Internal Colonialism
and the British Novel

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In the wake of recent studies of British national cultural forma-
tions and, increasingly, their relationship to colonial practices,
the concept of internal colonialism has garnered increased atten-
tion. Defined in Michael Hechter's seminal study as "the political
incorporation of culturally distinct groups by the core," internal co-
lonialism addresses the process by which, in the crucible of nation
building and its organization of a competitive domestic economy, a
national core expands, subsuming "peripheral" geographic zones.[1]
This territorial annexation, however, also propels a political and
cultural exclusion. In Hechter's initial application of the concept
to Britain's "Celtic periphery," he demonstrates the Anglo-British
core's systematic economic underdevelopment of Wales, Scotland,
and Ireland.[2] Often referred to as the "training ground" for the re-
pressive practices of its overseas empire, Britain's internal colonies
were subject to similar methods of political control and manoeuvres
of cultural suppression and appropriation.[3] Attention to the political
and cultural dynamics of internal colonialism has important implica-
tions for the ways in which we read eighteenth-century fiction, and a

1 Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (Berke-
  ley: California University Press, 1975), p. 32.

2 Linda Colley, however, argues convincingly that his characterization of the Celtic fringe as
  homogeneous flattens out important distinctions. *Britons: Forging the Nation* (New Haven:
  Yale University Press, 1991), p. 12.

3 See Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987);
  and Sue Zemka, *Victorian Testaments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

number of ground-breaking recent studies, from Katie Trumpener's
Bardic Nationalism to Leith Davis's *Acts of Union,* have undertaken ana-
lyses of the role internal colonialism has played in shaping British
literary production.[4] The three essays that follow explore the signi-
ficance of internal colonialism, particularly in the Scottish context,
for understanding the novel form and specific novels of the mid-
eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries.

These studies of internal colonialism and the novel supplement
the excellent work already carried out from a postcolonial perspect-
ive interested in rereading British cultural productions for the colo-
nial relationships to which they overtly or tacitly refer. If the territ-
orial expropriation and regional underdevelopment of internal co-
lonialism resemble the techniques of imperial domination, the pro-
motion of such activities within expanding national borders throws
the instability of the inside/outside binary opposition so crucial to
nationalist discourse into particularly high relief. Mary Jean Corbett
has pointed to the ways an internal colonial approach reveals the
"otherness even of ... putative insiders in a British context."[5] And,
as Eva Cherniavsky writes, the "internalization of 'extra-territorial'
spaces and extroversion of colonized peoples ... is ... the figure of
bourgeois culture delimited not at its periphery, but at its center."[6]
The fault lines of modern bourgeois national culture are most appar-
ent in the internal colonial relationship because, considered "other"
in the interest of legitimating their political and economic domina-
tion, the internally colonized must, perversely, be seen as leaving the
continuity of the national culture intact.

The three essays of this cluster, which pursue the tensions revealed
in the novel specifically as a national form, reconsider novels—and

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4 Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and British Empire* (Princeton: Prin-
   ceton University Press, 1997); Leith Davis, *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation
   of the British Nation 1707–1830* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). See also the spe-
   cial issue on Scott, Scotland, and Romantic Nationalism, *Studies in Romanticism* 40 (2001);
   James Buzard, "Translation and Tourism: Scott's *Waverley* and the Rendering of Culture,"
   Yale Journal of Criticism 8 (1995), 31–59; Ina Ferris, "Translation form the Borders: Encoun-
   ters and Recalcitrance in *Waverley* and *Clan-Albion, Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 9 (1997), 203–
   22; Janet Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge:
   Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Mary Jean Corbett, *Allegories of Union* (Cambridge:
   Cambridge University Press, 2000).

5 Mary Jean Corbett, "Another Tale to Tell: Postcolonial Theory and the Case of *Castle Rack-
   rent,*" *Criticism* 36 (1994), 398.

6 Eva Cherniavsky, "Subaltern Studies in a U.S. Frame," *Boundary* 2, 23 (1996), 86.

their textual and extra-textual contexts—in the period of a coterminous "rise" of nations and novels in Britain in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They consider and question the reasons why novels have enjoyed a pride of place in analyses of the literary production of the nation. Conventional understandings of the novel as national form, for instance, have perceived the mixed character of the novel, its status as a "hybrid" form, as arising simultaneously with, and being reflective of, the equally heterogeneous yet unified entity of the nation. As Timothy Brennan writes, "It was the novel that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the 'one, yet many' of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles."[7] This analysis draws upon Bakhtin's theory of the novel, in which he asserts that the "multiplicity of social voices ... the movement of a theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization—this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel."[8] Brennan's reading views the heteroglossia of the novel form as uniquely capable of representing the various and disparate social groups of the nation, locating them as distinct constituent elements of the whole nation. Thus, novels distinguish, define, and then contain diverse constituencies, such as men and women, sexually normative and deviant, and dominant and dominated ethnic groups under the sign of the nation.

In highlighting the uneven power relations behind the *e pluribus unum* logic of national identity, exposing a troubling heterogeneity at the heart of national cultural formations, and illuminating the erasure of struggle behind the "out of many one" formulation of nationalist rhetoric, these essays question whether "nation" is the most accurate term for understanding the modern production of textual cultures and subjectivities. While work on the cultural formations of nationalism has often sought to understand the ways in which those formations have facilitated a unitary national consciousness among diverse peoples, exploration of the internal colonial dynamics at work within national contexts provides a critical strategy for

7 Timothy Brennan, "The National Longing for Form," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 49.

8 Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), p. 263.

highlighting the discontinuities of national space, as well as the rup-
tures which inhere within national subjects. These essays open the
field of inquiry beyond the national to perceive the ways in which
global relationships help both to produce modern nations and to
deepen divisions within them. They thereby help to revise the in-
stitution of English studies as they reconfigure the very terms upon
which we might think about fiction writing and collective cultural
identities. This is an especially important task, for while we have
come to recognize that the notion of the nation as a cultural body
and the idea of "the best" monolingual literary texts as a national
canon emerged simultaneously, we have yet to disconnect literary
studies from national paradigms in most disciplinary—particularly
pedagogical—contexts.

In pointing to novelistic negotiations of internal colonialism, the
essays reorient the study of novels to render transparent the various
and conflicting agendas of the novels in the constitution of national
subjects. Each essay deals with moments at which national bound-
aries and novelistic conventions—themselves limits or boundaries—
fail to remain homologous. The blurred bounds between "nation"
and "colony" and "inside" and "outside" to which the authors' fo-
cus on internal colonialism calls attention illustrate the continual
displacement and pluralization of the "centre" of national cultural
production. In response to a pluralist vision of heteroglossia, these
essays recall V.N. Volosinov's modification of that vision, as he ar-
gues that heteroglossia is underwritten by persistent and often fierce
contestation.[9] As they reject a purely nationalist paradigm, these es-
says emphasize the hierarchical unevenness not simply contained by
but also produced within national borders.

Immanuel Wallerstein, the guiding spirit of much internal co-
lonial theory, has long maintained the seemingly counter-intuitive
proposition that the consolidation of different regions into a single
national block intensifies rather than eradicates internal divisions.
He suggests that "incorporation involved the integration of the pro-
duction sphere into the commodity chains of the capitalist world-
economy and this ... require[d] ... the establishment of larger units
of economic decision making ... and the increased coercion of the

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9 V.N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. L. Matejka and I. Titunik
   (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

labor force."[10] These essays take as their point of departure the theory of internal colonialism's assertion that global power relations transform space, creating spatial hierarchies and producing specific, historical forms of cognitive mapping. The value of this attention to spatial reorientation is not in a recovery of marginalized spaces and their cultures. Rather, it is in the insistence that, in order to understand fully the spatial hierarchies internal to each nation, we must reinsert the seemingly discrete unit of the nation and its internal workings and unevenness into a global economic system. Thus, these essays start with the premise that no individual social unit or transaction is comprehensible outside of what Peter Womack has called the "extended series of linked production processes through which capital passes in its drive to increase itself."[11] As Britain aimed to increase its national free-trade zone (which, with the incorporation of Scotland, formed the largest free-trade zone in Western Europe), it did not simply confront and integrate divergent Celtic regions and their particular processes of production into the nation. Instead, the very process of their integration, made necessary by global economic competition, led to the core's "developing the underdevelopment," in Wallerstein's words, of those regions. The distinct form those peripheral spaces took—and the distinct form represented in novels—does not reflect an indigenous pocket prior to British national development. Instead, the status of these peripheries functions as a sign of the larger web of the world economy and the place made for them within it, in part through their encodings within novels.

Resituating the nation and the unevenness of the regions within an international network of commodity production has major repercussions for our understanding of novelistic representations of these spatial, regional concerns. The essays chart fiction's role in this process of peripheralization, with special attention to its production of the spatial hierarchies of a global world system. They also track the responses of novels to the shifts in figurative and literal terrains caused by those processes. In *Bardic Nationalism*, Trumpener, speaking of British novels of the 1790s to 1820s, points out that

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10 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World Economy, 1730–1840* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1989), p. 167. Here he describes the incorporation of once external zones; the application of this description to internal colonial zones comes from Hechter.

11 Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1989), p. 166.

they "remain preoccupied with the integrity and interpenetration of cultural space: successive novelistic genres establish a dialectic relationship between nationalist ways of thinking about place and the consciousness of empire, a dialectic crucial ... to romantic nationalist, regionalist, and local-color writing."[12] Especially helpful about her analysis is the sense of continuous cultural mediations between the seemingly distinct but in fact mutually dependent categories of nation and empire. Compelling in its association of regional and local-colour literary codes with imperial as well as national programs, Trumpener's study offers an additional relationship—the exchange between Celtic peripheral spaces—as a third term for understanding the geopolitical possibilities of literary production in a global capital context.

Attentiveness to the representational techniques introduced by internal colonialism's agenda, then, enables us to read novels' distinct articulations of time and space against exclusively nationalist schematizations of cultural and literary productions. One might extend Trumpener's work, for instance, by noting that the detailed representations of place in that formative influence on and subset of novel writing—the regional tale—originate not as a national practice so much as an ethnographic impulse, a technology through which to register—or construct a particular version of—the inherent "otherness" of internal colonial space. Those novelistic material descriptions of the quotidian crucial, as Ian Watt and others have seen it, to producing a specific form of English identity might owe their existence to efforts not simply to record national selves but also to represent national others. The influence of the social relationships of internal colonialism long went unremarked in studies of eighteenth-century fiction. Increasingly, as recent scholarship and these essays demonstrate, analysis of that period's fiction that does not bear such relationships in mind will necessarily remain incomplete. Conversely, introducing internal colonial relationships to discussions of eighteenth-century novels promises to situate them and their production beyond the national borders they once seemed to help map.

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12 Trumpener, p. 164.