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History's rank stew: Walter Scott, James Mill, and the politics of time

Time, as we have already had occasion to observe, is nothing of itself—Jeremy Bentham

In May of 1826, newly widowed, financially desperate, and bilious, Walter Scott proposed to write a 'Small eastern tale' as part of his bid to stave off insolvency. The following year he published the fruits of that first rumination, now transformed into three stories, as the first series of the *Chronicles of the Canongate*: the popular 'The Highland Widow' and 'The Two Drovers', as well as the lesser-known novella *The Surgeon's Daughter*. Soon after, Scott began working on his Magnum edition of the Waverley novels and he split the stories up: 'The Highland Widow' and 'The Two Drovers' were placed in Volume 41 accompanying *The Fair Maid of Perth*, while *The Surgeon's Daughter* was published in Volume 48 along with the second part of *Castle Dangerous*. This fissuring determined the *Chronicles'* critical future—in which scholars almost always consider the tales separately—and reflected Scott's own seeming sense of the text, which he referred to variously as an 'old haggis', an '*hors d'oeuvre*', and an '*olla podrida*'. Upon closer consideration, however, the implied eclecticism of these food metaphors belies an underlying unity. In Peter Motteux's popular 1712 translation of *Don*

Quixote, which Scott had in his library at Abbotsford, Sancho Panza delivers a disquisition on the delights of *olla podrida* which, he declares, come not from its jumble of cast-off meats but from its overriding funkiness, for 'the stronger they are the better, where all sorts of good things are rotten stewed and, as it were, lost in one another…the more they are thus rotten, the better the smack'.[1] Similarly, while it is clear that the *Chronicles* can legitimately be read a series of distinct stories, this article proposes that considering the text as a single narrative delivers a stronger smack than when the tales are digested individually.

Chronicles, as Hayden White has suggested, are merely records of events lacking form.[2] There are, of course, tropes that crop up in the *Chronicles'* individual tales—obsessions with patrimony; the collapse of familial myths; destructive maternal figures—which, along with the narrator Chrystal Croftangry's stated purpose to 'throw some light on the manners of Scotland as they once were, and to contrast them, occasionally, with such as now are fashionable in the same country', are common in Scott's fiction.[3] Instead, I want to suggest that the *Chronicles*' distinguishing factor is the eponymous Canongate, which, like the iron pot of the *olla podrida* doesn't merely hold these stories together but functions as the constitutive factor in their coalescence, yielding history from parataxis. Reading the *Chronicles* as a single narrative, with the ancient Scottish neighborhood—the Canongate—serving as the nodal point for these geographically and historically radiating tales, allows us to see how the text as whole knits the British Empire together from both within and without in an interrogation of imperial chronopolitics. Sutured back together, the *Chronicles* present a bleak vision of historical momentum, so different from the narratives of progress in Scott's earlier work, that is indicative of the

'powerfully revisionist concern' Ian Duncan has identified as the most striking feature of the author's late fiction.[4] Duncan here refers to Scott's reassessment of his own novelistic and philosophical models, but this observation in the context of the *Chronicles* applies equally to that text's representation of imperial history during a period of transition, particularly in Britain's subcontinental territories. The narrative of this transformation has traditionally been epitomized by a single text—James Mill's *The History of British India* (1817)—but Scott's *Chronicles* offer an important, often overlooked counterpoint to Mill's narrative of progress. To read the *Chronicles* in the shadow of Mill, as I do here, is to get a fuller sense of Britain's understanding of its imperial self at an ideological crossroads between an older form of more assimilative, appreciative governance and an ascendant ideology of reform.

Chronotope

All of the Canongate's public buildings, as Croftangry informs us at the story's commencement, are inscribed with the Latin motto *sic itur ad astra* ('this is the path to heaven'). As the same motto appears as the epigraph for both the *Chronicles*' title page and its beginning chapter, it suggests a particularly intimate relationship between place and story. The Canongate, a small burgh on the lower eastern side of Edinburgh, was the seat of both sacral and political power in Scotland—both Holyrood Abbey and the Palace of Holyroodhouse are in the neighborhood—until 1603, when James VI moved from Holyroodhouse to England to assume the monarchy, beginning a neighborhood decline that would accelerate in the eighteenth century as aristocrats fled the old area for New Town. Because the Abbey's precincts traditionally provided sanctuary against debt, by the nineteenth century the neighborhood had devolved into a motely stew of bankrupts,

exiles, and the impoverished. In the 1820's, when the *Chronicles'* frame narrative takes place, the Sanctuary's (or Girth's) inhabitants included the Comte d'Artois, formerly Charles X who had fled France and was living in Holyroodhouse, as well as a flood of displaced Highlanders and Irish refugees.[5] Rich in history, the Canongate seems a natural choice for Scott to set his fiction, but excepting the narrator Chrystal Croftangry's own story, which appends and then frames the three successive tales, none of the *Chronicles*' tales are set in the Canongate or even in Edinburgh.

As the frame narrative recounts, Croftangry initially flees to the Canongate as a reckless youth eager to escape imprisonment for debt after frittering away his family fortune. Bound by ancient law to stay within the proscribed limits of the Sanctuary, he spends long hours musing on the invisible line that separates his limited freedom/relative imprisonment in the Sanctuary from freedom/inevitable imprisonment outside of it, an idea that the text frequently returns to. Eventually, Croftangry is released from his legal obligations and, like so many impoverished Scots he emigrates, only returning home in advanced age and prosperity. And then he does a strange thing. He returns to the scene of his original confinement and takes up residence not merely in the Canongate, but within the limits of the Sanctuary itself.

Croftangry's decision to return to the Canongate is spurred by the successive erosion of various familial myths. The most important one is his romantic notion of paternalistic largesse, which is dashed when he discovers that his former tenants remember their hereditary landlords with indifference rather than affection. Abandoning his attempts to recover his patrimony, Croftangry frames his decision to return to the Canongate in terms of classical romance, likening himself to a 'knight errant, prisoner in

some enchanted castle, where spells have made the ambient air impervious to the unhappy captive' (45). If, as Duncan has suggested, romance is the 'fulcrum against which…reality can be turned around', we see here how Croftangry's resort to fiction mediates his disappointment with the 'common life' of history.[6] He also explicitly links this newfound interest in the past to his emigration, noting that, 'a natural taste for [the landscapes of my youth] must have lurked in the bottom of my heart, which awakened when I was in foreign countries' (27). Thus, both fiction and the colonial periphery establish a dialectical relationship with the national domestic center.

This winking negotiation of fictionality in the frame narrative has another and telling iteration: once Croftangry's illusions of the past are shattered by his visit to the old family estate, his resolution to return to the Canongate is inspired partly by a suggestion in a family history that his real ancestral property lies therein. The proof of this, though—a scribal forefather's splitting of 'Croftangry' into *Croft-an-righ*, or, 'the king's croft', (and thus proof of the family's claim to land near Holyroodhouse)—is both etymologically spurious and meta-textually allusive. There is a section of the Canongate that was (and is still) known as Croft-an-Righ, but its spelling was successively changed in the 1820's to suggest this association to royalty.[7] Thus the Canongate's history, undone by colonial displacement and disenfranchisement, is refabricated through willed illusion on both a civic and fictional-familial scale.

Once Croftangry is settled in the Canongate he discovers that his neighborhood is situated as to offer views of both the crags of King Arthur's Seat and the modern cosmopolis of Edinburgh, allowing him unparalleled views of the sedimented, overlapping layers of history the city embodies. And although he does not refer directly

to what would have been one of the most striking aspects of the Canongate at the time—the destruction of old buildings to make way for industrial breweries—his narrative recreation of the district's demolished aristocratic houses (notably the famous description of Baliol's Lodging) suggests the Canongate is not just a static vantage point but functions as a dynamic center of change. Duncan has recently demonstrated how the romanticization of Edinburgh's contrasts cemented its status as the 'aesthetic site of an imperial nationalist ideology', and in *Chronicles* the Canongate functions chronotopically as a site of the imperial present as embodied in both its physical-historical flux and its narrative property, i.e., the be-mottoed tales.[8] Although initially turning to writing out of boredom, Croftangry's inspiration is that evolving contrast between ancient and modern that he is a daily witness to. Boredom is also the catalyst for the blurry distinction between historical fiction and the fictionality of historical narrative, as Croftangry narratizes history as a compensation for the alienation of flat, modern time: 'We have the best of it. Scenes in which our ancestors thought deeply, acted fiercely, and died desperately, are to us tales to divert the tedium of a winter's evening…or beguile a summer's morning' (54). The Canongate's three chronicles demonstrate a similar awareness of fiction's ability to simultaneously create and destroy narratives of national and imperial formation.

Despite Croftangry's deliberate seclusion within the confines of the Canongate, he hopes for a very different future for his literary output. Thinking through various genres of writing, he reflects:

> I have chosen not to publish periodically…for…a periodical paper is not easily extended in circulation beyond the quarter in which it is published…Now I am

> ambitious that my compositions, though having their origin in this Valley of Holyrood, should not only be extended into those exalted regions I have mentioned [commercial Edinburgh], but also that they should cross the Forth…and travel as much farther to the north as the breath of applause will carry their sails. As for a southward direction, it is not to be hoped for in my fondest dreams. I am informed that Scotch literature, like Scotch whisky, will be presently laid under a prohibitory duty (52).

As Croftangry details the geographical scope of Scottish literary ventures it becomes clear that Scottish writing is engirthed by the borders of Scotland in the way that he was once confined to the Sanctuary and that, like the Girth, this confinement is both nurturing and constrictive. Although he likens the results of his literary efforts to an antiquary, his desire to inject his stories into a nationally bounded narrative suggests less the antiquarian's eclectic hording for private pleasure than the historian's desire for 'civic humanism'.[9] This tension between the local and national (or global) in the frame narrative reverberates through the subsequent tales. Caroline McCracken-Flesher has noted that almost all border crossings in *The Chronicles* are ultimately fatal, a trope she reads as indicative of Scott's fear of the extinction of a distinctive Scottish cultural identity.[10] Reading the *Chronicles* as a unified narrative allows us to see how this anxiety over cultural erosion telescopes out into a critique of the economic and cultural traffic of empire.

A few years before beginning the *Chronicles*, Scott famously referred to India (or, more accurately, the East India Company's Board of Control) as a 'Corn Chest for Scotland, where we poor gentry must send our younger Sons as we send our black cattle

to the south', a symmetry of commercial and human traffic that links cross-border droving in *The Two Drovers* to expatriating Scots in *The Surgeon's Daughter* (and even *The Highland Widow*, in which the dissolution of Highland cattle-rustling prompts Hamish's decision to enlist to fight the French in America).[11] Like many of his countrymen, and arguably unlike most English, Scott was keenly aware of the essential connections both economic and civilizational between British imperial activity in India and Scottish migration. Alexander Duff's *A Vindication of the Church of Scotland's India Missions* (1837) pointed out that Scots should be particularly eager to embrace foreign evangelism because of their own relatively recent liberation from the 'thickest Popish darkness' and tribal savagery, a transformation he explicitly links to the embrace of English and the abandonment of tradition for 'universal knowledge'.[12] An similar parallel between internal British colonization and external imperial conquest is suggested in *Chronicles* when Croftangry is advised to substitute India for Scotland as the setting for his third story on the basis that 'India…is the true place for the Scot to thrive in; and if you carry your story fifty years back, as there is nothing to hinder you, you will find as much shooting and stabbing as there ever was in the wild Highlands' (155). Scott's earlier epistolary comparison of Scottish men to Scottish cattle suggests a satirical edge to the bit about Scots 'thriving' in India, particularly in light of *The Surgeon's Daughter*'s gloom, but the comparison of the wild Highlands of the late 1740's to India in the late 1770's provides a clue to the temporal politics that govern *The Chronicles*' seemingly random narrative structure, as Scott uses the Canongate as a spatio-temporal matrix to bind the tales together in a synthetic critique of British imperial consciousness.

Narrativity

For much of its (scant) critical history, interest in the *Chronicles* focused mostly on the text's famous Introduction in which Scott stepped out of the shadows to reveal his authorship to a knowing yet enthralled audience. Scott had originally intended for the *Chronicles* to be published with his anonymity intact until the financial crises of the mid-twenties necessitated making his persona public, so the novel was fully completed, and according to Scott, half printed before the Introduction's addition. It is no surprise, then, that the Introduction ends with a reference to historical contingency and temporal displacement, as Scott relates how this inclusion of what he termed a 'long proem' 'show[ed] how human purposes…are liable to be controlled by the course of events' (11). That the Introduction may have postdated the *Chronicles'* composition only underscores its importance as the threshold to a narrative obsessed with the dynamic between temporality, place, and history.

Croftangry bases his decision to become an author on his obsession with his self-proclaimed status as a 'historical borderer', mingling space and time, and his narrative is repeatedly punctuated with references to the significance of this interplay.[13] When, for example, he visits the interiors of the abandoned Castle Treedles—the home of the failed mill owner who had purchased his family's estate—he observes that the modern and derelict house was reflective of 'the disconcerted schemes of the Laird of Castle-Treedles…[which] resembled fruit that becomes decayed without ever ripening' (33). More than mere description, this meditation on fast-forwarding evinces a phenomenological interest in the construction of time as it relates to historicity. And as the *Chronicles* unfolds, narrative serves as the intermediary negotiating the tension between past, present, and future.

Reading the individual tales it is clear that time is of the utmost narrative importance: Hamish's loss of two days in *The Highland Widow* and Robin's two hour gap between manslaughter and murder in *The Two Drovers* effectively dictate these stories' tragic conclusions. If, however, as I've already suggested, we read the engirthing Canongate as a chronotope, we may consider how the text a whole evinces a greater conceptual interest in the relationship between space and time; specifically, how the temporal issues girding these stories allow the individual chronicles to form a colligation, or pattern of events, that present a successive history of colonial advancement. Claire Lamont has persuasively dated *The Highland Widow* in the 1760's, *The Two Drovers* in the 1780's, and *The Surgeon's Daughter*, in the late 1770's, and the tales' non-consecutive arrangement follows, although without celebration, the progress of society as laid out by Enlightenment theories of stadial history: from the Scots' advancement from the Highlands (and Highland stasis) in *The Highland Widow* into British modernity in *The Two Drovers*, followed by the movement of modernized Britons into exotic spaces in *The Surgeon's Daughter*.[14]

In traversing the planes of historicity, however, modernity is represented less as an assured state of being than as a wavering subject-position dangerously open to spatio-temporal contingencies. When, in *The Surgeon's Daughter*, Richard Middlemas's English Jacobite father flees to India after his correspondence with the defeated Charles Stuart is discovered, he is retroactively Highland-ized by his son's nurse who, while recounting the father's appearance, adds a wholly fictional and anachronistic 'dirk and claymore' to his brace of pistols. This passing moment early in the story is amplified in its climactic conclusion when the illegitimate Richard, having abandoned the sober

pleasures of modern Scottish life to pursue exotic adventure in India, appears in native dress to offer both fealty and his Scottish fiancé, Menie Gray, to Tipu Sultan. Traveling through the Empire in *The Chronicles* is thus a destabilizing journey where different geographical spaces and times collide to throw progress off track. As a 'pretender' to his (Highlandized) father's Englishness and property, Middlemas's true inheritance is the Scottish history of frustrated ambition and exile. Much like Croftangry's organic evolution from familial to national chronicler, Middlemas's disappointed fantasies of patrimony and familial recognition turn smoothly into imperial ones, while the tale's depiction of the various intersecting negotiations between French, British, and native, and rulers, independent agents, and vassals in the subcontinent echoes the squalid heterogeneity of the Canongate. Echoing the young Croftangry's ambivalence towards the liberating/constricting Girth, the imperial colony is both prison and sanctuary.

The Chronicles also present history as an alternately trammeling and liberatory force. All three tales feature protagonists who are characterized by a private and ultimately consuming immersion in the past and, as Alison Lumsden has observed, a corresponding inability to communicate.[15] Hamish/Elspat, Robin, and Middlemas are all similarly compromised, although the famous description of Robin in *The Two Drovers* is the most pithy: 'The pride of [Robin's] birth…was like the miser's treasure, the secret subject of his contemplation, but never exhibited to strangers' (126). This lack of intersubjectivity is not just a cultural or racial but an explicitly temporal problem, as Johannes Fabian notes that, 'communication is, ultimately, about creating shared Time'.[16] These Scottish characters are largely represented as temporal exiles, their presents so consumed by what has come before that they have no place in what is to be: Elspat, for

example, only anticipates the future 'from recollections of the past'. Croftangry, as historical borderer, is saved from this historical solipsism by a series of audiences that misunderstand, attack, (rarely) appreciate, and otherwise validate his tales through their participation, as 'narrative time is public time…through its recitation a story is incorporated into a community which it gathers together'.[17] Because of his embrace of the public time of narration, Croftangry is the only character to successfully negotiate the pull of the past with modern time. If the frame narrative demonstrates how the personal and civic may constitutively align (as with the fictive/real *Croft-an-Righ*), throughout the *Chronicles* public time is offered as the only way for individuals to successfully navigate history without being consumed by it.

Paul Ricoeur argues that while chronicle is open-ended, plot offers the anticipation of a conclusion ('Narrative Time', 45). Such finality is elusive in the *Chronicles*, which, by the end of *The Surgeon's Daughter*, has only unsatisfying fates (illness, disdain, and forgotten decline) for its protagonists and a nebulous gesture to the future of British imperium in India. After Hyder Ali vows to crush the British for their treachery, the narrator solemnly observes that 'It is well known how dreadfully the Nuwab kept his promise, and how he has his son [Tipu Sultan] soon afterwards sunk before the discipline and bravery of the Europeans' (285). As Hyder is correct in his scathing assessment of the colonial administration, this overt gesture to a brave colonial future rings hollowly, and is further compromised when Scott proceeds to kill off Adam Hartley, the only really brave colonial in the story (Middlemas having been previously trodden on by an elephant as punishment for his crimes). Whereas the culmination of the tragedies in *The Highland Widow* and *The Two Drovers*—what Croftangry, echoing

Sancho's description of mingling meats, describes as the Highlands' 'melting down into the great mass of civilization'—establish Scotland's place in modern civil society, *The Surgeon's Daughter* ends with the death of Menie Gray, who retired peacefully in Scotland after her traumatic foray into white slavery, and her erroneous epitaph: *domum mansit—lanum fecit*: 'she stayed at home and spun wool'. This misconclusion, and the story's explicit avoidance of a union between Adam and Menie, replaces the flawed but conclusive cultural rapprochement of the previous two tales with frustrated expectation. Scott's readers at this time would have been particularly aware not only of the Empire's rapid expansion, but also of its cost: immediately before *Chronicles*' publication Britain had begun the first of its three wars with the Burmese Empire, and the conflict, which was widely considered wasteful and poorly conceived, caused an economic crisis in British India and staggering troop losses (not to mention countless Burmese and Indians). Croftangry's friend advises him to turn to the India of fifty years ago as a sufficiently distant space for romance, but the story's evocation of the wild excesses of imperial outposts would have had a distinctly contemporary resonance.

It is unsurprising then, that *The Surgeon's Daughter*'s mocking of exotic stereotypes culminates with the description of an exoticized Middlemas in native dress and the ultimate squashing—literal and figurative—of his eastern fantasy. Considering Middlemas's fatal nabobism alongside both his father's Highlandization, and the longer, overwhelmingly tragic chain of imperial consequence represented in the *Chronicles*, 'going native' becomes more than simply the contagion of a corrupt India (or, as several critics have suggested, the natural result of Richard's racially hybrid background). Like the temporal backslidings of the other tales—historical stasis, legal devolution, and

fatally private time— such empty exoticism is part of what might be termed the offal of progress, the gristly remnants of imperial triumph that are the center of the *Chronicles'* narrative focus.[18] Despite the text's rich evocation of the Canongate and the Highlands, its narrative ultimately emphasizes the exilic nature of modern Scottish identity. The tales puncture the possibility, so tantalizing in the frame narrative, that national history (and places, like the Canongate) provide the dislocated with a national patrimony that mitigates the pain of losing their more local, familial inheritances. Instead, refugees too often become émigrés and civilizational borders yawn alarmingly wide, so to cross over is to become an exile. Aside from Croftangry, redeemed by narration, the other characters experience imperial activity more as anomie than as a natural extension of their cultural birthright. Scott never lets his readers forget that for the displaced and expatriated, the empire can be abattoir as well as haven.

Although Croftangry seems exceptional to the *Chronicles*' other characters, his frame narrative is what allows the text to 'grow into one autonomous tale', by demonstrating 'the futility of the attempt to call back a life that has been swallowed up by time'.[19] The *Chronicles* is similarly a narrative swallowed by time, offering a messy reinterpretation of progress in which moving forward and outwards may also mean moving backwards (in time and space), and in which the inevitability of modernity is chastened by a dubious reckoning of the its attendant costs. This bleak vision of Empire, in which advancement is invariably accompanied by trauma had, as James Watt points out, 'few parallels in British fiction of empire before the last decades of the nineteenth century'. Citing William Hockley Browne's *Padurang Hari* (1826) and James Morier's *The Adventures of Hajji Baba* (1828) as examples of the denigratory exotic picaresque

novels that were more common during the period, Watt argues that these stories follow the tone set by James Mill's *The History of British India*.[20] Published one year after the third reprinting (in nine years) of Mill's *History*, Scott's narrative makes no outward reference to Mill's tome, but because of its thick engagement with imperial history *The Chronicles* must be considered in relation to what T.B. Macaulay once described as 'the greatest historical work which has ever appeared in our language since that of Gibbon'.[21]

History

In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur posits that historians are committed not to presenting historical reality, but by a mysterious feeling of debt to the 'people of the past'.[22] It is this sense of historical debt that prompts Croftangry's own decision to 'present old Scotland as it really was', and his tales are themselves crowded with arrears economic and familial. We might trace this insistence on debt to the financial crises, both national and personal, that dogged Scott during the *Chronicles*' composition. Alex Dick suggests, for example, that the Financial Crash of 1825 and the government's controversial (and ultimately failed) attempt to centralize banking challenged the author with new ways to 'conceive of the relation between fiction and finance'.[23] Scott was a staunch opponent of the government's proposal to suspend Scottish currency and in the *Chronicles* he depicts empire as a model of centralized diversification that ultimately strangles the local and familiar. Dick traces Scott's negotiation of diversification through his interest in spectacular heroism, but I am interested in how the author's imbrication of economic, administrative, and colonial concerns—his negotiation of the England-Scotland-India matrix—appeared at a crucial and often neglected period of late imperial

Romanticism between the earlier, more appreciative orientalism of William Jones and company and the more culturally inflexible Raj heralded by Mill's *History*.

Mill and Scott are a curious but ultimately inevitable pairing. Students in Dugald Stewart's Moral Philosophy classes at Edinburgh University, both authors became contributors to *The Edinburgh Review* and were even erroneously paired as admirers of the same lady, one Miss Stuart.[24] But Scott's Whiggish conservatism and cultivation of Scottishness are in stark contrast to Mill's radical Benthamism and apparent indifference to his cultural background, and there is little evidence the two men had any direct contact with each other. Reading their work together, however, it becomes apparent that besides a shared investment in the principles of philosophical history (the legacy of Stewart's tutelage), both authors' manipulations of colonial time-space reflect the administrative and military turmoil of the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. If Scott used an ancient neighborhood as a chronotope through which to interrogate the fraught intimacies that created the early Romantic empire, Mill's defining of a 'British India' history, as opposed to a history of Britons in India or of Britain and India, marks the boundaries of a newly imagined community conjured through a critique of its past.

Mill's philosophical purpose, albeit with a practical underpinning, for writing the *History* was to see where India fit on a civilizational scale. By the late 1810's and 1820's the universal applicability of Scottish theories of stadial historiography began to be widely mocked, even in the periodicals like the *Edinburgh Review* that had initially touted it.[25] But Mill's *History* was a demonstration of how stadialism was not simply an exercise in abstraction. As its 'General Reflections' make clear, deciding India's place in history was crucial to the direction of colonial governance, for:

> No scheme of government can happily conduce to the ends of government, unless it is adapted to the people for whose use it is intended…if they [the British nation and government] have conceived the Hindus to be a people of high civilization, while they have in reality made but a few of the earliest steps in the progress towards civilization, it is impossible that in many of the measures pursued for the government of that people, the mark aimed at should not have been wrong.[26]

With this as his stated goal, Mill quickly repudiated both the universal progressivism of conjectural history and other historians' analyses of India as either a 'mixed civilization', or even a degenerate one. In his reckoning, India was simply an inglorious stasis. This antipathy towards the subcontinent was extreme even in its time—see H.H.Wilson's placatory emendations to the 1858 edition of *History*—but India was not the only target of the author's scorn. Javed Majeed has famously asserted that the *History* self-reflexively 'used British India to fashion a critique of British law in particular and British society in general, which has been ignored by analyses which characterize Mill's history as simply a "hegemonic" text'.[27] Majeed overstates his case—Mill's relentless castigation of Indian (coded as Hindu) civilization overpowers his insistence on British reform—but this splintering of the *History*'s seemingly focused purpose is only one example of how this text, once considered a straightforward application of utilitarian philosophy to historical analysis, is really much more of a philosophical stew: Benthamism layered on top of conjectural history flavored with echoes of Mill's seemingly long-abandoned interest in Scottish Dissent.[28]

Even before he began writing his history, Mill was committed to elevating the form beyond the dry recording of facts to something which would 'inflame' public

sentiment, and in its introductory pages the *History* argues that history, or at least this history, is a trial in which the historian apportions blame and praise. Mill was no doubt aware that his history would be attacked because of its author's lack of first-hand experience with the people and places he claimed to know, and the *History*'s Preface preempted potential critics with the audacious claim that the ideal model for a historian was as judge rather than as eyewitness, for 'in the investigation of…complicated scenes of action, on which a judicial decision is sometimes required…the judge, putting together the fragments of information which he has severally received from the several witnesses…obtain[s] a more complete and correct conception of [the transaction] than is almost ever possessed by any one of the individuals from whom he has derived information' (i. xvii). The metaphor of the judge is an important one for Mill, since he notes that the legal system in India is both lacking and problematically diffuse. Not only are the 'details of jurisprudence and judicature' inadequate, the lack of distinction between moral law and criminal law turns all citizens into virtual prisoners with 'no liberty even in their private and ordinary transaction' (i.133). Britain may have been hampered by its own adherence to tradition (manifested in Common Law), but the subcontinent's state of arrested development, with its citizens as virtual prisoners, made it an untrammeled space for intellectual/administrative experimentation on a grand and benevolent scale.

Scott's *Chronicles* is also concerned with the issues of colonial governance over disparate societies, although its conclusions are far more opaque than Mill's *History*. Croftangry describes himself, the historian, as a witness, and each of his tales derives from the very sort of first-hand, non-scholarly sources Mill disdained. He is also

considerably less assured of the value of uniform governance than Mill: in both *The Highland Widow* and, more controversially, *The Two Drovers*, colonial justice is rational and perhaps necessary, but also unduly harsh and emotionally compromised. *The Surgeon's Daughter* offers the narrative's only truly satisfying punishment, Middlemas's pachydermal execution, and this is Mughal justice meted out by the despotic Hyder Ali. If, as Simon Edwards has suggested, the historical novel stresses legal forms and procedures in order to articulate 'the formation of the modern nation-state with its endeavor to centralize and monopolize the principles and practices of justice and legitimacy', the compromised legal procedures in *Chronicles* reject both the judicial-emotional simplicity of Mill's assurance of utilitarian progress and the historical novel's clarity of purpose in order to narrate a more complicated cultural patchwork whose legal and ethical fabric uneasily undulates.[29]

Like the *Chronicles*, the *History of British India* was written in response to economic issues both personal and political. Having, as he freely admitted, no prior knowledge of or experience in India, Mill conceived of the project in the hopes that it would result in permanent employment with the EIC and a much-needed cash flow, wishes that were speedily gratified after publication. But as numerous articles and depositions both preceding and antedating the *History* show, the project also allowed Mill to engage one of his passions: tax reform, a subject that had bedeviled the Company since the mid-eighteenth century. As the EIC decimated the subcontinent's extant Mughal infrastructure, there was little the Company could do to ensure the proper adjudication of revenue, resulting in a rise in land abuse and famine. In an attempt to resolve the problem Governor General Charles Cornwallis instituted the Permanent Settlement Act (1793),

which fixed the amount of revenue raised from land and gave the *zamindari* (landowning) class tenure over their land as a means of incentivisation. But the Act was opposed by both Company conservatives—Monstuart Elphinstone, Thomas Munro, and John Malcolm—as well as radicals like Mill. Donald Winch argues that, for Mill, tax administration was not merely a pecuniary matter, but one that determined 'the character and condition of a society and its capacity for progress'. This was particularly true in the case of the India because the revenue system 'was the heart of the British administrative system…All great issues, the union or separation of judiciary and executive…hinged upon it…the British as sovereigns held in their hands the most powerful agency affecting the composition of Indian society'.[30] While conservatives objected to the Act as a displacement of native land customs, Mill disliked the Permanent Settlement because he viewed it as a continuation of fundamentally unjust British economic practices imported to the colonies, thus undermining his desire for India to act as a potential test tube in the laboratory of mutual reform. After the idea of the subcontinent as mere revenue generator fell into disfavor (arguably in the late eighteenth century after the trial of Warren Hastings), just how Britain's overseas territories would function in relation to the nation became an ongoing, evolving concern. *The Chronicles*, and the circumstances behind its publication, remind us how this anxiety was not relegated only to newly conquered, outlying territory but extant in the heart of Britain itself. The narrator of the *Letters of Malachi Malagrowther* (1826), Scott's response to the Banking Crisis, ponders the possible elimination of a separate Scottish currency and notes wryly that 'They [the English] adopted the conclusion, that all English enactments are right; but the system of municipal law in Scotland is not English, therefore it is wrong'. *Malagrowther* repudiates

of the colony-as-laboratory that lay at the heart of Mill's reform: the belief in the inherent rightness of English law, the narrator writes, has 'encouraged a spirit of experiment and innovation at our expense, which they [the English] resist obstinately when it is to be carried through at their own risk'.[31]

If Mill's purpose was to cut India's profound difference away to fit a utilitarian mold, Scott's representations of ahistorical similitude in the *Chronicles* (as well as *Malagrowther*) follow a crucially different pattern of historical development. Both integrate India into a history of British imperial development, but reach very different conclusions about the value of that incorporation. The imbrication of 'British India' is an allegory that creates a particular imperial present through its manipulation of the past. Contrastingly, the Canongate as *Canongate* becomes site of a historical-temporal mélange that uses the awkward juxtapositions brought about by colonial contact to present a historical narrative of cultural decomposition in which colonialism is not an active solution to an ongoing problem but a process which, civilizational inevitability aside, demanded questioning. Mill's now-infamous sections in the *History* on Hindu (and then Muslim) society and religion, appearing after an early accounting of the East India Company and not, as one might imagine, before it, integrate the Indian past into its colonial present. Recreating the textual reality of orientalism, the *History* implies that India's history materializes only after the advent of the British. This creation of a distinctly British India is one of the major differences between Mill's historical understanding of India and those of his contemporaries. John Malcolm's *Sketch of the Political History of India* (1811) for example, begins in 1784, and G.R. Gleig's *History of the British Empire in India* (1835), which Scott had at Abbotsford (there is no indication

he read Mill's *History*) pauses briefly to consider Hindu and Mughal history before plunging into his real interest, Indo-European contact.[32] Mill's insistence on the importance of India's pre-history to its present may have had few historiographical parallels, but his approach echoes Croftangry's deliberate turn to various moments of colonial trauma to anchor his understanding of Scotland's modernization. Both Scott and Mill's insistence on the importance of place as illustrative of time play on the argument that place may serve as 'an ordering term, relational position for categories of knowing'.[33] In essence, the narration of these colonized spaces creates their hyperrealities. Balachandra Rajan, identifying Mill's 'British India' as a quasi-fictional space, notes that, 'To call the results of this operation [the EIC's conquest of the subcontinent] British India is not to write history, but it is to provide the judgmental framework within which history is hereafter to be viewed'.[34] For Croftangry, the Canongate, and particularly the historical-geographic-fictional nexus of the falsely etymologized *Croft-an-Righ*, provides a necessary vantage point for the consideration of Scotland's role in the empire that is to be. Or, put another way, the production of place creates its history, as the Canongate and British India serve as spatial metaphors for the consequences of imperial time.

Before he sailed to India in 1827 to assume the post of Governor General, William Bentinck assured Mill that although he, Bentinck, was 'going to British India…I shall not be Governor General. It is *you* that will be Governor General'.[35] In 1910, the Rev. Alexander Macmillan made a speech to the Empire Club of Canada expressing uncannily similar sentiments about Scott's role as an indirectly influential 'empire-builder'. Expounding on the importance of literature 'upon the minds of lesser men',

Macmillan credits Scott with unifying, first Scotland itself, and then Scotland and England into a Britain characterized by 'brotherhood', but, crucially, not 'amalgamation'. He points out that the 'great work of empire' abroad was so successful because it was 'initiated' at home, largely through the imaginative potency of Scott's fiction.[36] Scott and Mill may have moved in parallel circles during their lifetimes, but in their colonial afterlives they would become intimate partners. Scott, as Macmillan observes, became the de facto leisure reading for imperial classes, providing a voice for the military caste that ruled the empire.[37] And as if Mill's immediate influence in Company governance was not enough, his *History* soon became a required textbook at Haileybury for students wishing to enter the Indian Civil Service. These codas reflect neither the complexity of Scott's late imperial imaginary nor the radicalism of Mill's dreams for dual economic reform, but placing Scott alongside Mill allows us to see just how Scotland's role as the testing ground for the incorporation of the colony into modern civil society influenced Britain's attitudes towards India. These authors' intertwining of imperial and domestic concerns also represent a singular moment in British historiography which, as the nineteenth century wore on, increasingly wrote the histories of Britain and its Empire as paralleled rather than intersecting, a perhaps inevitable consequence of the discourse of the Raj-to-be that Mill himself helped inaugurate.[38] The breadth of these two texts is vastly different but the scope of what they are critiquing is equally ambitious. An ancient and impoverished neighborhood becomes a barometer for a burgeoning global empire, and a little, near-forgotten fiction forms a sober counterpoint to the clarion of triumphalist history. The 'Hindus', according to Mill, had no history because they had no conception of the future. Whereas Mill composed the *History of British India* with a reformist eye

fixed firmly on improvement such that the ignoble Indian past might be overwritten, in the *Chronicles* an aging Scott reflects on the many ways in which the colonial future might remain inexorably bound to its past.

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[1] Peter Motteux, *The History of Don Quixote* (5 vols, Edinburgh, 1822), v. 59.

[2] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973), 6-7.

[3] Walter Scott, *Chronicles of the Canongate*, ed. Claire Lamont (Penguin, 2003), 53.

[4] Ian Duncan, 'Late Scott', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Walter Scott*, ed. Fiona Robertson (Edinburgh, 2012), 130-142, 131.

[5] E. Patricia Dennison, *Holyrood and Canongate: A Thousand Years of History* (Edinburgh, 2005).

[6] Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge, 1992), 2.

[7] Claire Lamont, 'Explanatory Notes to the Croftangry Narrative', in *Chronicles of the Canongate*, 300.

[8] Ian Duncan, *Scott's shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton, 2007), 19.

[9] Susan Manning, 'Antiquarianism, the Scottish Science of Man, and the Emergence of Modern Disciplinarity', in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan, and Janet Sorensen (Cambridge, 2004), 57-76, 71.

[10] Caroline McCracken-Flesher, *Possible Scotlands: Walter Scott and the Story of Tomorrow* (Oxford, 2005), 156.

[11] John Gibson Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott: Bart* (9 vols, London, 1839), vi. 344.

[12] Alexander Duff, *A Vindication of the Church of Scotland's India Missions* (Edinburgh, 1837), 21-22.

[13] Reinhart Koselleck identifies 'acceleration' as constitutive of modern time. Reinhart Koselleck and Keith Tribe, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York, 1985), 40.

[14] Claire Lamont, 'Scott and Eighteenth –Century Imperialism: India the Scottish Highlands', in *Configuring Romanticism: Essays Offered to C.C. Barfoot*, ed. Theo D'haen, Peter Liebregts, Wim Tigges, and Colin Ewen (New York, 2003), 35-50.

[15] Alison Lumsden, *Walter Scott and the Limits of Language* (Edinburgh, 2010), 166-197.

[16] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York, 2002), 31.

[17] Paul Ricoeur, 'Narrative Time', in *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure and Frames*, ed. Brian Richardson (Ohio, 2002), 35-46, 41. Caroline McCracken-Flesher notes the power of audience in *Chronicles,* writing 'In *Chronicles*…Scott learns to depend, too, on the philistine's oppositional readings. These readings grasp the reality of author and text, make them fully present, and maintain them as active in an ongoing, personal and political culture'. McCracken-Flesher, *Possible Scotlands*, 161.

[18] H.M. Hopfl argues that conjectural history did not presuppose progress, but remained alive to the possibility of devolution. H.M. Hopfl, 'From Savage to Scotsman: Conjectural History in the Scottish Enlightenment', *The Journal of British Studies* 17.2 (April, 1978), 19-40.
[19] Frank Jordan, 'Chrystal Croftangry, Scott's Last and Best Mask', *Scottish Literary Journal*, 7.1 (1980), 185-92, 185.
[20] James Watt, 'Scott, the Scottish Enlightenment, and Romantic Orientalism', in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, 94-112, 104.
[21] T.B. Macaulay, 'A Speech Delivered in the House of Commons on the 10th of July 1833', in *Speeches of Lord Macaulay* (London, 1863), 135.
[22] See Radvan Markus on Ricoeur's notions of debt. Radvan Markus, 'History, Fiction and Identity in the Works of Hayden White and Paul Ricoeur', *Litteraria Pragensia*, 20:39 (2010), 16-29, 26.
[23] Alex Dick, 'Walter Scott and the Financial Crash of 1825: Fiction, Speculation, and the Standard of Value', *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* (February, 2012), 6.
[24] 'But on a greater than [James] Mill Miss Stuart made a "lasting impression." She was Sir Walter Scott's first love.' J.S. Stuart-Glennie, 'James and John Stuart Mill: Traditional and Personal Memorials', *The Eclectic Magazine: Foreign Literature*, 36:99 (New York, 1882), 74-82, 76. Most Scott biographers do not believe Scott was in love with Miss Stuart.
[25] Watt, 'Scott', 94.
[26] James Mill, *The History of British India* (9 vols, Chicago, 1975), i. 429.
[27] Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford and New York, 1992), 133.
[28] Both Anna Plassart and Duncan Forbes argue that Mill's *History* is less resolutely Benthamite than has been argued. Plassart, in particular, makes the convincing argument that Mill's Scottish background plays a greater role in the *History* that has been acknowledged. Anna Plassart, 'James Mill's Treatment of Religion and *The History of British India*', *History of European Ideas*, 34 (2008), 526-534. Duncan Forbes, 'James Mill and India', *The Cambridge Journal,* 5:1 (October 1951), 19-33.
[29] Simon Edwards, 'The Geography of Violence', *Novel* (Spring, 2001), 293-308, 294.
[30] Donald Winch, 'James Mill and India' in *James Mill: Selected Economic Writings*, James Mill (New Brunswick, 2001), 383-396, 391.
[31] Walter Scott, *A Letter to the Editor of the Edinburgh Weekly Journal from Malachi Malagrowther, Esq.* (Edinburgh, 1826), 9.
[32] Other histories include Peter Auber's *Rise and Progress of British Power in India* (1837), John Bruce's *Annals of the Honorable East India Company*, and John Malcolm's *Sketch of the Political History of India, from the introduction of Mr. Pitt's Bill, A.D. 1784, to the present date* (1811).
[33] Charles W.J. Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity: Scotland Since 1520* (Cambridge, 2001), 2.
[34] Balachandra Rajan, *Under Western Eyes: India from Milton to Macaulay* (Durham and London, 1999), 90.
[35] Quoted in Uday Sing Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago and London, 1999), 13.

[36] Alexander MacMillan, 'Sir Walter Scott as an Empire-Builder', in *The Empire Club of Canada Addresses* (Toronto, 1910), 242-246.
[37] J.G. Rignall, 'Walter Scott, J.G. Farrell, and Fictions of Empire', *Essays in Criticism* 41.1 (1991), 11-27, 11.
[38] Michael Bentley, 'Shape and Pattern in British Historical Writing, 1814-1945', in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing Volume 4: 1800-1945*, ed. Stuart Macintyre, Juan Maiguashca, and Attila Pók (London, 2011), 204-224, 212.