

Chapter 10

Internal Empire

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Nostalgic feelings about the British Empire die hard, as the British referendum vote to leave the European Union in June 2016, so-called 'Brexit', has clearly demonstrated. Equally clearly delineated have been the stark divisions among the four constituent parts of this disunited kingdom, with the majority in Scotland and Northern Ireland voting for remaining in the European Union; England, with the notable exceptions of some large cities including London, for leaving; and Wales split between the 'remain' votes of the Welsh-speaking west and the capital, Cardiff, and the 'leave' votes of the rest of the country. Looking back on the period 1945-75 from this momentous present, we can see how our current divisions, conflicts, and differences were already being foreseen, anatomised, satirised, and lamented by the prescient women writers of the period who, moreover, reflected the instability of their times in their stylistic innovations and in their willingness to experiment with hybrid literary forms.

In 1975 the American sociologist, Michael Hechter, published an influential book entitled *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536-1966*, in which he argued that the 'peripheral' nations of the British Isles, namely Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, had functioned as internal colonies within the British Empire.¹ Hechter's theory foregrounds the analogy between what he calls the 'Celtic fringe' and the overseas colonies of the Empire, arguing that the 'internal colonies' had suffered from similar, Anglocentric cultural and economic exploitation. He sees the burgeoning nationalist movements in Scotland and Wales, foreshadowed by the nationalist struggle in Ireland earlier in the century, as signalling the beginning of the end of this imperial system. 1966, the date

chosen by Hechter as the end point of his study, coincides with the date of the election of Gwynfor Evans as the first Plaid Cymru (Welsh Nationalist) MP; he was soon joined in Westminster by Winifred Ewing, the first Scottish Nationalist MP. These parties had been established in the mid-1920s but events in the 1950s and 1960s suddenly boosted their popular support.² The '60s was also the period when many erstwhile British colonies were achieving independence, often in the wake of successful nationalist campaigns, for example Jamaica in 1962, and Botswana in 1966. The 'melancholy, long, withdrawing roar'³ of the British empire had, of course, been heard for many decades but it was undoubtedly intensified in the post-war period, especially after the independence and partition of India and Pakistan in 1948. Hechter's thesis has been disputed by many historians, notably Tom Nairn and Neil Evans, primarily because it ignores important differences among the countries it discusses.⁴ Nevertheless, the analogy between the three 'internal colonies' and the overseas empire was undoubtedly a potent element of the imagined nation, however historically inaccurate it may have been, and the post-imperial themes and concerns are particularly evident in the work of the British creative writers of the time, not least women novelists. In recent years, moreover, postcolonial approaches to the literatures of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland have borne fruit, indicating that literary scholars are more receptive than historians to the colonial analogy proposed by Hechter.⁵

If the so-called 'Celtic fringe' was affected by and responding to the decline of empire, arguably England itself was plunged into an existential crisis of its own. Certainly, this was a period when Englishness was being redefined through complex negotiations between the present and the past, and women writers such as the Anglo-Irish Elizabeth Bowen and the English Elizabeth Taylor played their part in charting shifts in the psychic geography of a country accommodating itself to economic and political decline. In the 1960s Enoch Powell attempted to rouse a new English nationalism not only with the infamous

‘rivers of blood’ speech of 1968 where he warned of a racial apocalypse on the streets of England,⁶ but also in less well known pastoral poetry yearning for a lost English idyll. In the poem sequence *Dancer’s End*, for instance, Powell’s speaker has a vision of the ghosts of the ‘old English ... hovering in the fields that once they tilled’ which makes the speaker ‘[b]rood ... on England’s destiny.’⁷ Deliberately echoing Gray’s ‘Elegy in a Country Churchyard’, Powell’s verse is simultaneously nostalgic and hopeful about a new national resurgence of the ‘old English’, who will presumably fulfil their destiny by displacing contemporary England’s hybrid, postcolonial population. Though Powell’s political demagoguery elsewhere is extreme, his chauvinism and anxieties about the present are not uncharacteristic of many English writers’ work in this period.⁸ Women writers of the time tend to use the changing English landscape as a metaphor for the changing nation, while their use of ‘private’ domestic space charts the post-war shifts in gender roles and expectations.

In Elizabeth Bowen’s *The Heat of the Day* (1948), set in London and Ireland during the Second World War, the protagonist, Stella Rodney, discovers that her lover, Robert Kelway, is a Fascist spy. When she asks him why he is against ‘this country’, he replies, angrily, “‘what *do* you mean? Country? – there are no more countries left; nothing but names””.⁹ Stella herself drifts from one rented flat to another, rather like a patrician version of a Jean Rhys heroine, feeling ‘the anxieties, the uncertainties of the hybrid. She ... had come loose from her moorings ... Her own extraction was from a class that ha[d] taken an unexpected number of generations to die out ...’¹⁰ The tense atmosphere of wartime London and the disorientating timelessness of the great house in rural Ireland create a fictional world in which nothing is safe or certain, a world characteristically described in terms of a shifting landscape: ‘There can occur in lives a subsidence of the under soil – so that, without the surface having been visibly broken, gradients alter, uprights cant a little out of the straight.’¹¹

Already in the 1970s, English women writers were beginning to chart the post-imperial demographic shifts which were transforming England. In the title story of Elizabeth Taylor's *The Devastating Boys* (1972), for instance, Harold, an Archaeology professor and his timid wife, Laura, have two 'coloured' immigrant children from the city to stay with them for a country holiday, as an act of charity. The two boys, Septimus Smith and Benny Reece, turn out to be difficult and funny characters who dominate and exhaust poor Laura. It is Laura's friend, Helena, a writer of 'clever-clever little novels', according to Harold, who exclaims that the boys are 'simply devastating!'¹² The adjective 'devastating', meaning astonishing or stunning, points to Helena's hyperbolic and trivial use of language, and yet there is perhaps a hint here of the etymological meaning of 'devastating', namely laying waste to a territory. The boys unconsciously present a threat to the 'old English' society praised by Enoch Powell. In the story they respond to their encounter with this world by accurately mimicking Helena's affected speech and manner. The boys object when Laura plays 'God Save the Queen' on the piano and are not impressed with the local Anglican church service either; Septimus observes "I prefer my own country. I prefer Christians". "Me, too", Benny said. "Give me Christians any day."¹³ In this story, Taylor holds English attitudes and mores up to ridicule, and places two black characters at the centre of rural England, inviting the reader to judge 'traditional' Englishness through their eyes. Taylor's stories engage directly and sensitively with the changing landscape, population, and class structure of post-imperial England, in a disarmingly gentle and yet acerbic mode of social comedy.

Like Bowen and Taylor, the Welsh writer, Kate Roberts ((1891-1985), was a gifted short story writer. Born to a poor family in the slate-quarrying area of Caernarfonshire in north-west Wales, she was a scholarship girl who was one of the first female students at the newly-established University College of North Wales in Bangor. She began writing in her

native language, Welsh, in the late 1920s, and by 1945 she was an established author, having published six volumes of creative prose, but there had been a hiatus in her creative work for some years, largely because she had thrown her energies into running a successful publishing house. But after the war, and the sudden death of her husband, Roberts gradually began to publish her own work once more. In 1946 there appeared the first selection of English translations of Roberts's short stories, in the volume, *A summer day and other stories*, which had an enthusiastic introduction by the prolific English writer, Storm Jameson. The latter praises what she sees as Wales's 'living culture which is not that of the elsewhere triumphant machine age.' Comparing Wales to Slovakia, for both are small countries with 'a native culture which has so much energy left,' Jameson implicitly suggests a contrast with the exhaustion of English culture. Indeed, she finds Roberts's work 'enriched and steadied by her deep sense of continuity with the past ... [and an] active sense ... of a complex tradition'.¹⁴ Interestingly, then, from the perspective of English writers, both Wales and Ireland seem to retain a sense of stability which is absent from England; as Elizabeth Bowen's character, Stella, perceives when she visits Ireland during the war: 'she could have imagined this was another time, rather than another country, that she had come to.'¹⁵

Yet, seen from within, the view is different. Welsh and Irish writers often engage with the changes that have overcome their allegedly static nations. In the post-war period Kate Roberts, for example, creates psychological narratives exploring women's position in a changing world, using private, domestic spaces as metaphors for the restriction of Welsh women's opportunities. Her 1956 novel *The Living Sleep* concerns a woman, Laura Ffennig, suddenly abandoned by her husband and attempting to come to terms with her new, unfixed life. Its form is different from Roberts's earlier, realist mode, containing lengthy passages of dream narrative and interior monologue, as well as pages from the protagonist's journal.¹⁶ While the novel tackles contemporary concerns about marital and social breakdown, it also

engages with Laura's internal battles with her conservative, Welsh identity and explores her attempts to gain autonomy through a therapeutic act of writing. Another Roberts novel of this period, *Fairness of Morning* (1957-58) is partly autobiographical and set in the pre-World War One era, evoking nostalgically a lost age of innocence.¹⁷ One of Roberts's best-known works, *Tea in the Heather*, a humorous collection of stories about childhood and adolescence in rural Wales, also belongs to this period.¹⁸ Roberts's recurring interest in *looking back* and *looking inward* in this fiction and in chronicling and recording what has been irrevocably lost chimes with the concerns of other British and Irish women writers of the time, though its implicit attitudes towards notions of Britishness and of empire are invariably negative.

The novella *Gossip Row* (1949) represents Roberts's generically experimental work at this time. It takes the form of a diary written by the disabled protagonist, Phoebe. This is a highly inward-looking narrative, focussing exclusively on Phoebe's thoughts, feelings, and observations. Her invalid status means that she is unable to move from her bed, unless she is physically carried outside. Her paralysis has lasted three years and it is clear that Roberts is using her condition as a metaphor for the stagnant, monotonous and incestuous condition of the society of this small-minded, north Welsh town. The narrative offers an unflattering portrait of Welsh life, centred on chapel and shop, with the main concern of its inhabitants seemingly being to gossip and make snide remarks about their neighbours. Families are seen as restrictive and warping, not unlike the depiction found in the northern Irish writer, Janet McNeill's, *Tea at Four O'Clock* (1956), discussed below. Like that text, Roberts's begins with a death, which is one of the mainsprings of the plot.

And yet there are positive aspects to this society, too – there is lifelong friendship here, considerable kindness, and a real bond between sisters. The narrative is full of satire at the expense of a hypocritical chapel-going society, a picture not unlike Muriel Spark's satire of Scottish Presbyterianism in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. By the end of the narrative

Phoebe feels remorse for her feelings of hatred and jealousy, which have been fostered by ‘Gossip Row’, and has an epiphany in which she is able to acknowledge her own selfishness and self-deception. The diary ends with a quotation from a fifteenth-century Welsh poem by Siôn Cent: ‘My hope lies in what is to come’.¹⁹ The poem refers to the future of Wales and wishes for a ‘*mab darogan*’ [son of prophecy] who will save the country, but Phoebe hopes for a personal, spiritual and perhaps even physical resurrection. This allusion is the only veiled reference to the contemporary nationalist politics of Wales, in which Kate Roberts was centrally involved, but which she chose to keep as separate as possible from her creative work.

In *Fairness of Morning*, another novel from the late 1950s, Roberts’s protagonist, Ann Owen, a schoolteacher, feels a similar growing discontentment with the narrow-minded milieu of small town Welsh society. She describes the place as ‘like some mask over one’s face; the world moves on but Blaen Ddôl stays the same’.²⁰ In the second half of the novel, Ann’s life is shadowed by the First World War in which her beloved younger brother is killed (echoing events in the author’s own life). Looking back, Ann sees her life as a meadow, one half bathed in the ‘fair’ light of ‘morning’, separated from the other half by a deep trench, which represents the war. The deployment of landscape as metaphor both for the nation and the individual is once again clear.

If the general tenor of Kate Roberts’s fiction in this period is one of sad reflection upon losses, the work of her younger Welsh contemporary, Menna Gallie ((1920-1990), is characterised by subversive humour and exuberant energy, though certainly with dark undertones. Gallie was from industrial South Wales and in her two novels, *Strike for a Kingdom* (1959) and *The Small Mine* (1962) she can be credited with a bold re-framing of the male-dominated Welsh industrial novel which had its heyday in the 1930s from a different gender perspective. Surprisingly, too, Gallie was one of the first writers to register in fictional

form the Troubles in Northern Ireland in her 1970 novel, *You're Welcome to Ulster*. The earlier novels are based on her own background growing up in Ystradgynlais in the Swansea Valley, given the fictional name Cilhendre in the novels, while *You're Welcome to Ulster* speaks of Gallie's experience of living near Belfast between 1954 and 1967.

Although Gallie was a Welsh speaker, her politics were very different from those of Kate Roberts. Gallie's early novels *Strike for a Kingdom* (1959) and *The Small Mine* (1962) reflect a very South Walian socialist worldview, implicitly rejecting nationalist aspirations and yet charting carefully the ways in which Welsh workers and Welsh speakers had been systematically disempowered by an Anglocentric capitalist system. If that description sounds excessively dogmatic, the good news is that Gallie leavens her politics with large doses of humour and irony. Her style is striking – a racy, recognizably Welsh idiolect, not unlike some of the prose of Dylan Thomas or Gwyn Thomas. She is an irreverent novelist who does not shy away from satirizing some of the foundational institutions of Welsh society, such as the chapel. In *Strike for a Kingdom*, for example, one of the workers complains that his wife has become obsessed with religion: “she goes down that chapel they have in Clydach and comes home with diarrhoea and messages.”²¹ Similarly, she mocks those with social pretensions who feign an inability to speak Welsh, such as Evans the police inspector, who ‘spoke Welsh but preferred not to let it be known that he suffered from this disability.’²² Gender roles are also explored in a largely comic mode, with male pretensions being deflated and middle-class women's notions of propriety being openly mocked: at Mr Nixon, the mine manager's funeral, a sister-in-law of the deceased is described as: ‘[s]o corseted ... and firm that she felt to the touch like a dead crusader on his tomb.’²³

The plot of *Strike for a Kingdom* is set against the background of the miners' Lock-Out which took place after the 1926 General Strike. Interwoven with the men's labour disputes is a personal drama involving surreptitious love affairs and exploitation of women

by the odious Mr Nixon, the mine manager, who is found murdered. The investigation of his murder constitutes the plot, but Gallie's novel is hardly a conventional whodunit. On the contrary, the text – her first published work – is much more concerned with the vivid evocation of a place, a time and a community. This convergence of potentially tragic subject-matter with a robust comic style is highly characteristic of Gallie's work and contributes to making her novels slightly uneasy reading – there can be a modulation from the humorous to the heart-rending within the space of one paragraph.

Gallie's 1962 novel, *The Small Mine*, is set some decades later, after the Second World War and the nationalisation of the coal mines. The main concern here is with social change in the valley community, though again this is animated by a kind of detective plot. Structurally, the novel is daring in that the character whom we might identify as the 'hero', Joe, is killed in the mine halfway through the text. Social change is represented in this novel with the final emblematic closure of the 'small mine', a throwback to earlier industrial practices which have been superseded by the highly mechanised new coal industry run by the National Coal Board. Another emblematic scene of social change is the burning of the old bardic chair on the children's bonfire on November 5th. Nevertheless, this society is still strongly connected to the Welsh language and culture, a fact indicated in the texture of the narrative itself, where there are frequent literal translations of Welsh idioms and a suggestion from the syntax and rhythms that the direct speech of the characters has been translated from the Welsh.

Both of Gallie's Welsh-set novels engage with gender issues in a Welsh cultural context. In *The Small Mine*, Flossie Jenkins is of the older generation of women who willingly perform their domestic duties and whose role in the novel is defined as that of the archetypal Welsh Mam. Once her son, Joe, is killed, she loses her vitality and her voice in the novel. Up until the accident, though, she is a formidable presence, ruling her household with

energetic glee. She adheres to a rigid domestic system of labour which is described as analogous to the shift system operated in the coal mines; all through the working day she wears curlers in her hair as an emblem of being ‘on duty’ and only takes them out last thing at night when her work is done: ‘combing out her sausage curls was Flossie’s clocking-off signal.’²⁴ If Gallie uses terms usually associated with the male world of work in describing Flossie’s working day, she reverses the process in her description of Dai Dialectic and Jim Kremlin’s labour in the mine: ‘They were both good colliers, taking pride in their roofing and in the proper organization of their stall, as a housewife is proud of a well-organized, uncluttered kitchen.’²⁵ The effect of these unexpected transpositions is to assign equal weight and importance to the work of both genders. Gallie may have been reluctant to accept the label ‘feminist’ but her literary practice certainly suggests a belief in gender equality.²⁶

Gallie is a fascinating figure not least because she seems to embody the ‘Four Nations’ of the British Isles in both her life and work. Welsh-born and Welsh-speaking, she married a Scottish academic, Bryce Gallie, and moved with him to live in Northern Ireland and England for extended periods of her adult life. The complicated relations and interactions among the Four Nations are reflected in her works, especially in her pioneering 1970 novel, *You’re Welcome to Ulster*, which focuses particularly on relations between Northern Ireland and Wales.

But in order to understand that text, it is necessary to take a few steps back to understand the history of activism in Wales in the 1960s. In 1962, Saunders Lewis made a ground-breaking broadcast on the BBC entitled ‘Tynged yr Iaith’ (The Fate of the Language) in which he argued that: ‘Welsh will end as a living language, should the present trend continue, about the beginning of the twenty-first century ... Thus the policy laid down as the aim of the English Government in Wales in the measure called the Act of Union of England and Wales in 1536 will at last have succeeded.’²⁷ He went on to issue a call to arms, or at

least to the barricades: ‘this is the only political matter which it is worth a Welshman’s while to trouble himself about today ... It will be nothing less than a revolution to restore the Welsh language in Wales. Success is only possible through revolutionary methods.’²⁸ As a direct result of that broadcast, the Welsh Language Society or Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg was established in August 1962 and has spent the last half-century often successfully campaigning for language rights for Welsh speakers. In the 1970s, Cymdeithas yr Iaith mounted a direct action campaign against Anglicised road signs in Wales, either taking down or defacing English-language signs for Welsh places. As is so often the case, names are politically powerful. Cymdeithas yr Iaith saw the symbolic power of changing the way a country is named, rejecting the imposed Anglicised names and reverting to the original Welsh ones. Women were prominent in these campaigns during the 1970s, some being incarcerated for their ‘revolutionary methods’, and this experience begins to be registered in fiction during the period, notably in Meg Elis’s autobiographical novel, *I’r Gad (To battle, 1975)*.

Members of Cymdeithas yr Iaith did not hesitate to destroy property and to disobey the law, but they were never a paramilitary organization. In the 1960s and 1970s there were, however, a number of such organizations operating in Wales, such as the Free Wales Army and the Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru (Wales Defence League). In 1969, in the period leading up to the Investiture of Prince Charles as the ‘Prince of Wales’, there was considerable protest against this very public ritual which appeared to some to be celebrating and consolidating Wales’s continuing colonised status. On the morning of the Investiture two members of the ‘Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru’ were killed when the bomb they were carrying exploded prematurely. Later that same summer, Northern Ireland witnessed the worst flare-up of sectarian violence for many decades, and historians now tend to date the beginnings of the Troubles back to 1969. These events in Wales and Ireland are explicitly linked up by

Menna Gallie in her daring 1970 novel, *You're Welcome to Ulster*. In the novel a Welsh woman, Sarah Thomas, travels to visit friends in Northern Ireland and becomes embroiled in the violence which has flared up there. The novel focuses both on Sarah's body and her desire, reflecting a new atmosphere of sexual freedom typical of the late 1960s and upon the new political activism which is bubbling over into violence in both Northern Ireland and Wales. Indeed, in an explanatory Prelude to the novel added to the US edition in 1971, Gallie makes explicit the links between the IRA and a group of Welsh paramilitaries, who are expecting a delivery of arms from their Irish 'brethren'. One of the young Welsh extremists in the novel is called Mab, in a clear echo of the 'mab darogan' of Welsh mythology, but his attempts at violent action fizzle out into failure. In contrast, events in Northern Ireland take a literally fatal turn. One young Irish Civil Rights activist, called Una, appears to be a fictional representation of Bernadette Devlin, who in 1969 'became the youngest woman elected to Westminster.'²⁹ Gallie's novel can be seen as a warning to Wales about the dangers of following in Irish footsteps, but the novel is by no means wholly negative about the new political activism of the period, showing how the liberation movements of the time broaden the possibilities and sphere of women in both Wales and Ireland in a hitherto unprecedented way.

Gallie's Welsh view of Irish politics received mixed reviews. It actually took Irish women writers themselves a few more years to write directly of the violence overtaking the North. *Shadows on our Skin*, the novel in which Jennifer Johnston engages directly with Northern Ireland's Troubles, for instance, was not published until 1977. Johnston, born in Dublin in 1930 but for many years resident in Derry, is one of Northern Ireland's most distinguished contemporary writers. Her first novel, *The Captains and the Kings* (1972) is set in a dilapidated Irish great house and revolves around the relationship that develops between an elderly widower, Charles Prendergast, the owner of the great house and a veteran of the

First World War, and a local lad, Diarmid Toorish. The book shows how the recluse, Charles, has had his whole life blighted by the experience of war, which has left him incapable of love and human communication, until the impertinent young truant, Diarmid, trespasses on his life and a doomed attachment for the boy develops in Charles's soul: 'The child had, somehow, halted for a while the inevitable, dreary process of dying.'³⁰ The novel is firmly in the tradition of the Irish great house novel but it also brings that genre into the modern world, showing how the past is never dead and buried but always a ghostly inhabitant of the present. Charles's long-dead brother, Alexander, killed in the war, becomes a palpable presence in the house as Charles and Diarmid play complex games with toy soldiers and reality and memory become blurred in Charles's disordered mind. He reflects: 'So much debris ... Useless debris ... If only there was some way of disposing of the debris, leaving the mind neat and ordered, but more and more now the mess, the past, kept breaking through the barriers.'³¹ The novel begins and ends with the local gardai going to arrest Charles for his paedophiliac designs on the boy.

The colonial themes of the novel are implied in the title, taken from a song by Brendan Behan which satirises the British imperial past and its ideologies, as in the third stanza:

Far away in dear old Cyprus, or in Kenya's dusty land,
We all bear the white man's burden in many a strange land.
As we look across our shoulder, in West Belfast the school bell rings,
And we sigh for dear old England, and the Captains and the Kings.
And we sigh for dear old England, and the Captains and the Kings.³²

Janet McNeill's 1956 Belfast-set novel, *Tea at Four O-Clock*, also examines what Seamus Deane has called the 'plight of a lost Protestant gentility which looks back'.³³ McNeill (1907-1994) is almost an embodiment of three of the 'Four Nations', having been

born in Dublin, educated in England and Scotland, returning to live in Belfast from the 1920s to the 1960s, and spending the last years of her life in Bristol. Beginning to write creatively in the mid-1950s, McNeill immediately established herself as an astute commentator on women's lives in the complex and shifting religious and political terrain of Northern Ireland at the time. The focus in *Tea at Four O'Clock* is on the family as a repressive and restrictive structure, and on women's complicity in upholding the very structures which incarcerate them. Again, the setting is a great house, but one built on the commercial gains of the linen industry rather than the seat of ancestral landed gentry. The novel charts the decline of the Percival family, focusing on Laura Percival, a spinster who has sacrificed her own happiness to care for her tyrannical older sister, who has just died. The possibility of freedom is now there for Laura, but she fails to take it, relapsing instead into the empty and rigid rituals of family life, as encapsulated in the novel's title, *Tea at Four O'Clock*. The freedom which Laura refuses also has a political dimension, as indicated by the name of the house, Marathon, situated 'between the Castlereagh Hills and the Belfast Lough' but recalling Byron's poem about Marathon in which the speaker 'dreamed that Greece might still be free'.³⁴ When the house is built, Aunt Augusta disapproves of the house's name, keeping 'a careful eye on her nephew for any deplorable Home Rule tendencies, and was relieved that she was able to detect none'.³⁵ As Laura sadly watches a train departing for Cork, carrying emigrants bound for the United States, she realises that she will never escape like them. She says, fatalistically, to her brother, George: '[Mildred's] dead ... but the poison is living in us now.'³⁶

If the events of the 1960s in Scotland and Wales led to an increased nationalism and to some direct action and protest, in Northern Ireland some of the same drivers led to more catastrophic consequences. Northern Ireland had been partitioned by act of parliament in 1921 but in 1948 the Irish Free State officially became a Republic and in the following year

Ulster's partitioned status became enshrined, controversially, in the Ireland Act. Then, in the late 1960s, the Northern Irish Troubles began, lasting until the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and leading to the deaths of more than 3,500 people in total. The early seventies saw the worst death toll in the province. Clearly, nothing analogous to this came to pass in Wales, Scotland, or England, although some of the terrorist acts spread to English cities in the 1980s. The political comparison among the three 'internal colonies' in the period are invidious, showing up the weaknesses of Michael Hechter's theory, and yet the underlying connections and similarities are often perceived by the writers of the time, notably Menna Gallie, whose life placed her in a uniquely panoptic position.

In Scotland, Naomi Mitchison was already a well-established and acclaimed novelist by the post-war period. From a landed and scholarly family, Mitchison quickly established her reputation as a brilliant and daring historical novelist in the 1930s. Her novel *The Bull Calves* (1947) is typical of her command of the genre of the historical novel, and deals centrally with issues of Scottish identity relevant to the twentieth century, though the work is set in the eighteenth. However, like her contemporaries Kate Roberts and Doris Lessing, this period saw her experiment with new genres and modes of writing, including science fiction, fantasy, and writing for children. Rooted in Scotland and active in socialist politics there, by sheer accident while travelling she developed an extraordinary relationship with the Bakgatla people of Botswana, eventually having the title of 'Mmamarona' (mother) bestowed upon her. This African link affected her politics and writing, making her acutely aware of the Scottish contribution to British imperialism. As she put it in one of her autobiographical works, 'I was so filled with horror and guilt at the thought of what might have been done to my people here, by my people there.'³⁷ This is reflected in a curious 1975 story, entitled 'The Hill Modipe', in which Kenneth, a Scottish botanist, takes a plant-collecting trip into the interior of Bechuanaland with two gold-prospecting Boers. It is the early twentieth century

and the Boers, Jan and Hendrik, treat the local people with contempt and are single-mindedly bent on making their fortunes through exploitation of the African land. Kenneth, meanwhile, is mild-mannered and bewitched by the beauty of the unfamiliar flora. The hill Modipe is regarded with awe and fear by the local people and Kenneth feels its hostility. Nevertheless, Jan and Hendrik charge in and proceed to desecrate the place. The story is full of analogies between Scotland and Africa, partly because Kenneth's grandfather has been a missionary there. As Kenneth sleeps and dreams of the Scottish Highlands he is miraculously transported to safety by a mysterious snake-like creature. Half-asleep, Kenneth mutters 'You'll know Loch Ness?'³⁸ When he wakes, he finds himself with friendly native people miles from the hill Modipe; the fate of his Boer companions remains uncertain, but the implication is that they have succumbed to the hill's malevolence, while Kenneth has been saved. The ending is open; Kenneth reassures himself: 'I am on a visit. A good visit. And it will work out fine.'³⁹ Arguably, this ending reflects Mitchison's own feelings about the Scottish participation in the colonial exploitation of Africa: like Kenneth, she wants the Scottish 'visit' to the colonies to have been a positive one – she seeks to redeem the past and reconcile 'her people there' with 'her people here'.

Mitchison's science fiction is also concerned with colonialism. In *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962), for example, the telepathic protagonist, Mary, is a mother and a space explorer who comes across many different worlds and societies. One particular world is populated by butterflies and caterpillars, the latter oppressed and made to feel inferior by the former, in a clear metaphor for imperialism. Mitchison's venture into the new genre is also not uncharacteristic of the post-war period when science fiction and fantasy, erstwhile a male-dominated form was beginning to attract the pens of a range of supremely talented women writers, notably Ursula LeGuin in America and Doris Lessing in England, as explored elsewhere in this volume.⁴⁰

Muriel Spark, like Naomi Mitchison born in Edinburgh, also had unexpected African connections and interests, which found their way into her fiction. During the Second World War Spark lived in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and her experiences there influenced some of the stories in *The Go-Away Bird and Other Stories* (1958) which deal with race relations and conflicts. In the title story, Daisy, an orphan, is brought up by her uncle Chahata Patterson on his tobacco farm in an unnamed African Colony. The story provides an acid analysis of race relations and divisions; Daisy is eventually murdered by Tuys, her uncle's Afrikaaner farm manager. Race is also addressed in 'The Black Madonna' in which a Catholic couple from Liverpool pray to a black Madonna for a child. They also befriend two lonely Jamaican men. Their prayers are answered but the baby turns out to be black, a fact which immediately shows their 'enlightened' attitudes to race to have been completely false. Some of these stories bear comparison with those of Elizabeth Taylor, discussed above, though Spark's style is more experimental and her authorial positioning more distant, colder. Nevertheless, Spark is also capable of some delicious social comedy *à la* Elizabeth Taylor, as she would prove a few years later, in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and, here, in a story such as 'You should have seen the mess'. In the latter, the first-person narrator, Lorna Merrifield, obsessed with propriety and cleanliness, is gleefully ironised through her non-sequiturs; Laura reflects: 'Mavis did not go away to have her baby, but would have it at home, in their double bed, as they did not have twin beds, although he was a doctor.'⁴¹

This deadpan irony is developed to brilliant effect in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), which is still Spark's best known novel and one of the few of her works firmly set in Scotland and engaging directly with Scottish identity and mores. Set in Edinburgh during the 1930s, it revolves around the eponymous Miss Brodie, an eccentric schoolmistress who cultivates a privileged 'set' of girls in the Marcia Blaine Academy where she teaches. The novel is scathing in its satire of the hypocrisy of Scottish Presbyterianism as embodied in the

ostensibly upright spinster Miss Brodie, who flouts the church's teachings on sexual behaviour, fails to teach her girls the school curriculum, and is a devoted follower of the Fascists in Italy and Germany. Though Miss Brodie is a striking individual, Spark's narrator makes the point that 'there were legions of her kind during the nineteen-thirties, women from the age of thirty and upward, who crowded their war-bereaved spinsterhood with voyages of discovery into new ideas and energetic practices in art or social welfare, education or religion ... Some assisted in the Scottish Nationalist Movement; others, like Miss Brodie, called themselves Europeans and Edinburgh a European capital ...'⁴² Miss Brodie is, finally, a manipulative and dangerous woman; Sandy Stranger, the girl in her set who betrays her, perceives that 'She thinks she ... is the God of Calvin, she sees the beginning and the end.'⁴³ Both inveterate storytellers, Jean Brodie and Sandy Stranger can be seen as versions of the author; the former thinks that she has, godlike, created her story from beginning to end but Sandy usurps her role and changes the story's conclusion. This self-referentiality, along with the disorientating prolepses and analepses that punctuate the text, are typical of the strange and discomfiting world of Spark's fiction. Yet it is a world connected at a slant to the real one, reflecting some of the political, religious, and social concerns of contemporary Britain.

Spark is a writer who is also discomfiting for some Scottish critics and literary historians, largely because she was for many years the most internationally renowned living Scottish writer and yet she did not invariably signal her Scottishness in her writing. Even in the twenty-first century, she remains for some a 'cosmopolitan misfit who does not ... have an insistent enough agenda of being Scottish', as Gerard Carruthers puts it.⁴⁴ In the later twentieth century the Scottish writer and critic, Christopher Whyte, encapsulated the pressure placed upon Scottish writers to focus on Scottish subjects as the enjoinder 'Don't imagine Ethiopia!'⁴⁵ Spark had, of course, boldly 'imagined Ethiopia' for decades, ignoring the prescriptions of nationalism and expressing her characteristic 'systemic doubleness' which,

ironically enough, turns out to be characteristically Scottish.⁴⁶ This doubleness is perhaps best expressed in her autobiographical short story, 'The Gentile Jewesses', in which she explores her 'mixed inheritance' in a characteristically playful and unusually positive way.⁴⁷ The central figure in this story is the narrator's grandmother, a small, ugly, clever woman and former suffragette, who keeps a shop in Watford, and it is she who, in answer to the question, 'Are you a Gentile, Grandmother, or are you a Jewess?' gives the answer 'I am a gentile Jewess.'⁴⁸ Grandmother is also a formidable storyteller and the narrator clearly has in mind not only her cultural and religious affiliations when she affirms 'I was a Gentile Jewess like my Grandmother.'⁴⁹ When Grandmother dies she is 'buried as a Jewess since she died in my father's house [in Edinburgh] ... Simultaneously my great-aunts announced in the Watford papers that she fell asleep in Jesus.'⁵⁰ Here, systemic doubleness is embodied in the figure of Grandmother and perpetuated through the generations in a line of female inheritance which recalls not just Jewish custom but also the nature of literary genealogy for women writers who, as Woolf asserted, 'think back through' their 'mothers.'⁵¹

At a time when writers from Britain's erstwhile overseas colonies, such as the West Indies, were beginning to make their mark on English letters, then, we can see that women writers from the so-called 'internal empire' were also engaging with the decline of empire and its consequences, especially for women.⁵² Women writers were also alert to the shifting political landscape of the Four Nations and the ways in which new opportunities were opening up for women outside the domestic sphere and the confines of the family. There is a strong element of satire or at the very least sharp social comedy in many women writers' engagement with family life and rituals in this period. While an elegiac note can be heard in the writing of many women, who express disquiet at the post-war transformation of urban and rural landscapes, others appear to welcome the new freedoms, not least sexual, promised by the loosening of traditional ties and bonds, and the new mobility which allowed some to

travel and to adopt an increasingly international perspective. Above all, women writers of the ‘internal empire’ display a refreshing willingness to experiment with genre, perhaps mirroring the attempted reforging of national boundaries and gender identities in their reinvention of form, challenging imperial rhetoric with an imaginative, positive, and outward-looking creative prose.

¹ M. Hechter (1975) *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (London: Routledge).

² One of the most significant drivers in Wales was the public outrage over the building of the Tryweryn dam to provide water for the city of Liverpool. Despite universal opposition in Wales, the valley, including the village of Capel Celyn, was drowned. See R. S. Thomas’s poem, ‘Reservoirs’, for a characteristic and poignant nationalist response: R. S. Thomas (2003) *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin), p. 74.

³ Matthew Arnold (1910) [1867] ‘Dover Beach’ in *Selected Poems of Matthew Arnold* (London: Macmillan), p. 165.

⁴ See T. Nairn (1981) *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, 2nd expanded edition (London: Verso), and Neil Evans (1991) ‘Internal Colonialism? Colonization, Economic Development and Political Mobilization in Wales, Scotland and Ireland’ in G. Day and G. Rees (eds) *Regions, Nations and European Integration: Remaking the Celtic Periphery* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press), pp. 235-64.

⁵ Even earlier than Hechter, Ned Thomas (1971) in his seminal *The Welsh Extremist: Modern Welsh Politics, Literature and Society* (London: Gollancz) had argued for a postcolonial approach to Welsh writing; later examples include: Kirsti Bohata (2004) *Postcolonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press); Declan Kiberd (1995) *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape); Michael Gardiner, Graeme

Macdonald, and Niall O’Gallagher (eds) (2001) *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature: Comparative Texts and Critical Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).

⁶ Enoch Powell, speech given in Birmingham in April 1968, cited in Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, p. 256.

⁷ Powell, Poem XXIV, *Dancer’s End* (1951), cited in Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, p. 258.

⁸ Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) may be said to have set the tone of English post-war, post-imperial disillusionment, captured also in the poignant poems of Philip Larkin, such as ‘MCMXIV’ which, of course, harks back to the First World War.

⁹ Elizabeth Bowen (1949) *The Heat of the Day* (London: Jonathan Cape), p. 258.

¹⁰ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, p. 109.

¹¹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, p. 291.

¹² Elizabeth Taylor (1984) [1972] ‘The Devastating Boys’ in *The Devastating Boys* (London: Virago), p. 26.

¹³ Taylor, ‘The Devastating Boys’, pp. 30-1.

¹⁴ Storm Jameson (1946) Introduction, *A Summer Day and Other Stories* (Cardiff: Penmark Press), p. 14.

¹⁵ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, p. 156.

¹⁶ Kate Roberts (1956) *Y Byw sy’n Cysgu (The Living Sleep)* (Denbigh: Gee).

¹⁷ Roberts (1967) *Tegwch y bore (Fairness of Morning)* (Llandybie: Christopher Davies).

¹⁸ Roberts (1959) *Te yn y Grug (Tea in the Heather)* (Denbigh: Gee).

¹⁹ Roberts, *Te yn y Grug (Tea in the Heather)*, p. 94. My translation.

²⁰ Roberts, *Tegwch y Bore (Fairness of Morning)* (Llandybie: Christopher Davies, 1967) p. 142. My translation.

²¹ Menna Gallie (2003) [1959] *Strike for a Kingdom* (Dinas Powys: Honno), p. 56.

²² Gallie, *Strike for a Kingdom*, p. 87.

²³ Gallie, *Strike for a Kingdom*, p. 138.

²⁴ Gallie (2000) [1962] *The Small Mine* (Dinas Powys: Honno), p. 3.

²⁵ Gallie, *The Small Mine*, p. 28.

²⁶ Claire Connolly and Angela John note Gallie's rejection of the label 'feminist' in their introduction to the Honno edition of her later novel, *You're Welcome to Ulster*, discussed below. They quote Gallie as saying 'I'm not much of an -ist except that I'm a socialist'. See Connolly and John (2010) Introduction to *You're Welcome to Ulster* [1970] (Dinas Powys: Honno), p. xvii.

²⁷ Saunders Lewis (1973) 'Tynged yr Iaith' (The Fate of the Language) translated from the Welsh by G. A. Williams in A. R. Jones and G. Thomas (eds) *Presenting Saunders Lewis* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press), pp. 127-41, p. 127. Saunders Lewis was both one of the founders of Plaid Cymru in the 1920s and one of the most acclaimed Welsh poets and dramatists of the twentieth century. He was also a close friend of Kate Roberts.

²⁸ Lewis, 'Tynged yr Iaith' in Jones and Thomas (eds) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*, p. 141.

²⁹ Connolly and John, Introduction, *You're Welcome to Ulster*, p. xiii.

³⁰ J. Johnston (1979) [1972] *The Captains and the Kings* (London: Coronet), p. 91.

³¹ Johnston, *The Captains and the Kings*, p. 103.

³² Brendan Behan (2008) 'The Captains and the Kings', *Brendan Behan Sings Irish Folk Songs and Ballads* (Arran Records).

³³ S. Deane (1988) quoted in J. Madden-Simpson, Introduction to J. McNeill [1956] *Tea at Four O' Clock* (London: Virago), p. v.

³⁴ McNeill, *Tea at Four*, p. 19.

³⁵ McNeill, *Tea at Four*, p. 19.

³⁶ McNeill, *Tea at Four*, p. 178.

³⁷ Naomi Mitchison (1966) *Return to the Fairy Hill* (London: Heinemann), pp. 111-12.

³⁸ Mitchison (1975) 'The Hill Modipe' in T. A. Dunn (ed.) *Scottish Short Stories 1975* (London: Collins), p. 170.

³⁹ Mitchison, 'The Hill Modipe', p. 175.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Ursula LeGuin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (New York: Ace Books, 1969) and Doris Lessing, *Memoirs of a Survivor* (London: Octagon, 1974).

⁴¹ Muriel Spark (1963) [1958] 'You should have seen the mess', *The Go-Away Bird and Other Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), p. 139.

⁴² Spark (2013) [1961] *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (London: Penguin), pp. 42-3.

⁴³ Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, p. 120.

⁴⁴ G. Carruthers (2008) "'Fully to Savour her Position": Muriel Spark and Scottish Identity', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 54:3, 487-504, 488.

⁴⁵ C. Whyte (2000) "'Don't imagine Ethiopia": Fiction and Poetics in Contemporary Scotland' in T. Brown and R. Stephens (eds), *Nations and Relations* (Cardiff: New Welsh Review), pp. 56-70. Nevertheless, Whyte is hopeful that political devolution will help to avoid the necessity for such deadening prescription in future; as he puts it 'the setting-up of a Scottish parliament will at last allow Scottish literature to be literature first and foremost, rather than the expression of a nationalist movement.' Whyte (1998) 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 34:2, 274-85, 284.

⁴⁶ The term 'systemic doubleness' is Christopher Whyte's; see "'Don't imagine Ethiopia"', p. 62.

⁴⁷ Spark herself referred to her 'mixed inheritance' but at the same time insisted that 'I am certainly a writer of Scottish formation and of course think of myself as such': see A. Bold (1986) *Muriel Spark* (London: Methuen), p. 26. For the story 'The Gentile Jewesses', see Muriel Spark (2001) *The Complete Short Stories* (London: Penguin), pp. 310-16.

⁴⁸ Spark, 'The Gentile Jewesses', p. 312.

⁴⁹ Spark, 'The Gentile Jewesses', p. 314.

⁵⁰ Spark, 'The Gentile Jewesses', p. 316.

⁵¹ V. Woolf (1929) *A Room of One's Own* (London: Hogarth), p. 114.

⁵² See for example: P. S. Allfrey (1953) *The Orchid House* (London: Constable), S. Selvon (1956) *The Lonely Londoners* (London: Wingate), and V. S. Naipaul (1967) *The Mimic Men* (London: Andre Deutsch). Jean Rhys holds a particularly interesting position here in that she was a West Indian-born writer of Welsh and Scottish extraction, a fact which is addressed occasionally in her work. She even uses the Welsh word 'hiraeth' (longing, homesickness, looking back) in her autobiographical novel *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 81.