

Joseph Conrad (“An Outpost of Progress“)

- 1857 born in "Congress Kingdom" of Poland as son of aristocrats
- father was exiled from Poland in 1861 (subversive political activities)
- when he was twelve both his parents had died; was brought up by his uncle
- 1874 left Poland to join a French ship in Marseilles; sailed on the oceans for the next 20 years
- 1886 became English citizen
- remains an outsider because of his accent
- 1890 commands a river steamer in Belgian Congo for three months, a "bestly" experience he never recovered from; left completely disillusioned
- 1896 married and stayed in the south-east of England
- died in 1924
- themes: displacement, professional defeat and social insecurity; cruel treatment of natives by the whites ("Heart of Darkness"; "Outpost ...")

William Somerset Maugham (“The force of circumstances“)

- 1874 born in Paris
- Son of a lawyer → also for him a career as a lawyer was set up by way of family tradition
- Both parents died when he was ten → sent to England to be raised by an uncle
- First studied philosophy in Heidelberg, then medicine in London
- Worked in slums
- Wrote his first novel because of his experiences in the slums
- His following stories are characterized by early experiences of exile, unhappy life at school (for example because of his stammer) and his training as a doctor
- He was homosexual, but feared the public opinion
- Liked to travel → he took the experiences of his travels for his stories
- 1930 he was the highest-paid author in the world
- Died in 1965

George Orwell (“Shooting an elephant“)

- Born as Eric Arthur Blair in 1903 in India
- His family belongs to the middle class
- 1907 returned to England with mother and sister
- Goes to Eton College, a famous English public school
- Joined the Indian Imperial Police in 1922
- 1928 Blair decided to live among the poor of London and Paris for a time
- Changed his name to George Orwell because that is an ordinary English name
- 1936 wrote “Shooting an elephant”
- 1950 he died

Doris Lessing ("The second hut")

- 1919 born in Persia (now Iran) as Doris May Tayler
- both of her parents were British
- father (crippled in World War I) was a clerk in the Imperial Bank of Persia
- mother was a nurse.
- 1925 family moved to the British colony in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)
- Doris's mother adapted to the rough life in the settlement; her father did not
- childhood a mixture of pleasure and pain
- maize farming failed; they stayed very poor (but not as poor as the Afrikaners)
- once burned down a hut "just to see what would happen"
- was married twice and left both her husbands
- joined the communist party and left it again
- 1949 moved to London and started her career as professional writer
- themes: politics of race and gender;
the role of the family and the individual in society

Risipuram Krishnaswami Narayan (“A Horse and two Goats”)

- 1906 born in Madras (South India)
- son of a middle-class Brahmin family (Brahmin = highest caste in Hindu society)
- attended missionary school and was taught English there
- failed in all his jobs: academic career, railroad official and bank clerk, teaching
- started to write
- India's greatest writer in English
- created the fictional town of Malgudi in which many of his stories take place
- died in 2001

Chinua Achebe (“Dead men’s path”)

- 1930 born in Ogidi, Eastern Nigeria
- His father was a missionary teacher
- Albert Chinualumogu Achebe (later rejected his British name)
- His family was Christian and Igbo (tribe religion)
- Won scholarship and studied English, history and theology
- Wrote “Dead men’s path” in 1953, the year he graduated
- Was angry about the way European represented African in fiction (wrote it down)
- In his novels he deals with the clash between tradition and colonial power
- 1990 car accident, paralyzed from the waist down

Ngugi wa Thiong’o (“Meeting in the dark”)

- Born as James Ngugi in Kamiriithu, Kenya
- Was the 5th child
- Lived in Kenya (under British rule)
- Christian “grew up in two groups”: Africa/Western culture
- Nearly his whole family was killed
- “Weep not, child” was his first novel in English to be published by an African Author → later he wrote in his native language
- 1977 came into prison because of his criticism of policies
- After prison he taught at the University of Bayreuth in Germany, at the University of Auckland (New Zealand) and at several renowned American universities
- Themes: conflict between the individual and the community

Muriel Spark (“The Black Madonna”)

- Born 1918 as Muriel Sarah Camberg in Edinburgh
- daughter of a Jewish father and Protestant mother
- began to write poetry at the age of nine
- 1937 sailed to Africa and married Sydney Spark (school teacher in Northern Rhodesia); marriage ended in divorce
- came back to Britain in 1944
- worked for the MI6 (British secret service)
- 1954 converted to Catholicism (central event in her life)
- moved to New York, Rome, Tuscany
- died in 2006
- talent in black humour, allegory and satire; often biographical works

Quaisra Sharaz (“A pair of jeans”)

- Born 1958 in Pakistan
- At the age of nine she moved to England
- Studied English and Classical Civilization
- She is a teacher, teacher trainer, college inspector and active member of the Pakistani community
- She is living in two cultures which she explores in every project (writing, TV-scripts, radio, novels)
- Her first novel was “The holy woman”

Hanif Kureishi (“My son the fanatic”)

- Born 1954 in Bromley, England
- Father: Pakistani / mother: English
- Was discriminated and beaten up in school
- Worked as playwright, screenwriter, novelist and film-maker
- Topics: racial tensions, cultural divisions, racially mixed relationships, homosexuality, fanaticism
- “My son the fanatic” is the reaction to the “fatwa” against Mr. Rushdie
- Most successful British-born author

Salman Rushdie (“Good advice is rarer than rubies”)

- Born in Bombay 1947
- Middle-class Muslim family
- He studied in England and lived in Pakistan
- Criticises Islam (1988) with one of his stories → “fatwa”: everybody was allowed to kill him (it was religiously legitimated)
- 1990 he apologized and confirmed his respect for the Islam
- Ayatollah Khomeini (Iran’s spiritual leader) took back the “fatwa”