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A Possible Source for Lewis Grassic Gibbon's Sunset Song

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One of the most dramatic incidents in *Sunset Song* (1932) occurs at the end of Chapter 4, "Harvest," when the ghost of the dead Ewan Tavendale revisits Chris at the Standing Stones. It is not necessary to believe that the author was indebted for this idea to any single precedent in English or Scottish literature; but there can be no harm in noting a remote analogue, and also a much more recent possible source. William Collins introduces the *revenant* theme in stanza 8 of his "Ode On The Popular Superstitions Of The Highlands, Considered As The Subject Of Poetry." This illustrates that the general idea was widely known in the eighteenth century. A possible source for Gibbon is "Deidman's Gait," a poem by Hugh MacDiarmid, printed in *The Scottish Chapbook*, vol. 1, no. 9 (April, 1923) p. 249 (from *A Kist O' Whistles*). Gibbon admired MacDiarmid's work; *Grey Granite* was to be dedicated to him. "Deidman's Gait" has one or two details which are close to the presentation of Ewan in *Sunset Song,* for instance the description of Angus as "a hule amang the lassies," and emphasis on the physical sensations experienced by those who see him after his death.

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