MEEF Devoir maison Groupe de M Mullen

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Composition: Compare and contrast the following documents.

Document A.

"Whose heritage?", Key note speech by Stuart HALL at an Arts Council national conference *Whose Heritage? The impact of Cultural Diversity on Britain's Living Heritage*, 2 November 1999, G-Mex, Manchester, England.

This is therefore an appropriate moment to ask, then, who is the Heritage *for*? In the British case the answer is clear. It is intended for those who 'belong' – a society which is imagined as, in broad terms, culturally homogeneous and unified.

It is long past time to radically question this foundational assumption.

It is, of course, undeniable that Britain has been in recent times a relatively settled society and 'culture'. But as something approaching a nation-state, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (subsequently 'and Northern Ireland') is in fact a relatively recent historical construct, largely a product of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Britain itself was formed out of a series of earlier invasions, conquests and settlements – Celts, Romans, Saxons, Vikings, Normans, Angevins – whose 'traces' are evident in the palimpsest of the national language. The Act of Union linked Scotland, England and Wales into a united kingdom,

but never on terms of cultural equality – a fact constantly obscured by the covert oscillations and surreptitious substitutions between the terms 'Britishness' and 'Englishness' (Davies 1999a).

The Act of Settlement (1701) secured a Protestant ascendancy, drawing the critical symbolic boundary between the Celtic/Catholic and the Anglo-Saxon/Protestant definitions of the nation. Between 1801 (the date of the Act of Union which brokered Ireland into the Union) and Partition in 1922, the national story proved incapable of incorporating 'Irishness' into 'Britishness' or of integrating Irish Catholic migrants into an imagined Englishness. Their culture and presence remains marginalised today.

Though relatively stable, English society has always contained within it profound differences. There were always different ways of being 'English'. It was always fissured along class, gender and regional lines. What came to be known, misleadingly, as 'the British way of life' is really another name for a particular settlement of structured social inequalities. Many of the great achievements which have been retrospectively written into the national lexicon as primordial English virtues – the rule of law, free speech, a fully representative franchise, the rights of combination, the welfare state – were struggled for by some of the English and bitterly resisted by others. Where, one asks, is this deeply ruptured and fractured history, with its interweaving of stability and conflict, in the Heritage's version of the dominant national narrative?

The British Empire was the largest *imperium* of the modern world. The very notion of 'greatness' in Great Britain is inextricably bound up with its imperial destiny. For centuries, its wealth was underpinned, its urban development driven, its agriculture and industry revolutionised, its fortunes as a nation settled, its maritime and commercial hegemony secured, its thirst quenched, its teeth sweetened, its cloth spun, its food spiced, its carriages rubber-wheeled, its bodies adorned, through the imperial connection. Anyone who has been watching the Channel 4 series on *The Slave Trade* or the 'hidden history' of the West India Regiment or the BBC's *The Boer War* will not need reminding how deeply intertwined were the facts of colonisation, slavery and empire with the everyday daily life of all classes and conditions of English men and women. The emblems of Empire do, of course, fitfully appear in the Heritage. However, in general, 'Empire' is increasingly subject to a widespread selective amnesia and disavowal. And when it does appear, it is largely narrated from the viewpoint of the colonisers. Its master narrative is sustained in the scenes, images and the artefacts which testify

> to Britain's success in imposing its will, culture and institutions, and inscribing its civilising mission across the world. This formative strand in the national culture is now re-presented as an external appendage, extrinsic and inorganic to the domestic history and culture of the English social formation.

(...)

> . I have tried to suggest not only *what* but *why* the question of 'The Heritage' is of such timely and critical importance for our folks at this time. 'British' most of us were, at one time – but that was long ago and, besides, as Shakespeare said, 'the wench is dead'. 'English' we cannot be. But tied in our fates and fortunes with 'the others' – while steadfastly refusing to have to *become* 'other' to belong – we do, after all, have a stake, an investment – in this phase of globalisation – in what I might call 'the post-nation': but only if it can be re-imagined, re-invented to include us. That is the bet, the wager, the gamble we are here to discuss.

Document B.

Speech by the Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the British Council annual lecture, July 7 2004

[…] But when we ask what are the core values of Britishness, can we find in them a muscularity and robustness that neither dilutes Britishness and British values to the point they become amorphous nor leaves them so narrowly focused that many patriotic British men and women will feel excluded? Of course, a strong sense of national identity derives from the particular, the special things we cherish. But I think we would all agree that we do not love our country simply because we occupy a plot of land or hold a UK passport but also because that place is home and because that represents values and qualities - and bonds of sentiment and familiarity - we hold dear.

And it is my belief that out of tidal flows of British history - 2000 years of successive waves of invasion, immigration, assimilation and trading partnerships that have created a uniquely rich and diverse culture - certain forces emerge again and again which make up a characteristically British set of values and qualities which, taken together, mean that there is indeed a strong and vibrant Britishness that underpins Britain.

I believe that because these islands - and our maritime and trading traditions - have made us remarkably outward looking and open, this country has fostered a vigorously adaptable society and has given rise to a culture both creative and inventive. But an open and adapting society also needs to be rooted and Britain's roots are on the most solid foundation of all - a passion for liberty anchored in a sense of duty and an intrinsic commitment to tolerance and fair play.

The values and qualities I describe are of course to be found in many other cultures and countries. But when taken together, and as they shape the institutions of our country these values and qualities - being creative, adaptable and outward looking, our belief in liberty, duty and fair play - add up to a distinctive Britishness that has been manifest throughout our history, and shaped it. 'When people discard, ignore or mock the ideals which formed our national character then they no longer exist as a people but only as a crowd', writes Roger Scruton. And I agree with him.

For there is indeed is a golden thread which runs through British history of the individual standing firm for freedom and liberty against tyranny and the arbitrary use of power. It runs from that long ago day in Runnymede in 1215 to the Bill of Rights in 1689 to not just one but four Great Reform Acts within less than a hundred years. And the great tradition of British liberty has, first and foremost, been rooted in the protection of the individual against the arbitrary power of first the monarch and then the state.

But it is a golden thread which has also has twined through it a story of common endeavour in villages, towns and cities - men and women with shared needs and common purposes, united as neighbours and citizens by a strong sense of duty and of fair play.

And their efforts - and that sense of duty and fair play - together produced uniquely British settlements that, from generation to generation, have balanced the rights and responsibilities of individuals, communities and state and led to a deeply engrained British tradition of public service.

[…] And out of that same openness to new ideas and influences, an outward looking internationalism that made us not just the workshop of the world but as a country of merchant adventurers, explorers and missionaries the greatest trading nation the world has ever seen. Many people have made much of the fact that Britain was a set of islands. But unlike some other island nations British history has never been marked by insularity. We are an island that has always looked outwards, been engaged in worldwide trade and been open to new influences - our British qualities that made us see, in David Cannadine's words, the Channel not as a moat but as a highway. An island position that has made us internationalist and outward looking and not - as other islands have become - isolationist and inward looking.

Of course all nations lay claim to uniqueness and exceptionalism and many would choose or emphasise the qualities of the British people in a different way from me. And in highlighting this view of British

history - one which places what I regard as intrinsically British values and qualities at its centre - I do not want to claim moral superiority for Britain nor romanticise the past. And I do not gloss over abuses which also characterised our past. Nor do I claim the values and qualities I have described are not to be found in other nations. But I believe that they have shaped our institutions and together they have been responsible for the best of our past -- creating a distinctive British identity that should make us proud, and not reticent nor apologetic, about our history. But most of all these values and qualities should inform any discussion of the central questions affecting our future.

[…] There are social and cultural reasons too for a new British optimism, a rising British confidence.

We should think of Britain as a Britain discovering anew that its identity was never rooted just in imperial success or simply the authority of its institutions, nor in race or ethnicity.

We should think of a Britain rediscovering the shared values that bind us together. Indeed the ties that today bind us are the same values and qualities that are at the core of our history...the values that should shape our institutions as they adapt, change and modernise to meet and master future challenges.

So standing up for Britain means speaking up for British values and qualities that can inspire, strengthen and unify our country. And we can stop thinking about a post war Britain of decline - the Britain that was - and start thinking about the Britain that we can become: Britain, a great place to grow up in. A Britain believing in itself; A new era of British self confidence; Not just a Britain that is a beacon for economic progress but a Britain proud that because of its values and qualities, progress and justice can advance together, to the benefit of all.

Document C.