yams. The strongest man, Okonkwo, is destroyed in a very complicated process of internal contradictions and external invasion.

We can see the same complications, at a later stage and in different societies, in the resistance movements of the country people against English power, in the Kenya of James Ngugi's Weep Not, Child and A Grain of Wheat, or in the Malay of Han Suyin's And The Rain My Drink. What has been officially presented, to English readers, as savagery followed by terrorism, is seen in its real terms: so many different rural societies—unidealised, containing their own tensions—invaded and transformed by an uncomprehending and often brutal alien system. It is significant that the idealisation of the peasant, in the modern English middle-class tradition, was not extended, when it might have mattered, to the peasants, the plantation-workers, the coolies of these occupied societies. Yet in a new and universal sense this was the penetration, transformation and subjugation of the 'country' by the 'city': long-established rural communities uprooted and redirected by the military and economic power of a developing metropolitan imperialism. Nor is this only a process of the past or the recent past; we have only to read, from South Africa, the writings of Ezekiel Mphahlele.

But what we then also see is the more complicated secondary process. In the most general sense, underlying the description of the imperialist nations as 'metropolitan', the image of the country penetrated, transformed and subjugated by the city, learning to fight back in old and new ways, can be seen to hold. But one of the effects of imperialist dominance was the initiation, within the dominated societies, of processes which then follow, internally, the lines of the alien development. An internal history of country and city occurs, often very dramatically, within the colonial and neo-colonial societies. This is particularly ironic, since the city, in Western thought, is now so regularly associated with its own most modern kinds of development, while in fact, on a world scale, the most remarkable growth of cities in the twentieth century has been in the 'underdeveloped' and 'developing' continents. Within the industrialised societies, urbanisation has continued, though in societies like Britain the proportions for some time have become relatively stable. Indeed there has been some important movement away from the city in the older sense, as city centres are cleared for commercial and administrative development; or as suburbs, new towns and industrial estates are developed in rural and semi-rural areas as parts of a policy of relative dispersal. The concentrated city is in the process of being replaced, in the industrial societies, by what is in effect a transport network: the conurbation, the city region, the London-Birmingham axis. The city thus passes into its tertiary development, when it becomes in effect a province or even a state.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the imperialist process, intensely overcrowded cities are developing as a direct result of the imposed economic development and its internal consequences. Beginning as centres of colonial trade and administration, these cities have drawn in, as in our own history, the surplus people and the uprooted labourers of the rural areas. This is a long-term and continuing process, intensified by rapid rises in general population. Familiar problems of the chaotically expanding city recur, across the world, in many of the poorest countries. People who speak of the crisis of cities with London or New York or Los Angeles in mind ought to think also of the deeper crises of Calcutta or Manila or a hundred other cities across Asia and Africa and Latin America. A displaced and formerly rural population is moving and drifting towards the centres of a money economy which is directed by interests very far from their own. The last image of the city, in the ex-colonial and neo-colonial world, is the political capital or the trading port surrounded by the shantytowns, the barriadas, which often grow at incredible speed. In Peru, as I write, a few acres of desert have become, in a fortnight, a 'city' of thirty thousand people, and this is only a particular example, in the long interaction between altered and broken rural communities and a process of capitalist agriculture and industrialisation sometimes internally, more often externally directed.

It is then too late for the rich industrial societies to give warnings about the consequences of this dramatic process. There is a false conservationist and reactionary emphasis which would in effect, as Hardy observed of rural England, have the developing societies stay as they are, picturesque and poor, for the benefit of observers. Even when this is more serious, as in the reasonable emphasis on the full human consequences, it is in bad faith if it argues that the process should stop at anything like the present levels of relative advantage and disadvantage. For what has to be recognised, not only as an historical but as a contemporary fact, is that the lines of development,
in their intended and unintended consequences, run back to the centres of imperialist economic, political and military power. The shattered rural societies include not only the economies of Latin America but the bombed and burned devastation of Vietnam. Independent development, which has to be bitterly fought for, then offers the only chance of any possible growth in the interest of the majority. And while it is true that if we add up all the developments, or the failures to develop, the global crisis is terrifying, it is a process that cannot be stopped in any one of its sectors. The decisive changes, indeed, if they are to come at all, will have to come from within the 'metropolitan' countries, whose power now distorts the whole process and makes any genuine system of common interest and control impossible. Yet when we look at the power and impetus of the metropolitan drives, often indeed accelerated by their own internal crises, we cannot be in any doubt that a different direction, if it is to be found, will necessarily involve revolutionary change. The depth of the crisis, and the power of those who continue to dominate it, are too great for any easier or more congenial way.

Within this now vast mobility, which is the daily history of our world, literature continues to embody the almost infinitely varied experiences and interpretations. We can remember our own early literature of mobility and of the corrupting process of cities, and see many of its themes reappearing in African, Asian and West Indian literature, itself written, characteristically, in the metropolitan languages which are themselves among the consequences of mobility.

We can read of the restless villages of so many far countries: in Nkem Nwankwo's *Danda*, in George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*. A mixed language, learned in the mobility, comes through in V. S. Reid's *New Day*. And Chinua Achebe, who in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* showed the arrival of the alien system in the villages, shows us the complicated process of educational mobility and new kinds of work in the city in *No Longer at Ease* and *Man of the People*. Yet we have got so used to thinking of common experiences through the alienating screens of foreignness and race that all too often we take the particularity of these stories as merely exotic. A social process is happening there, in an initially unfamiliar society, and that is its importance. But as we gain perspective, from the long history of the literature of country and city, we see how much, at different times and in different places, it is a connecting process, in what has to be seen ultimately as a common history.
By the same Author

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CULTURE AND SOCIETY  
THE LONG REVOLUTION  
MODERN TRAGEDY  
COMMUNICATIONS  
DRAMA FROM IBSEN TO BRECHT  
THE ENGLISH NOVEL  
FROM DICKENS TO LAWRENCE

Novels  
BORDER COUNTRY  
SECOND GENERATION

THE COUNTRY AND THE CITY

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Cambridge

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