

Indoctrinating Mutual Hatred? Teaching British Rule in Ireland

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Abstract

Many European countries share a significant part of their history, with different narratives promoted by each nation-state. The focus of my PhD research is a comparative analysis of textbooks. This paper includes some of the early findings regarding 'British rule in Ireland', from the qualitative analysis of 61 textbooks, mostly from England, but also from Northern Ireland and Ireland. Although textbooks often represent both competing points of views, there are many ways to influence the reader about who can be considered 'us' against the 'others'. The extent of this paper could only aim to cover a few examples of them: omitting 'inconvenient' parts of the relevant history or reducing supporting data, evaluating historic persons with certain bias, creating heavy bias by oversimplifying narratives, not calling out what is morally wrong, and avoiding parallels with similar events that the public considers unacceptable.

Keywords

Otherness, Ireland, Discrimination, Textbooks.

¿Adoctrinamiento del Odio Mutuo? Enseñanza del Dominio Británico en Irlanda

Abstract

Muchos países europeos comparten una parte significativa de su historia, con diferentes narrativas promovidas por cada estado-nación. Esta investigación doctoral se enfoca en un análisis comparativo entre libros de texto. Este texto contiene algunos de los primeros resultados sobre el "Dominio británico en Irlanda", a partir del análisis cualitativo de 61 libros de texto, en su mayoría de Inglaterra, pero también de Irlanda del Norte e Irlanda. Aunque los libros de texto a menudo representan ambos puntos de vista, hay muchas maneras de influir al lector sobre quiénes se pueden considerar "nosotros" frente a los "otros". La extensión de este documento solo podía aspirar a cubrir algunos ejemplos de ellos: omitir partes "inconvenientes" de la historia relevante o reducir los datos que lo corroboran, evaluar a las personas históricas con cierto sesgo, crear un gran sesgo al simplificar en exceso las narrativas, no denunciar lo que es moralmente incorrecto y evitar paralelismos con eventos similares que el público considera inaceptables.

Keywords

Otredad, Irlanda, Discriminación, Libros de texto.

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I. WHY SHOULD WE STUDY HOW HISTORY IS TAUGHT?

National identity is largely based on a proud understanding of past glories; therefore, it is not surprising that events that a given country considers to be its most splendid moment in history can coincide with the deepest tragedies of another. Different nations explain the same events and developments in very different lights. This can lead to identifying other groups of people as 'the enemy'.

The wider population generally comes into contact with History when this subject is taught in primary and secondary school. Therefore, it is essential that children and young adults learn a balanced version of history that teaches them tolerance and respect for the 'other'. A particular challenge is that textbooks often present complex events in a simplified manner to ease the learning process. Most historians know that there are many potential interpretations of historic events, however textbooks may seek to 'clarify' this ambiguity by illustrating the 'good' and the 'bad', conveniently coinciding with ideas of national pride.

As Pérez Garzón explains, governments dedicate much attention to history teaching: the profession of historians was largely born as public servants of nation-states which required specialists to formulate and teach their newly formed identity and thus - not surprisingly - history textbooks especially in the secondary school are still focused on patriotic 19th century content (Pérez Garzón, 2022).

History textbooks have been a relevant field of academic research. Without the aim to provide a holistic summary of the current academic thought about teaching history (there are already many excellent examples for it, for instance in the work of Carretero and his colleagues (Carretero, Lopez, & Rodriguez-Moeno, 2014; Van der Vlies, 2017)), it is important to mention the specialised research centre in Braunschweig (Germany), focused on textbook research: Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, founded in 1975 (<http://www.gei.de/en/home.html>). This research centre has a large library, which has 180,000 volumes of textbooks from over 175 countries plus 9,000 curricula (Georg Eckert Institute, n.d.).

A UNESCO guidebook has also been completed on textbook research, which explains the history of the discipline and the methodology, although we believe it would have been better to include concrete examples of

'dos' and 'don'ts' in order to illustrate which can be considered biased, or on the contrary balanced (Pingel, 2010). As Pingel explains, the origins go back to the Inter-War period, after scientists and politicians were looking for a deeper clue on the origins of the First World War.

A very interesting series has been edited in the late 1920s at the University of Chicago, with 11 different books looking into the 'making of citizens' through so many case studies. One of them is the highly insightful book by Jászi examining the role of education in the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy. It starts with the following quote from Goethe:

[...] Speaking generally, there is something peculiar in national hatred. We always find it strongest and most vehement on the lowest stage of culture. But there is a stage where it totally disappears and where one stands, so to say, *above* the nations and feels the good fortune or distress of his neighbor people as if it had happened to his own... (Jászi, 1929)

There are also several initiatives whose purpose is to improve the multicultural aspect of History education. The Council of Europe launched its Observatory on History Teaching in Europe late 2020, with 17 member states (Council of Europe, 2020). Parallel Histories is a UK charity that first started to focus on aligning Israeli-Palestinian history teaching with the aim to further progress on other topics, like Northern Ireland or the Union between England and Scotland (Parallel Histories. A new way to study conflict, 2021).

Shared memory is not only submitted via history teaching, also via museums. The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is a US-based non-profit organisation connecting over 300 sites in 65 countries (International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, 2021). The European Parliament has set up the House of European History in Brussels in 2017, which 'aims to initiate learning on transnational perspectives across Europe' (House of European History, 2021).

Research methodology of education content mostly relies on textbook review. The focus usually is on understanding which topics are covered by which length, the amount and quality of supporting value content (e.g. images) used (which make the assimilation of the information easier and thus can provide a certain bias), the type of exercises used for students to test their knowledge and -to a lesser degree- the tonality of how a certain event is narrated. A particularly interesting example for instance counts the number of photogra-

phic representations of people of colour fighting for the United Kingdom during the Second World War (Crawford & Foster, 2007, p. 184).

A significant challenge is the selection of the textbooks that form part of the analysis. Researchers often include only a very few books into their research, providing serious limitations to any numerical analysis. As an example, Crawford & Foster analysed 4 United Kingdom textbooks to understand the representation of the British Empire and Commonwealth in the Second World War, focusing only on textbooks published between 2001 and 2004 by major publishers, supporting the Modern World GCSE History course (2007, p.179). Naturally, when the evolution of history teaching over time is the subject matter, more extensive sources are considered: thirty-eight textbooks have been accessed by the same authors to analyse *Textbook Portrayals of British Women During World War II, 1942-2004* (p.148).

Another challenge is the comparison of textbooks among different countries. Not just from the perspective of languages used, but specially because of the need to establish a fact base against which the contents are compared. If a country's textbooks tend to be biased into a specific direction and another country's into a different direction, how can we prove which one is objectively more correct without the need to evaluate extensive source material? Maybe because of this, researchers focusing on history textbooks infrequently investigate how a certain conflicting event has been covered in a specific country versus another.

Of course, there are some examples of comparative reviews, for instance Grindel compares the French, British and German treatment of colonisation in textbooks (usually they refer to it as a 'European' phenomenon, giving examples of other countries) (Grindel, 2012, pp. 96-118).

Ferro explains with some irony in his 'The Use and Abuse of History, Or, How the Past is Taught' how different countries narrate their history, conveniently adjusting their stories to the political agenda. However, he does not directly compare the treatment of the same historic events in different countries. For instance, in the case of Algerian textbooks, he only complains about the lack of the coverage of the good things France did there, he does not examine what French textbooks say about the same events (likely also omitting part of the other narrative). There are some brief examples of indirect comparison, for instance between

Turkey/Persia/Arab countries, or in the case of South Africa -the colonist and the 'black' history- when both narratives are explained, but they are not directly compared (Ferro, 1981).

II. WHY FOCUS ON BRITISH RULE IN IRELAND

A very long shared history exists between Ireland and Great Britain, since the 12th century. It is particularly insightful to observe how history has been taught in both countries, especially as:

- Ireland was the first foreign country that England controlled and many others followed later – we can compare the narratives.
- British rule in Ireland contributed to an armed conflict in Western Europe well into the 20th century.
- After the Brexit Referendum in the United Kingdom, the 'Irish question' resurfaced again in the negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union.
- Nevertheless, sufficient time (a century) has gone by since Partition, so that by now mainstream politicians in Ireland and the United Kingdom promote peaceful mutual understanding. This leads to an additional hypothesis that History education probably has not been as much influenced by politics as it happened in similar situations among other countries.
- There is a specific curriculum in Northern Ireland, different from that of England.
- These countries share a common language and so it is easy to compare texts.

Interestingly, among the many academic papers reviewed, the teaching of the history of British rule in Ireland is not a frequent topic. However, English A-level history textbooks sometimes provide a review of the Irish perspective – with a highly critical narrative:

Yet, such nationalist history is too simple: It highlights the role of nationalist heroes and martyrs, often inspired by the Catholic faith, as the embodiment of the will of the Irish people. It provides a "mythical" interpretation of key events, based on their emotional appeal -the 1798 rebellion and the Easter Rebellion of 1916, for example- to sustain that nationalist fervour. This sort of history reads the past through the eyes of the present, and its purpose is to raise Irish nationalist consciousness and justify the revolutionary tradition. [...] Bradshaw is critical of the false "objectivity" of the revisionists. Yet, Bradshaw has, in turn, been criticised by one senior

historian for abandoning ‘the status of history as a detached scholarly activity’ (Byrne & Adelman, 2016, pp. 12-13)

Although there is also a bit of a distancing from the English perspective, nevertheless, the secondary school student reading the previous and the following paragraph should have no doubts who the authors suggest are the real historians:

To some extent, historians’ outlooks on the Irish question have been determined by their nationality. [...] For English historians, therefore, the Anglo-Irish relationship has formed only a minor part of modern English history. Even when the Irish question has impinged more directly on England, as during the Home Rule crises and the Anglo-Irish War, the attitude of English historians has on the whole been Anglo-centric: Irish affairs are looked at through English eyes and with English concerns in mind. [...] This of course does not mean that all English historians have been unsympathetic in terms of recognising the problems of Ireland and the desire for reform or even the Irish independence (Byrne & Adelman, 2016, pp. 11-12).

We have so far reviewed 61 different textbooks for our ongoing PhD research titled *Indoctrinating mutual hatred? An analysis of secondary school history teaching across European nations with a joint conflicted past*. The focus of the research has so far been on British rule in Ireland and the plan is to extend it at a later stage and carry out a secondary case study for context, comparing the findings with other similar situations. This paper summarises some of the early findings regarding British rule in Ireland, based on textbooks published in the last forty years, which cover the period from the beginning of the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland in the 12th century, up to The Troubles during the second half of the 20th century. A majority of the textbooks I have analysed, fifty, have been published in England and are not specialised in Anglo-Irish history. In addition, there are eleven textbooks dedicated to Anglo-Irish history, two of them from England, seven from Northern Ireland, and two from Ireland. Of course, the above list can and will be further extended as we progress in the research, especially for past textbooks dedicated to Irish history (similar in scope to the eleven mentioned above).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & HISTORY CURRICULUM IN ENGLAND

As in any other example of shared European history, it

is highly possible that historians on both sides of the past conflict have already reached a near consensus on the most plausible narrative of the events. However, if those conclusions have not been transmitted through easily and widely accessible materials, public opinion can still perceive the other side as ‘the enemy’. The question this paper deals with therefore is not what the consensus among historians is, but what is being explained to the wider population through history education.

In case of England, it is important to know the structure of secondary school history education in order to understand the importance of each of the different stages for a wide spectrum of students (and future citizens) in assimilating the knowledge:

Age group 11-14 (Key Stage 3 or KS3). Learning history is compulsory and the curriculum is more standardised. For each publisher only one version of textbooks covers the course of history, thus schools only have to choose the publisher. The National Curriculum defines a minimum content which should be explained; however, the specific examples provided within the National Curriculum are not mandatory. Such non-statutory examples related to Irish history are:

[...] the Elizabethan religious settlement and conflict with Catholics (including Scotland, Spain and Ireland), [...]
the Interregnum (including Cromwell in Ireland), [...]
Ireland and Home Rule... (Department for Education, UK, 2013).

Although these examples are not mandatory, they are frequently covered in textbooks. Other topics related to Irish history are found more rarely in KS3 teaching materials, the Great Famine being one of the most frequent exceptions.

Age group 14-16 (GCSE). There were 580,850 students taking GCSE exams in England in 2019 out of a population of 607,496 in the same age group. 261,535 of them studied History: 45% of students taking GCSEs and 43% of the population (Ofqual, UK, n.d.) (Office of National Statistics, UK, 2020). As history is not a compulsory subject, schools can choose among many topics and textbooks.

Age group 16-18. (A-level). Few pupils actually choose to learn history during their A-level. In 2019 in England, 47,100 students took A-level history exams

among 245,300 students, a 19% share. However, compared with the population of 618,873 aged 18 in England, a mere 8% (Ofqual, UK, 2019) (Office of National Statistics, UK, 2020). History teaching at A-level offers a wide range of topics from which schools can choose from. For instance, Pearson has forty different books under the Edexcel exam board, many of them covering specific topics like *The making of modern Russia, 1855-1991* or *Civil rights and race relations in the USA, 1850-2009* (Pearson Education Limited, 2017).

Therefore, specific A-level history textbooks covering Anglo-Irish history can only impact a very small segment of the population. At GCSE the potential influence is wider, however, it is at KS3 when the vast majority of pupils will hear for the last time about Anglo-Irish history during their studies.

Thus, in order to analyse the impact of History education in the consciousness of the wider English population about British rule in Ireland, we need to focus more on the KS3 textbooks and on non-Ireland focused GCSE topics. Therefore, we performed a detailed quantitative analysis of the content of the 50 above mentioned textbooks that do not focus on (Anglo-)Irish history.

In order to do that, we prepared upfront a list of 45 different historical events related to British rule in Ireland where it could be argued that someone in England should learn about them in order to obtain a balanced view of this question.

This list of 45 events itself has been based on a much longer list of 168 events, which we have collected in an iterative process reading the 50+11 above-mentioned textbooks and also accessing other materials about Irish history. The compiling of this longer list of 168 events initially caused some methodological doubts (e.g. how to make sure that we represent all relevant points of view in an objective manner), however as the study of the 50+11 textbooks progressed, we realised that it is easier than expected. This was because we have not found such a dichotomy in the views represented as the ones that could be found in other examples of countries with a disputed joint past. There was not much divergence among history textbooks in the same country and across the analysed countries about the factual description of historic events – if they have been included in the given textbook. The differences were rather related to what historical events are covered in each of them and of course there are different valua-

tions of the historic events depending on specific points of view. The forty-five events have been chosen out of the 168 based on their significance to explain the joint Anglo-Irish history. As one can imagine, the list feels very short to anyone knowing Irish history in depth, however, only a very few would expect that English secondary school students could assimilate a longer curriculum than this.

Therefore, as a next step, for the quantitative research we have looked into how many of the fifty non-Ireland-specific British textbooks mention Ireland-related events that took place during these centuries, based on the shorter list of forty-five events. Many textbooks only cover part of the period, thus for any given topic, the most frequent answer is that the specific period the event took place was out of scope. Thus, only the in-scope periods have been considered. The results of this quantitative research are too extensive to be included in this paper, however, it is interesting to observe that events which - with the current moral standards - do not show the UK at its best are frequently omitted (e.g. Penal Laws, impact of the Great Famine in deaths and emigration).

A second type of analysis has also been prepared in order to distil qualitative insights about the tonality of the coverage of the relevant 168 events in the 50+11 textbooks. We will focus on some of these early findings in the following pages of this paper.

Apart from secondary school textbooks, an additional relevant source is the official history taught in preparation for citizenship tests. This is the version of history that new citizens have to learn. In the year ending June 2019, there were 153,462 individuals who were awarded British citizenship, 34,273 of whom were children, thus leaving 119,189 adults who obtained their British nationality (Government of the United Kingdom, n.d.) after learning a version of history from the official handbook titled *Life in the United Kingdom. A Guide for New Residents*, issued by the Home Office (Home Office, UK, 2019).

IV. EXAMPLES OF BIAS DIFFERENTIATING 'US' VS 'THEM'

I. DEFINING IDENTITY: THE MEANING OF BRITISH

The current status of 'UK' and 'British' has been defined in the following way in the above handbook:

The official name of the country is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

‘Great Britain’ refers only to England, Scotland and Wales, not to Northern Ireland. The words ‘Britain’, ‘British Isles’ or ‘British’, however, are used in this book to refer to everyone in the UK (Home Office, UK, 2019, p. 13).

As Northern Ireland is on the same island as the Republic of Ireland, if Northern Ireland forms part of the ‘British Isles’, logically the same should apply to the Republic of Ireland.

From 1801 until partition, the official name of the country was the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. ‘British Isles’ clearly referred to the entirety of both Great Britain and Ireland: Victorian maps showing the British Empire usually refer to the UK as ‘British Islands’ (Fowke, 2002, p. 18; Harnett, 1992, p. 24).

Some textbooks refer to the whole of Ireland forming part of Great Britain, for example: ‘In the early years covered by this book, Ireland, Scotland and Wales formed with England what was known - until the time of the Irish separation - as Great Britain’ (Martell, 1988, p. 8).

Although the definition of ‘British’ and ‘Irish’ are extremely complex matters -and it differs today from what it was in the 19th century-, ‘British’ should also include some coverage of ‘Irish’ especially in history textbooks. Thus, when someone is reading a textbook titled *Understanding History: Britain in the wider world, Roman times – Present* (Riley, et. al., 2019), one could reasonably expect that there should be some coverage of what happened in Ireland during the shared part of the history. However, we will see in the next point that it is not always the case.

From a ‘British’ perspective, ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ in relation to Ireland changed its definition over time. The Anglo-Normans who invaded Ireland in the 12th century became Anglo-Irish or Old English after the Reformation as many of them kept their Roman Catholic faith and lost influence to the Protestant Ascendency (Byrne & Adelman, 2016, pp. 14-15; Hayes, 2009, pp. 110-112). ‘Papist’ became the synonym of ‘them’ and the introduction of the Penal Laws ensured that ‘they’ (the ‘native’ Irish and Anglo-Irish) were discriminated against (Hodge, 2011, p. 116). Even at the end of the 19th century, the unionist slogan against autonomy was ‘Home Rule is Rome Rule’ (Hayes, 2009, p. 191).

Religious labelling is still used in British textbooks to

define the ‘other’ - the Catholics, an example (Riley, et. al., 2019, pp. 78-79):

1588. Catholic Spain sent a fleet of ships to invade England. The Spanish Armada was defeated and England remained a Protestant nation.

1605. Gunpowder plot. Catholic plotters attempted to blow up Parliament but were arrested before they could do so.

1688. The ‘Glorious Revolution’. The Catholic monarch, James II, was forced to give up his throne. Parliament invited James’s Protestant daughter (Mary) and her husband (William) to rule. It placed limits on the power of the monarchy.

Therefore, the definition of ‘us’ can be perceived as ambiguous, ranging from those of English origin and those who were Protestants on the British Isles to those who share the same country today and with a further extension it could also include the inhabitants in the Commonwealth member states.

2. INFLUENCING IDENTITY: WHAT PARTS OF HISTORY ARE TAUGHT AND WHAT IS BEING OMITTED

Eight centuries of English and later British rule in Ireland provide us with a long list of events, which from an ‘Irish’ point of view, caused significant suffering and injustice. As Ireland’s share in the population of the United Kingdom reached 31% by 1841¹ (Hill & Wright, 1981, p. 89), one could reasonably expect that most of these events should also be relevant for history teaching in England. However, Ireland related events are frequently a side-note in English textbooks, for instance the extent to which the Great Famine is treated.

As an example, in *Understanding history: Britain in the wider world, Roman times – Present* (Riley, et. al., 2019) the only 2 mentions of Ireland in 258 pages are on page 111: the fact that Charles I was also crowned King of Ireland and that in 1641 a ‘Catholic rebellion began in Ireland’. Children reading this book would not know if and why the country is called the United Kingdom, and how it came together. Even if it explains the 13th century English conquest of Wales and the wars against the Scottish and later the 1707 Act of Union with Scotland, it misses any mention of the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland, the Tudor conquest, the plantations, the Act of Union with

1. Ireland’s population was 8.175m, Scotland’s 2.620m, and England’s and Wales’ together 15.914m.

Ireland of 1801, and the Partition of 1921, which created the current state they live in.

Interestingly, the book dedicates two pages (102-103) to ‘Elizabethan adventures’, including attempts to colonise America, however, there is no mention of the only successful colonisation that England carried out during this time, which was in Ireland. Similarly, there are long sections dedicated to the case studies of colonisation of Australia (pp. 160-167) and India (pp. 178-185), but nothing is mentioned of England’s longest held colony: Ireland.

Pages 230-233 explain different forms of discrimination in Britain, including against women, black and minority ethnic groups, gay people and disabled people, from 1960 to the present. However, it does not include anything about the discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland. Page 234 tells us about the impact of civil rights movements in the US in the 1950s and 60s - but nothing about their equivalent in Northern Ireland.

Referring back to the changing definition of ‘us’: there could be a perception as if the ‘Native’ Irish Catholics who live now in the Republic of Ireland never really formed part of ‘us’, even less than the current Commonwealth member states, thus ‘their’ history is not relevant for teaching ‘ours’. Or, that ‘we’ prefer to forget the inconvenient past if the ‘others’ we discriminated against did not become part of ‘us’.

3. INFLUENCING IDENTITY: HOW MUCH SUPPORTING DATA IS PRESENTED

One of the most surprising aspects of British rule in Ireland is the imposition of the so-called Penal Laws. These were laws that during the 18th century discriminated against Catholics and to a much lesser extent against Non-Conformist (non-Anglican) Protestants. How much is written about the content of these laws could have a deep impact on a student’s understanding of Irish history.

Let us compare 2 different KS3 textbooks in Northern Ireland:

A) *History for NI Key Stage 3, Ireland 1500-1900* (Dean, Stafford, & Thompson, 2008):

In 1691, the Penal Laws were passed in Ireland against two groups of people who did not attend the new Protestant Church - the Catholics and Presbyterians. These laws prevented them from certain jobs, having the vote and owning land. These

laws eventually helped to create a new ruling group in Ireland known as the Protestant Ascendancy (p. 11)

These laws prevented Catholics from practising their religion and from having a say in who ran the country (p. 43)

B) *History in close-up: The age of discovery* (Hodge, 2011, p. 116):

The Penal Laws. (...) These laws had two main purposes:

- (a) To exclude all those who remained Catholic from:
 - (i) the right to carry arms (weapons)
 - (ii) all professions except the medical
 - (iii) political power at local and national level
 - (iv) the possession of landed property except in a short-term leasehold basis
 - (v) all education except that which endeavoured to convert them to Protestantism
 - (vi) owning a horse worth more than GBP 5
- (b) By means of these laws, to encourage Irish Catholics, especially the landowning class, to convert to the Protestant religion. (...)

Catholics were not the only religious group to suffer. Presbyterians discovered that they were also to be denied many rights. Their ministers could preach freely but could not perform marriage ceremonies. In 1704 Presbyterians were also banned from town councils and from holding other official positions.

Someone reading the second text will have a deeper understanding of what happened, what impact it caused and that the impact was different for Catholics and for Non-Conformists, especially in terms of land ownership - leading to the reduction of the share of land owned in Ireland by Catholics to around 5%: ‘By controlling landownership in particular, the Penal Laws were singly important in promoting a widening gulf between the religions in Ireland because land was the main source of power and prosperity’ (Kidson, 2016, p. 66).

4. INFLUENCING IDENTITY: EVALUATION OF HISTORIC PERSONS

Daniel O’Connell is widely being considered one of the greatest Irishmen of all times (one of the main streets of Dublin being named after him). He led the process which achieved Catholic Emancipation (the right to sit in Westminster without taking an oath against Catholic

beliefs) in the United Kingdom in 1829. Of course, interpretations can diverge, however one can argue that the summary below is not sympathetic to him:

Daniel O'Connell undoubtedly had a great impact on the course of Irish history. However, his right to the title 'the Liberator' is very questionable. It rests entirely on his role in bringing about Catholic Emancipation in 1829. In reality, Emancipation was 'liberating' only for the minority of Roman Catholic men who could meet the property qualifications for election to parliament and had the leisure and means to support themselves as MPs. (...) But O'Connell was essentially an elite politician. He made no effort to resist or revise the significant increase in voting qualifications in Ireland introduced in 1829 and maintained by the 1832 Reform Act (Byrne & Adelman, 2016, p. 60)

The above text diminishes the importance of Catholic Emancipation stating that it only covered the rich, however with this logic there was no parliamentary democracy in the UK at all. After Catholic Emancipation, Protestants had the same rules to become part of the electorate.

Regarding the reduction of the electorate, O'Connell could have done little against it. The increase of property qualification thresholds was the only way the government could keep the election results under certain control, given that Catholics were usually poorer than Protestants (due to the centuries-long discrimination). In another textbook's narrative: 'So as to curtail the political danger from Ireland, the Irish county voting qualification was raised from forty shillings to ten pounds. This cut the number of voters from 216,000 to 37,000 and left the electorate almost wholly Protestant' (Catterall, 1994, p. 64).

Not surprisingly, when in 1884 the Third Reform Act extended voting rights further, using the same rules in the whole of the UK, the pro-'Home Rule' Irish Parliamentary Party won all seats in the south except for Trinity College Dublin (which used to be an only Protestant university) (Byrne & Adelman, 2016, pp. 114-118).

5. INFLUENCING IDENTITY: HEAVILY BIASED INTERPRETATION

A heavily biased representation of the past rarely appears in recent textbooks, where nearly all aim to show several primary and secondary sources reflecting both sides' views. Nevertheless, the official handbook

Life in the United Kingdom. A Guide for New Residents (Home Office, UK, 2019, p. 55) refers to the partition of Ireland in surprising terms. Maybe driven by the need for extreme simplification, after 15 lines explaining how the desire of Home Rule in Ireland led to Protestant resistance and then to the Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish Treaty and Partition, the following text illustrates what happened after:

There were people in both parts of Ireland who disagreed with the split between the North and the South. They still wanted Ireland to be an independent country. Years of disagreement led to a terror campaign in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. The conflict between those wishing for full Irish independence and those wishing to remain loyal to the British government is often referred to as 'the Troubles'.

The last sentence clearly positions the conflict as something that has been created between those who want independence and those who want to remain loyal. Both parts of this positioning can be heavily debated as we will see in some examples below.

On the one hand, the 'Nationalist' side at the beginning of the Troubles was not represented by those who wanted independence, but by those who fought peacefully for civil rights in Northern Ireland. The Troubles started in 1968-69 when a number of marches organised by NICRA (Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association) had been attacked by Unionists. It is hard to find recent textbooks from Northern Ireland that do not recognise the pacific aims of NICRA and that they were not against partition, an example:

They did not want to end partition or to bring down the state of Northern Ireland. Instead they wanted to work to reform the government and abolish discrimination. Many Protestants who had been formerly unaware of discrimination supported the movement. (Dean, Kelly, & Taggart, 2009, p. 86)

There is no mention in the text provided by the Home Office of the fact that there was a sectarian political system in Northern Ireland which openly discriminated against Catholics and which existed well into the second part of the 20th century until the civil rights movement achieved some of its objectives.

On the other hand, it is also highly debatable whether the other side of the conflict was represented by those 'wishing to remain loyal to the British government' – being loyal to a government also implies that such a

government agrees to the fact of loyalty. The following quote refers to the reaction of the British Prime Minister when a Unionist strike in Northern Ireland was bringing down the first power-sharing government in 1974.

Source F. Adapted excerpt from British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, speaking about the 1974 UWC strike in a speech broadcast on television, 25 May 1974. [The strike is] a deliberate attempt to bring down the whole constitution of Northern Ireland ... The people on this side of the water ... have seen their sons spat upon and murdered. They have seen the taxes ... going to Northern Ireland. They see property destroyed by evil violence and are asked to pick up the bill for rebuilding it. Yet people who benefit from this now defy Westminster, claiming to act as if they were an elected government, spending their lives sponging on Westminster and British democracy and then fighting democratic methods. Who do these people think they are? (Madden & Clare, 2017, p. 169).

The reference to the conflict as if it was ‘between those wishing for full Irish independence and those wishing to remain loyal to the British government’ could easily lead to the identification of the reader with one side (the ‘loyal’ side) against the ‘others’, without knowing what has really happened.

6. WHAT ELSE SHOULD BE DONE: CALLING OUT WHAT IS MORALLY WRONG

As described in the previous section, most textbooks show several primary and secondary sources reflecting both sides’ views. This is especially so in the textbooks of Northern Ireland written in the last decade, which aim to represent a balanced picture, so that pupils of both communities can use the textbook. However, this aim of equidistance to both views cannot be always correct. There are tragic events in history that students have to learn were morally wrong (e.g. Holocaust, Apartheid).

Without the aim to directly compare the above tragic events with those that took place in Ireland, some examples can be found in textbooks where the authors should call out if one side’s opinion is obviously not acceptable in the eyes of today’s society. For example, a Northern Irish textbook (Dean, Stafford, & Thompson, 2008, p. 37) refers to a mural in West Belfast

depicting Cromwellian soldiers in the process of slaughtering a Catholic, with the following text:

Source 14. A mural of Shankill Parade, West Belfast, 2002. [Inscription on the mural:] Oliver Cromwell. Born 1599. Died 1658. Lieutenant General. Lord Protector Defender of the Protestant Faith. Catholicism is more than a religion. It is a political power therefore I am led to believe there will be no peace in Ireland until the Catholic Church is crushed. Oliver Cromwell. Our clergy persecuted and our Protestant churches desecrated also our Protestant people slaughtered in their thousands. Oliver Cromwell.

The textbook evaluates this source in the following way:

This is a mural painted in 2002 on Shankill Parade in Belfast. The mural commemorates the life of Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell is viewed as a hero for his role as defender of the Protestant faith and his conquest of rebellious Catholic Ireland in 1649-52. The mural shows four of Cromwell’s New Model Army (Roundheads) putting to death a native Irish rebel.

Even if there are questions asked to the students about the value of the above source from the perspective of a historian, there is no part of the textbook that would in any way criticise the existence of this mural celebrating the killing of a Catholic by Protestants. If the book passes a moral judgement against ‘rebellious Catholic Ireland’, it should at least do the same about ethnic and religious cleansing.

7. WHAT ELSE SHOULD BE DONE: DRAWING PARALLELS WITH SIMILAR EVENTS

A particular aspect of teaching British rule in Ireland is the use of euphemistic terms. The process of English colonisation of Ireland is often called differently, insisting that these were very different concepts.

In a Northern Irish textbook (Dean, Stafford, & Thompson, 2008, pp. 94-95) the following definitions are given: ‘Colony. A country or piece of land which is taken and ruled by another state [...] Plantation. The policy of putting settlers in a land in order to control it’. After a whole chapter dedicated to the process of colonisation in the Americas on pages 16-25, in the same book the following text is used to explain what the Ulster plantation was: ‘Mary I and Elizabeth I used a policy of plantation to try to control Ireland. Think about the process of planting something and explain what they were hoping to achieve’ (p. 27).

Another book for GCSE explains the concept more outspokenly: 'English Protestant settlers began to colonise Ireland in so-called <Plantations>' (Royle, 2016, p. 7).

However, English history textbooks only seldom include a direct comparison with other colonial confrontations and with the aim for self-determination of other nations. A rare example from 1981 (Hill & Wright, 1981, p. 170):

The government's reply was to declare the [Land] League illegal and to imprison its other leaders. At once there was an increase in violence in Ireland encouraged by a rash of newly formed secret societies. It was to become a familiar pattern for Britain's modern wars of colonial liberation. To imprison nationalist leaders like Parnell and, in the twentieth century, Gandhi, Kenyatta and Nkomo, usually meant the removal of restraint and the cutting of channels of communication, a lesson which successive governments found it hard to learn.

It is understandable that the situation in Northern Ireland requires to balance many sensitivities in a textbook aimed to be shared across communities, however, it is questionable if it will be achieved by not calling things by its name. Both the 'plantations' in Ireland and the colonisation in North America combine achievements and shameful past, and children should learn about both. The shameful aspects of the 'plantations' in Ireland are similarly unacceptable as the treatment of native Americans.

V. CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, textbook research should be a highly relevant topic for historians. Many European countries share a significant part of their history, with different narratives promoted by each nation-state. Not many attempts have been made to carry out a comparative analysis between textbooks explaining each of the two competing points of view, which is the focus of my ongoing PhD research. The first example I analysed is the treatment of British rule in Ireland. This paper contained some of the early findings from the qualitative analysis of 61 textbooks, mostly from England, but also from Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Maybe unsurprisingly, textbooks are not as objective as one may think. Although textbooks often represent both competing points of views, there are many ways to influence the reader about who can be considered 'us' against the 'others'. The extent of this paper could only aim to cover a few examples of them:

- Omitting 'inconvenient' parts of the relevant history or reducing supporting data.
- Evaluating historic persons with certain bias.
- Creating heavy bias by oversimplifying narratives.
- Not calling out what is morally wrong and avoiding parallels with similar events that the public considers unacceptable.

More detailed research is needed to look into certain patterns: by year of publication, by publisher, by age group and by which part of the UK it is being used. Also, a comparison with textbooks in the Republic of Ireland will be highly relevant.

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