

Inside and Outside the Nation: Highland Violence in Walter Scott's Tales of a Grandfather

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I

Long before writers commented on the colourful peculiarity of Highland dress, they remarked on the peculiar savagery of Highland society. Savagery defined and separated Highlanders from the rest of 'civil' society beyond their mountain strongholds. This idea that Highland society was inherently violent and that this violence placed them beyond the boundaries of civilization continued until the eighteenth century, as Highland violence served to legitimate periodic forays by the forces of the state at least to control, if not to eliminate, Highland acts of rapine and plunder. By the early eighteenth century, however, accounts of Highland society underwent a dramatic transformation as the Highlander became a subject of intense fascination and scrutiny and Highland society became a useful case-in-point for enlightenment discourse in Edinburgh and elsewhere on the nature of the progress of human civilization. The Highlander was the primitive in metropolitan Scotland's own backyard, Britain's own 'home-grown' Noble Savage, a peculiar anomaly in the civil society of the nation. As a Noble Savage, the Highlander was considered to be little different from other Noble Savages around the globe in North America and the South Pacific. This anthropological reading understood all acts of Highland savagery as a sign of essential Highland primitiveness. Highland violence, however, served a crucial yet altogether different function in the development of a Scottish historiography that sought to legitimate the union of Scotland with 'sister' nations in a single 'Great Britain'. In pro-British Scottish historiography of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Highland violence is understood as a sign of the primitiveness of Highland society, yet it also

plays in integral role in the historical narrative of the development of the nation.

In the representative text that will be the focus of this essay, Sir Walter Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather* (1827) – a text both popular and influential – Highland violence is represented simultaneously as atavistically savage *and* as a crucial agent of Jacobitism in the final development of the political union of Great Britain. Highland violence is paradoxically configured as ahistorical (as the essential aspect of a 'rude', 'uncivilized', 'tribal' people) and thus not part of the history of the nation, and *constitutive* of that history (as the heart and soul of Jacobitism). Yoked to the history of the nation through Jacobitism, Highland violence abruptly meets its end along with Jacobitism, on the field of Cullodden. Highland savagery suddenly ceases and the Highlander is suddenly brought into the modern world as it is brought into 'history'. The aporetic demise of Highland violence seems radically to disrupt the idea of progress that Scott had carefully laid out early in his text: Highland civility is achieved neither gradually nor organically but abruptly and at the end of bayonet. The conflicting imperatives of Scott's text, one anthropological the other more precisely historiographical, reveal the underlying tensions and ruptures in his elaboration of the theory of progress. Because the Highlander stands both inside and outside British history, the figure threatens to undermine Scott's historical project altogether. Before examining the anomalous role that Highland violence plays in the *Tales*, I want to outline briefly the basic elements of the two impulses – one historiographical the other anthropological – in Scott's work.

Although Scott entitled his work a plural compilation of *Tales of a Grandfather*, a collection of anecdotes taken from 'Scottish History', the preface makes it clear that the work is to be taken not as a discontinuous collection of anecdotes but as a single coherent narrative of the history of the nation:

The compilation, though professing to be only a collection of Tales, or Narratives from the Scottish Chronicles, will nevertheless be found to contain a general view of the History of that country, from the period when it begins to possess general interest. (no page number)¹

The narrative voice begins with a description of the geography of Great Britain and never wavers in its authority nor loses the relentless train of its story (except in an isolated chapter on the 'Progress of Civilization' which I will examine presently) to its conclusion describing the years immediately following the Jacobite defeat in 1745. The theme of the *Tales* is always the progress of society and the relentless movement of the nation toward the achievement of the Union of the Scottish and English parliaments, signalled by the establishment of the Hanoverian Succession. This theme of progress both legitimates and naturalizes the end-product of Union, and, as Scott states in the preface, determines the history's conclusion:

It is the Author's purpose to carry this little work down to the period of 1748, when the two sister nations became blended together in manners as well as by political ties. The task will afford an opportunity to show the slow and interrupted progress by which England and Scotland ... gradually approximated to each other, until the last shades of national difference may be almost said to have disappeared. (no page number)

The idea of the political progress of the nation, predicated on the Hanoverian Succession, is often associated with Whig historiography of the period and thus would seem antithetical to Scott's Tory allegiances. Recent critics, however, have shown that Scott's historical ideas are indebted to a Whig theory of progress.² The historical narrative of the *Tales* affirms for the most part the idea that the movement of the nation is ever progressive and ultimately for the better.

Scott's history also configures Jacobitism as an ideology that serves a specific political movement. Though its adherents may change through the course of the history, the idea itself remains consistent. Jacobitism is not embodied in any single individual or, for the most part, in any single group. Jacobitism is not, in and of itself, simply 'Catholic', 'Scottish', 'Irish', or 'Highland'. Yet Jacobitism does seem to be linked inextricably with 'Highlandness' in a way that suggests the Highlander has little choice but to be Jacobite. Highlanders are uniformly the agents of violence that give force to the Jacobite cause. Although the landing of Bonnie Prince Charlie in Scotland in 1745 and the summoning of the clans do not initiate the idea of Jacobitism itself, they do initiate the necessary Highland machinery of force that makes Jacobitism a real threat to the Union and to the Hanoverian succession. Scott implies that without this force of violence, without the Highland clan armies, Jacobitism would have played only a trivial role in the development of Britain. In Scott's historiography, Highland violence is configured as the agent of a specific political movement that saw its rise and fall in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The history of the progress of humanity that Scott also lays out in the *Tales*, however, unlinks Highland violence from specific historical events. For his broad theories of social progress, Scott was indebted to Scottish theorists of mid-eighteenth century enlightenment Edinburgh, such as Adam Smith, Lord Kames, John Millar, and, especially, Adam Ferguson.³ Scott interrupts his narrative at the end of the first series of the *Tales* (at the point of James VI of Scotland's assumption to the English throne) to devote an entire chapter to explaining the mechanisms of the 'Progress of Civilisation'. The ideas on progress in this chapter are largely modelled on the ideas in Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, and they outline several of his key ideas: human civilization always advances toward ever more sophisticated forms of social organization structured by ever more complicated systems of law and convention, and this advancement is organized in a

succession of 'stages'.⁴ Scott asserts, as does Ferguson, that progress is desirable in general in that it reflects an 'accumulation of knowledge' and thus allows for the perfection of 'Reason' in human affairs. However, he also writes that 'the progress of society, or of civilisation ... is attended, like all things human, with much of evil as well as good' (375). Scott argues, like Ferguson, that progress is not unequivocally benevolent as later Whig historians would argue. This distinction allows Scott both to find virtue in 'primitive' societies and to critique the 'evil' of his own 'advanced' society, all the while affirming the overall inevitability of progress.

For the most part, these two discourses of progress in the narrative of the *Tales* – one political and specific to Great Britain, the other sociological, describing a universal dynamic of human existence – are knitted together in the text. The general progression toward more sophisticated (and benevolent) civil society is the movement of the people of Great Britain, from their feudal roots to their position as the most advanced people in the world. Both ideas of progress maintain a symbiotic relationship in the text: Scott's sociological ideas provide the theoretical support for his historiography, which, in turn, provides historical evidence for his sociological ideas.

Scott's account of Highland society, however, seems radically to violate his own ideas of the progress of society. While the other peoples of Britain are shown to evolve gradually from their ruder origins in the *Tales*, Highlanders seem stuck in the first stage of the progress of civilization, in the primitive 'infancy' of humankind. For most of the *Tales*, Highland society exists in its own unique time as well as space. As Johannes Fabian writes in his analysis of the uses of 'time' in anthropological discourse:

Savagery is a marker of the past, and if ethnographic evidence compels the anthropologist to state that savagery exists in contemporary societies then it will be located, by dint of some sort of horizontal stratigraphy, in *their* Time, not ours.⁵

The violence of Highland society is represented as a violence without motivation, not grounded in a specific political situation. Thus, when the Highlander finally enters the history of the nation as the agent of Jacobitism, he does so simultaneously under the sign of history and of anthropology.

II

Jacobitism has been so consistently and overwhelmingly equated with the Highlands since the early nineteenth century that the conflation of the two is now almost universally taken (certainly in popular culture, but even among literary critics) as self-evident. This commodified conflation of Jacobitism with the Highlands has tended to trivialize our understanding of both. Twentieth-century Scottish nationalists have long dismissed the memory

of Jacobitism as irrelevant to the modern struggles of the nation. Only recently have scholars like Murray G. H. Pittock re-emphasized the central role that Jacobitism and the Stuart myth have played in the making of Scottish identity.⁶

The popularity of the Jacobite Highland figure is indebted to Scott's imagination, particularly as it is revealed in *Waverley* and the other 'Scottish' novels that allude to the nation's Jacobite period. Yet it is clear that as Scott shifted from novelist to historian, he envisioned himself as following a much different set of literary principles.

The *Tales* is the author's most extensive and ambitious account of the history of Scotland. Ostensibly a narrative of the nation's history intended for Scott's young grandson – John Hugh Lockhart ('Master Hugh Littlejohn'), to whom the book is dedicated – the final product is rhetorically quite sophisticated. In a period when Scott was struggling to stay out of bankruptcy, the *Tales* was a huge financial and critical success, and even before the first edition had run its course, Scott's publisher was encouraging him to produce a second edition. The 10,000 printed copies of the second edition quickly sold out and earned their author £800. In his late nineteenth-century biography of Scott, Andrew Lang affirms the success of the *Tales*, writing that 'of the little that the world used to know about Scottish history, three-quarters were learned from *Tales of a Grandfather*'.⁷

Perhaps the greatest acclaim for the *Tales* in the eyes of its author came from the anonymous review (probably by Andrew Bisset) of the first two sections of the *Tales* in the *Westminster Review*. Though the reviewer argued at length against the politics of its author, he praised the ultimate 'truthfulness' of the history. Scott later recorded this comment in the Preface to the last series of his *Tales*:

[This reviewer] has paid me the great compliment, (which I may boast of having to my utmost ability deserved,) that my little work contains no fault of commission; that is to say, he admits that I have not either concealed or falsified the truth of history in controverted points, which, in my opinion ... would have been a most unpardonable crime. (ix-x)⁸

Grasping at a single comment from a review that was for the most part critical suggests Scott's anxiety in having his work judged as 'truthful' in the eyes of his readers. For the *Tales*, Scott seemed anxious to re-establish the dialectic between fact and fiction that he had so thoroughly dissolved in his historical novels. If it ultimately proved impossible for Scott to purge his work of all the novelistic devices that had made him such a success, he would at least attempt to tilt at the pole of fact in the *Tales*. His desire that his narrative 'entertain' and 'amuse' with fascinating anecdotes of Scottish history does not override his desire for 'truthfulness'. Scott's final allegiance is always to the 'Real' of historical events. At times, Scott seems to

acknowledge his own role in romanticizing Jacobitism. In the passage that immediately follows the final defeat of the Highland armies in the Battle of Culloden, Scott writes:

[The Jacobite Rebellion] has much that is splendid to the imagination, nor is it possible to regard without admiration the little band of determined men by whom such actions were achieved, or the interesting young Prince by whom their energies were directed. It is therefore natural that the civil strife of 1745 should have been long the chosen theme of the poet, the musician, and the novelist, and each has in turn found it possessed of an interest highly suitable to his purpose. (1172)

Yet the text introduces the possibility of a ‘romantic’ Jacobite Rebellion only to establish its own generic difference. As history, the *Tales* must serve a different master:

In a work founded on history, we must look more closely into the circumstances of the rebellion, and deprive it of some part of the show which pleases the fancy, in order to judge of it by the sound rules of reason. The best mode of doing this is to suppose that Charles had accomplished his romantic adventure, and seated himself in temporary security in the palace of St. James’s; when common sense must admit that nothing could have been expected from such a counter-revolution excepting new strife and fiercer civil wars. (1172)

This passage suggests that Scott sought to eliminate any of the tensions between romance and reason that inform so much of his discussion of Highland society and Jacobitism in his novels, although much of the scholarship on Scott’s historical ideas has ignored the *Tales*.⁹ In a work proclaiming itself as ‘history’, the romance of Jacobitism is jettisoned in keeping with the fundamental influence of Scottish Whig historiography, which Colin Kidd argues underlies Scott’s work in general. Kidd writes: ‘Scott’s romantic ... patriotism was qualified by his sociological whiggism ...’ (261). Further, this Whig qualification in Scott’s work ‘creat[ed] mental and emotional space for a “scientific” allegiance to Anglo-British modernity’ (259). Scott therefore rejects Jacobitism as an ideology of the past, an alluring yet antiquated ideal that is counter to the eventual triumph of the British Union and of progress.

III

Although it is in the last third of the *Tales* where Highland violence achieves its preeminence – in the story of Jacobitism’s rise and final defeat at Culloden – Highlanders and Highland violence make their first appearances much earlier, after the first hundred pages or so of the history. Highland violence

is not linked to the political progress of the nation but serves a comparative function that emphasizes the distinctiveness of Highland society:

The inhabitants of the Highlands spoke, and still speak, a language totally different from the Lowland Scots. The dress of these mountaineers was also different from that of the Lowlanders. They wore a plaid, or mantle of frieze, or of a striped stuff called tartan This part of the Scottish nation was divided into clans, that is, tribes. Each tribe lived in a valley, or district of the mountains, separated from the others; and they often made war upon, and fought desperately with each other. (118–120)

This brief first appearance of Highland society ropes off the Highlands from the rest of the nation, establishes the structure of ethnic comparison, in this case between Lowland and Highland Scots, and establishes the pattern by which Highland society will be described throughout the narrative. The fact of Highland difference – illustrated by language, dress, tribal society and, especially, warlike behaviour – is consistently restated and emphasized throughout the *Tales*. Yet Highlanders and Lowlanders are not the only peoples who are included in Scott's sociological schema: Borderers and the English also play roles. The *Tales* occupies itself with a comparative analysis of the different peoples that have existed on the island of Great Britain through time, all of whom can be seen to be moving along the track of social progress at varying rates of development. Early on, the English achieve the comparative status of 'most civilized' and never retreat from their civilized state. At one point, the Borderers of Scotland seem to occupy almost (but not quite) the same low position on the civilized scale as the Highlanders:

[T]he Borderers resembled the Highlanders in their mode of government and habits of plundering, and, as it may be truly added, in their disobedience to the general government of Scotland, yet they differed in many particulars. (120)

At successive points, however, both Lowland Scots and Borderers achieve parity with the English. Differentiated groups therefore do not simply become progressively more 'civil'; they more precisely 'catch up' to a leader. By the beginning of the eighteenth century and the achievement of the Union (two-thirds of the way through the *Tales* as a whole), English and Border and Lowland Scottish societies achieve a static polarity: 'Men [of Britain] used the same language, possessed in considerable degree the same habits of society, and lived under the same forms of government, which have existed in Britain down to the present day' (772). In sociological terms, the past merges with the present at this point; ethnic peoples that were once different in relation to each other become the same. The achievement of Union signals a partial end to social progress – as it concerns the English, Lowland

Scots, and Borderers – by signalling the end of ‘difference’ among these three societies of the nation.

Highlanders do not, however, achieve parity at the Act of Union; Highland society remains ‘primitive’ and is therefore excluded from this triumphant merging. Indeed, Highland society almost seems to be excluded from the mechanisms of social progress altogether. Throughout the *Tales*, until the narrative of their crushing defeat at Culloden (which I will take up last), Highland society makes little or no progress.

At the point of his history that relates the union of the Scottish and English crowns under James I (and VI) in 1603, Scott again remarks on the social state of the Highlands:

The Highland tribes ... remained in the same state as before, using the same dress, wielding the same arms, divided into the same clans, each governed by its own patriarch, and living in all respects as their ancestors had lived for many centuries before them. (410)

Scott restates this description of Highland atavism again and again in the history. Four hundred pages and 150 years later, on the eve of the ’45, Scott remarks:

The Highlands were in a very different state [from the Lowlands], and from the tenacity with which the inhabitants retained the dress, language, manners and customs of their fathers more nearly resembled their predecessors of centuries long past than any other nation in Europe. (979)

Scott does complicate this last description of Highland atavism, suggesting that by this time ‘[c]ivilisation had approached their mountains’ and that young Highlanders ‘of fortune’, especially (who ‘received their education in English and Lowland schools’) had ‘gradually adopt[ed] the ideas of those with whom they were brought up’ (980). Yet even at this point in the history, descriptions of Highland society retain their full comparative effect. It is continuously marked as ‘different’. Furthermore, all the descriptions of the primitiveness of Highland society are nearly interchangeable.

Stories of the tribal Highlanders seem to grant a historicity to Highland society by placing it in the ‘first stage’ of human development. Yet without momentum, without the eventual working toward the achievement of the last stage of human development, of ‘civilization’, Highland ‘history’ is no history at all. The Highlander is positioned in the *Tales* much like the Oriental in other metropolitan descriptions. Scott’s Highlander is like ‘the ‘Arab’ who, Edward Said writes, ‘as a collective entity accumulates no existential or semantic thickness. He remains the same. [His] experiences are necessarily subordinate to the sheer, unadorned, and persistent fact of being an Arab’.¹⁰ Indeed, the Highlander seems more an ethnographic subject than

a historical one in most of the *Tales*. History eludes the Highland subject; weighed down by its failure to progress or even change it yet retains the lightness of a feather that makes no mark on the edifice of history, until the last third of the *Tales*.

Of course Highlanders (or their society) are more than simple subjects in the workings of social progress alone in the *Tales*. As I have suggested, although the sociological imperatives of the work do not seem to grant the Highland subject historicity, the figure is simultaneously an important agent in the history of the political progress of the nation. As a story of a single specific nation, grounded in a particular epoch or milieu, the *political* history is the focus of the *Tales*. Again, at times, the Highlander seems to enter the specific history of the life of the nation even before the introduction of Jacobitism. Individual Highlanders engage in specific acts with specific political consequences throughout the unfolding historical narrative before and up to Jacobitism. Although this aura of historical precision may seem to suggest that Highlanders, either individually or collectively, are indeed subjects of British history proper, the text always places them outside the political progress of the nation in a way that affirms their historical irrelevance, rather than suggesting any possibility of Highland agency in the history of the nation.

Scott suggests at one point that even if the names and dates of specific intra-Highland conflicts could be known and narrated, their only use would be to further emphasize the essential character of the Highlander. In short, a representation that gave some historical 'meaning' to the Highland past is simply impossible. The *Tales* envisions a Highland past that is merely, in Peter Womack's words, 'a zone of pure violence', a prehistoric world.¹¹ A dramatic example of this is the story of Evan Dhu Lochiel, chief of the clan Cameron. That Lochiel led his clan into battle in the Highlands on the Royalist side during the English Civil War and later 'supported the cause of the Stewart family ... with distinguished heroism, in the Battle of Killiecrankie' (543) are not as significant in the text as the ferocity with which he defends his cause. The text provides a description of hand-to-hand combat during the Civil War between Lochiel and an English officer 'of great personal strength'. In what can only be described as 'typical' Highland ferocity, Lochiel defeats his opponent:

Lochiel was dexterous enough to disarm the Englishman; but his gigantic adversary suddenly closed on him, and in the struggle which ensued both fell to the ground, the officer uppermost ... [T]he Highland chief, making a desperate effort, grasped his enemy by the collar, and snatching with his teeth at the bare and outstretched throat, he seized it as a wild-cat might have done, and kept his hold so fast as to tear out the windpipe. The officer died in this singular manner. Lochiel was so far from disowning, or being ashamed of this extraordinary mode of defense, that he was afterwards heard to say, it was the sweetest morsel he had ever tasted. (541)

Here, Lochiel's act and final utterance alludes to the primitive taboos that link Highlanders with other tribal peoples around the world. It also illustrates the sheer unmitigated animal ferocity of the Highlander in war.

The anecdote of Lochiel and his 'sweetest morsel' is perhaps only the most extreme example of an oft-repeated trope. At many other points in the narrative leading up to the Jacobite rebellion, Scott treats his reader to anecdotes that illustrate the essential savagery of Highland life. There is, for example, the story of the Highlanders who trap their enemies in a cave and wait for them to starve to death; and of the Highland maid, who holds the lamp in the fading light of the gloaming while her brothers cut the throats of captured members of a rival clan; and of the hapless Lowland woman who, after going into her kitchen to prepare a meal for a group of invading Highlanders, returns to the dining room only to find that they have killed her brother, cut his head off, and, after placing the head on the dining table, stuffed his mouth with food. By Scott's time these accounts were well-worn anecdotes in the popular litany of Highland horror stories. Most had appeared in print before. Samuel Johnson had (twice) mentioned the anecdote of Highlanders trapping their enemies in a cave in *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, published fifty years earlier. Scott himself used the anecdote of the grisly dinner surprise in *A Legend of Montrose*. However, this elaborate procession of Highland anecdotes invests the narrative with a graphic spectacle of blood and gore meant to titillate its young (and old) readers. This procession also serves to make emphatically clear that what Scott says at one point in the narrative is true of all Highlanders in general:

Many ... stories could be told you of the wild wars of the [Highlanders]; but these may suffice at present to give you some idea of the fierceness of their manners, the low value at which they held human life, the cruel manner in which wrongs were revenged, and the unscrupulous violence by which property was required. (417)

Though the anecdotes are contextualized in a specific time and place that gives them a limited narrative coherence, this coherence cannot be said to grant them a 'historical' power. Discontinuous and only tentatively linked to the unfolding of the history of Great Britain proper, these colourful Highland anecdotes of violence are not emplotted within the narrative of the formation of the nation, and they only temporarily disrupt this narrative. Neither can these anecdotes collectively be thought to constitute some 'proto-national' tribal history that runs parallel or counter to the history of Great Britain. Rather, Highland violence in these anecdotes is always configured as *excess*, as an essentialized ahistorical aspect of Highland society that, by its very nature, exceeds the boundaries of the historical narrative of the nation.

IV

Scott's account of Highland violence in the long section of his history devoted to Jacobitism and the Jacobite struggle against the Hanoverian Succession must be seen in the context of earlier descriptions of 'exemplary' Highland violence. Yet from the description of its first manifestation after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 to its final defeat at Culloden, the Jacobite Rebellion is largely a Highland affair. Again, Highland agency in the Jacobite rebellion is almost exclusively expressed in terms of Highland propensity for violence: the Highland clan army is the engine that gives force to the rebellion. In the description of the '45 campaign, this Highland army is consistently noted for its constant eagerness to fight, its immunity to the hardships of the campaign, and its distinctive tendency to give its opposition no quarter in defeat. So eager to fight is the Highland army that it will begin to disintegrate if not deployed soon enough:

The Highlanders, with the impatience and indolence of a half-civilised people, grew weary alike of remaining idle and of being employed in the labour of fortification, or the dull details of ordinary parade exercise. (905)

References to the Highlanders in the narrative of the Jacobite rebellion reproduce this belligerence unproblematically, though it is of course not the case that Highlanders are the sole agents in the rebellion. Lowland and English Jacobites fight alongside Highlanders for the lost cause. Certainly the individual political and military leaders of the rebellion (including Prince Charlie himself) are not Highlanders. Scott, however, distinguishes between the Highland and non-Highland forces of Jacobitism. Consistently anxious to delineate the complex and often contradictory personal and political motivations of the principal Jacobite players, Scott seems to deny just as consistently the possibility of any such motivations to Highlanders, who align themselves so unequivocally to the Jacobite ideal.

From the moment that the Union of 1707 is achieved, Jacobitism is enlotted as its foil, and because it is inherently anti-Union, Jacobitism's demise is foretold at its very birth:

[T]hough there could be never any doubt that the Union in itself was a most desirable event, yet by the erroneous mode in which it was pushed on and opposed by all parties concerned, such obstacles were thrown in the way of benefits it was calculated to produce as to interpose a longer interval of years betwixt the date of the treaty and the national advantages arising out of it, than the term spent by the Jews in the wilderness ere they attained the promised land. (765)

Jacobitism is part of the price of struggling in the desert that the chosen people of Great Britain must pay before achieving the inevitable paradise of

Union. Ignited by passion and opposed to the ‘reason’ of the Union, Jacobitism is an ‘error’ that must be corrected. Thus when Scott describes Jacobite activity, he seeks to contain any residual subversive force by underpinning his discussion with an ‘explanation’ of political motivation, as if to make Jacobitism, though never ‘reasonable’, at least ‘understandable’. He adopts a narrative framework that seeks always to explain the underlying motivations of individual Jacobite actors. For example, the description of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715 begins with a long elaboration of the personal motives of the Earl of Mar in undertaking to lead a Jacobite force. In a lengthy episode characterized by descriptions of sly political maneuvering, duplicity, and outright bribery, the narrative positions Mar as a true Jacobite ‘player’, whose motivations in taking up the cause of the ‘Old Pretender’ are perfectly understandable though not particularly scrupulous. There is, however, never any attempt to ‘explain away’ the motive of Jacobite Highlanders as a whole or any of the individual clan chiefs who would lead them into battle.

In place of political motivation, Scott substitutes the ahistorical patriarchal bond of clan loyalty, which prompts all acts of Highland violence in the cause of Jacobitism. Highlanders do not so much fight *against* the Hanoverian succession as fight *for* their chief in support of their clan. Indeed, Scott never suggests that Highlanders even *understand* the ideology of Jacobitism, much less consciously fight for it. Though the tribal ‘loyalty of the clans’ is attractively romantic (if anachronistic), it strips the Highlanders, who are surrounded by a veritable sea of Jacobite political maneuvering and intrigue, of any political consciousness.

Thus, when Bonnie Prince Charlie makes his first appearance in Scotland, landing on the west coast of the Highlands, and initiates Jacobitism’s final climactic defeat, the Highlanders are simply *there* and ready to take up the fight. When one of the prince’s loyal Highland chiefs seems to waver in his support by suggesting the futility of their enterprise one of the chief’s young attendants reminds him of the proper attitude of a Highlander:

A young Highlander ... began now to understand before whom he stood, and, grasping his sword, showed visible signs of impatience at the reluctance manifested by his chief and his brother to join their Prince. [The Prince] turned suddenly towards the young Highlander, and said, “You at least will not forsake me?”

“I will follow you to death,” said Ranald, “were there no other to draw a sword in your cause.”

The Chief, and relative of the warm-hearted young man, caught his enthusiasm, and declared that, since the Prince was determined, they would no longer dispute his pleasure. (997)

Such is the extent of Highland deliberation on the worthiness of the cause, the chances of its success, or effects that the rebellion would have on the political position of the clan or Highland society in general.

This lack of political motivation or understanding ironically redeems the Highlanders in Scott's eyes when the armies of Jacobitism are defeated and when its principal leaders are caught and put on trial. Scott provides a lengthy account of the treason trials of the supporters of the rebellion, men of various 'ages, ranks, and habits', hundreds of whom were afterwards executed in cities throughout Scotland and England (1168). Scott's attitude toward the treason trials and executions, however, seems mixed. While lamenting the general and indiscriminate 'effusion of blood' as both imprudent and excessive, Scott, hesitatingly at first, affirms the necessity of punishment:

It was to be ... expected that those who had been most active in such rebellious and violent proceedings should be called to answer with their lives for the bloodshed and disorder to which they had been given occasion. (1143)

He also seeks to moderate any condemnation of the severity of the punishment, suggesting that the rebels themselves must have accepted its possibility: '[The rebels] themselves well knew at bloody risk they had played the deadly game of insurrection, and expected no less forfeit than their lives' (1143). Granting 'understanding' to the defeated rebels not only serves to contain any potential lingering outrage at the severity of their punishment; it also initiates a clear contrast between the punishments of defeated Jacobites in general and that of defeated Jacobite Highlanders specifically. Although death also is meted out to the Highland rebels, Scott seems much more critical of the severity of their sentence:

If ... much could be said in favour of extending clemency even to several leaders of the insurrection, how much more might have been added in behalf of their simple and ignorant followers, who came out in ignorance of the laws of the civilised part of the nation, but in compliance with the unalienable tie by which they and their fathers had esteemed themselves bound to obey their chief. (1144)

Scott suggests it is precisely because Highlanders, as a primitive people living outside the 'civilized' world in which Jacobitism was created, are *incapable* of understanding the full implications of Jacobitism that their punishment is inherently unjust. Without the precondition of 'civil society' the principles of law (in place of the patriarchal bonds of loyalty) cannot be applied to Highlanders. In a footnote to the text, the narrator makes this point using a metaphor that also de-humanizes the Highlander:

To punish men who were bred in such principles [of patriarchal obedience], for following their chiefs into war, seems as unjust as it would be to hang a dog for the crime of following its master. (1144)

Thoughtlessly and fanatically loyal, the Highlander is ever ready to bare his fangs and attack any opponent until victory or death, all at the bidding of his betters.

V

With the Battle of Culloden, which concludes the '45, and the Jacobite movement, Scott concludes his history of Britain. After the final dramatic defeat of the greatest challenge to the Union, the history's dénouement is brief, lasting only four chapters (out of a total of 87) and 49 pages (out of a total of 1,192), and is focused largely on the fate of Highlanders in the aftermath of the '45. Because the text consistently configures Highland society as primitive, outside the context of the civil polity of the nation, it would seem to suggest that there is no *necessary* link between the fate of Highland society and that of the Jacobite movement. There is certainly no reason to suggest that the demise of Jacobitism *must* bring with it a concomitant demise of Highland society. Yet the end of Jacobitism signals Highland society's irreversible ascension to 'civility' and the triumph of social progress in Great Britain. At the finale of the *Tales*, Scott combines his sociological and historiographical threads, interweaving them into a single pattern that demonstrates political and civil advancement. To do so, however, he must dramatically violate his own assumptions on the nature of human progress. The defeat of Jacobitism signals the Highlander's abrupt entry into the modern civilized world and the end of a Highland way of life that was, up to that point, fascinatingly different, fascinatingly savage.

Much recent historiography on the profound changes in Highland society of the mid-eighteenth century has sought to diminish the link between Jacobitism and the breakup of Highland society (at least as this was manifested in the breakup of clanship). This historiography suggests that social bonds of the clan community had already largely disintegrated by the beginning of the century and that the social relation between the clan 'chief' and his people was already one based largely on a system of private land ownership in a market-driven agrarian economy; that is, it was a relation between a landlord and his tenants.¹² This historiography suggests that the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie and Jacobitism did little to alter this trend, a trend that would lead to the Highland Clearances of Scott's own time. Yet in the *Tales* (and indeed much historiography that came after), Culloden is like a great portal by which Highland society leaves behind its primitive ways and enters into the modern world, never to be the same, never to return to the other side.¹³ In this interpretation, Culloden can act as a clear demarcation point between a 'lost' Highland past – a lamented 'authentic' Highland past that can never be recovered – and a sad shadowy Highland present that is hardly 'Highland' at all. The Culloden portal often is the point of departure for a historiography of 'loss' that informs much of our understanding of Highland culture

today. Scott's account of the Highland passage from savagery to civility, however, emphasizes the historical necessity and inevitability of the transformation. Susceptible to the powers of nostalgia himself, Scott first cautions his reader to avoid the dangers of losing one's way amid the all-too-enticing romantic Highland mist.

With whatever sympathy, therefore, we may regard the immediate sufferers; with whatever general regret we may look upon the extinction by violence of a state of society which was so much connected with honor, fidelity, and the tenets of romantic chivalry; it is impossible in sober sense to wish that it should have continued, or to say that, in political wisdom, the government of Great Britain ought to have tolerated its longer existence. (1177)

In a final effort to purge his history of the elements of nostalgia and romantic loss, Scott configures all subsequent government acts to suppress the peculiarities of Highland society as inevitable, although perhaps distasteful, in the unwavering march of progress. Thus Scott acknowledges that the abolition of all legal authority of clan leaders and the banning of Highland arms may irritate the reader's sensibility; however, such acts are dictated by the principles of reason and of 'political wisdom' (1178).

The Highlander can finally take his position in the history of progress with the other peoples of Great Britain in a process that Scott declares has begun relatively recently. With the minor resistance that is to be expected in such a dramatic shift from one way of life to another – and mostly coming from disaffected Highland 'old-timers' – 'modern Highlanders, trained from their youth to the improved mode of agriculture' are suddenly ready to take up the plough and enter the world of agrarian capitalism on an equal basis with their southern counterparts (1191). Scott only hints at this dynamic in his 'Postscript which should have been a Preface' to *Waverley*, but in the *Tales* it is firmly emplotted within the narrative. Quite literally, at the very end of the history proper, Highland society is not reconciled with but merged into the society of the nation at large:

With the Highlands we have now done, nor are their inhabitants now much distinguished from those of the rest of Scotland except in the use of the Gaelic language, and that they still retain some vestiges of their ancient feelings and manners. (1192)

This ending to the Highlanders and the *Tales* reveals not only the specific traces of the powerful offspring of the idea of social progress in the nineteenth century, the ideology of social 'improvement'; it also suggests that history ultimately represents the assimilation of diverse peoples into a single civilized society. After Anglo-Saxon, Lowland, and Border societies, Highland society is finally able to take a place in the homogeneous civilization of

the nation and, in doing so, loses its distinctiveness as it is absorbed into contented, pacified, unified Great Britain.

Thus, a text that had consistently sought to articulate essential Highland difference abruptly banishes at its very end all such difference and the very grounds upon which it was based. Highlanders simply stop their 'savagery.' Yet the narrative of the forced and rapid assimilation of Highland society at the very end of the *Tales* implies a drastic reworking of Scott's ideas on the mechanisms of social progress. As Scott writes in his chapter on the progress of civilization, the pace of the progress of a society toward civilization is a 'gradual' one, as the development of the other societies of Great Britain clearly demonstrates. It is a 'law of our moral nature', Scott writes, that as the progressive 'alterations' of society 'take place ... faster or slower' they do so 'in consequence of the inventions and improvements of *succeeding generations* of mankind' (my emphasis) (373–4). Using a specific example at the end of the chapter that illustrates the pace of social change, Scott writes:

a material change had gradually and slowly taken place, both in the kingdom of England, and in that of Scotland, when their long quarrels were ... ended by the accession of James the Sixth of Scotland to the English crown (377)

This passage reveals that, although the political upheavals that signal change are often dramatic, the overall pace of social progress is always evolutionary *not* revolutionary.

Yet the transformation of Highland society suggests not only that an advanced society can suddenly and effectively wrench another society out of its primitive state. The transformation also points to the practical uses of violence in civilizing a primitive society that, for whatever reason, is not able to become civilized on its own. The emphasis on progress and the benevolence of assimilation at the end of the *Tales* removes the foul taste from accounts of military suppression in the Highlands. Highlanders are made the equal of the rest of Great Britain through the violent destruction of their way of life. Thus, at the very end of the history of the nation, which is concomitantly the end of social progress and of a distinctive Highland way of life, it is not the atavistic extra-national violence of the Highlanders that has the final word, but the legally sanctioned 'civil' violence of the armies of Great Britain. This violence is, as the 'legitimist' representation of the wishes of the state, not really violence at all.

Notes

1 Walter Scott, *The Tales of Grandfather*, (London, 1933). All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. The *Tales* was originally published in four successive series. The first series carries the history of Scotland up to the union of Scottish and English crowns under James VI and I. The second finishes with the

achievement of the Union of Parliaments, and the third concludes the history of Scotland. The fourth and last series of the *Tales* is a history of France left unfinished at Scott's death in 1832. In the absence of a standard edition of Scott's works, all citations (unless otherwise noted) refer to the 1933 edition, which is a reprint of the first edition of the *Tales* to combine all the three successive series of the Scottish history into a single volume.

2 For a recent discussion and bibliography on the Whiggism in Scott's work see Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity, 1689–1830* (Cambridge, 1993), especially pp. 256–67.

3 For studies on the influence on Scott's thinking of social theorists of the Scottish Enlightenment, see Graham McMaster, *Scott and Society*, (Cambridge, 1981), especially Part 2; Duncan Forbes, 'The Rationalism of Sir Walter Scott', *Cambridge Journal* 7:1 (October, 1953), pp. 20–35; Peter D. Garside, 'Scott and the Philosophical Historians', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36 (1975), pp. 497–512; and Cyrus Vakil, 'Sir Walter Scott and the Historicism of Scottish Enlightenment Philosophical History', in J. H. Alexander and David Hewitt (eds), *Scott in Carnival* (Aberdeen, 1993), pp. 404–418.

4 For a discussion of Ferguson's Highland background and how his own knowledge of the Highlands influenced his theories on the development of civil society, see Duncan Forbes, 'Introduction', *An Essay on the History of Civil Society, 1767, by Adam Ferguson* (Edinburgh, 1966).

5 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York, 1983), p. 75.

6 See Pittock's *The Invention of Scotland: The Stuart Myth and the Scottish Identity, 1638 to the Present* (London, 1991).

7 Quoted in John Sutherland, *The Life of Walter Scott: A Critical Biography* (Oxford, 1995), 318.

8 *Tales of a Grandfather*, Third Series, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1830). This preface is not in the combined edition.

9 For recent work, see for example David Brown, *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination* (London, 1979); Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca, NY, 1991); Murray G. H. Pittock, 'Scott as Historiographer', in J. H. Alexander and David Hewitt (eds), *Scott in Carnival*, (Aberdeen, 1993), pp. 145–53; and Fiona Robertson, *Legitimate Histories: Scott, Gothic, and the Authorities of Fiction* (Oxford, 1994).

10 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979), p. 230.

11 Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (London, 1989), p. 35.

12 See for example T. M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofter's War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester, 1994), and Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances, Volume 1: Agrarian Transformation and the Evictions 1746–1886* (London, 1982).

13 For examples of the 'portal' theory in twentieth-century historiography on the changes in Highland society after the '45, see John Prebble, *Culloden* (London, 1961).