R. B. Cunninghame Graham: The Kailyard and After

Laurence Davies
Dartmouth College

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl
Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol11/iss3/4

This Article is brought to you by the Scottish Literature Collections at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Studies in Scottish Literature by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.
LAURENCE DAVIES

R. B. Cunninghame Graham:
The Kailyard and After

"I am just off to the Holy Land, for the Renfrewshire election." ¹

R. B. Cunninghame Graham is a phantom of Scottish literature. His writing is not easy to categorize; it so often flickers between fact and fiction. His standpoint is elusive. The sketches of Argentine life give him a place in South American literature; the Moroccan work is by a sympathetic and informed visitor; writing of Spain, Graham takes the part of Spaniards against northern Europeans. Is there any sense in calling him a Scottish writer at all? Is not Graham's writing essentially a cosmopolitan product of late Victorian and Edwardian London? I hope to show that a significant part of Graham's work belongs to Scottish literature by more than accident of descent, residence, or subject matter.

It would clearly be superfluous to argue that Graham thought of himself as a Scot during the twenties and thirties when he was working for the Scottish National Party. From a literary point of view, those last years of his life are less interesting than the decade beginning with 1896, in which he produced much of his best work. During this period, Graham brought new techniques and fresh attitudes to writing on Scottish subjects. In particular, as the unpublished correspondence with Edward Garnett, and a number of early periodical contributions show, Graham was one of the first writers seriously to challenge the predominance of the Kailyard school. The challenge was on two fronts: a questioning of assumptions, and an attempt to demonstrate new ways of writing about Scotland. Graham's treatment of Scotland was acerbic,

¹ Letter from Graham to Richard Curle, 21 November 1932; MS, Herbert Faulkner West Collection, Dartmouth College. For permission to quote from unpublished letters, I am indebted to Admiral Sir Angus Cunninghame Graham, and to the holding libraries, Baker Library, Dartmouth College, and the Academic Center, University of Texas.

[156]
and perhaps partly for this reason, his place in her literature has not, with the notable exceptions of C. M. Grieve and Stephen Graham, been more than fleetingly assessed.²

I

The first major critical attack on the Kailyard school was that by J. H. Millar in 1895.³ The first attempt at an alternative fictional view of Scottish life is generally taken to be The House with the Green Shutters. It has recently been suggested that Stevenson may have contributed to the ground and method of the attack.⁴ Stevenson wrote a poem to S. R. Crockett, and was hardly a conscious repudiator of the group. Brown, on the other hand, although it was not his major purpose in writing, had every intention of damning what had become, by 1901, a fashion distinctly faded, but still dutifully followed. Brown’s book was of course widely noticed in Scotland. Cunninghame Graham’s earlier attacks seem to have made little impression at the time.

In 1896, Graham claimed that “In spite of kail-yard tales we snivel little, and cant not much more than our neighbours do”;⁵ jibes at the Kailyarders are a motif in his publications and his correspondence over the next few years. He objected to their sentimentalism: “In dealing with Scotland and things Scotch, one should avoid sentiment, it destroyed those awful McCrocketts, and Larens, and is a snare to

⁵ “Salvagia,” Saturday Review (London), 82, 280, 12 September 1896. (Henceforth cited as SR.) In quoting from “Salvagia,” “Heather Jock,” and “A Survival,” I shall normally use the SR versions in the first section of this paper, which deals with Graham’s attacks on the Kailyard; in the second section, discussing them as sketches, I shall use the revised versions in The Ipané (London, 1899). Otherwise, I shall only refer to periodical publication of stories and sketches later collected when the circumstances of date or place are noteworthy.
the pious chanting, hypocritical, hard, but at the same time sentimental, and whisky loving Scotchman. I am a Scotchman."

There is of course nothing unusual in such a reaction. It is easy, perhaps too easy, to mock the psalm-echoing deathbeds and the tardily returned prodigals. The failings of Kailyard literature are the failings of a hundred bad Victorian novels, and a thousand drawing-room ballads. A passage like this, from *A Window in Thrums*, could be matched countless times among the feeble descendants of *Irish Melodies*:

Ah, that brae! The history of tragic little Thrums is sunk into it... We have all found the brae long and steep in the spring of life. Do you remember how the child you once were set at the foot of it and wondered if a new world began at the top?... As boys we ran up the brae... But the autumn of life comes, and the brae grows steeper, then the winter, and once again we are as the child pausing apprehensively on the brig."

Barrie is not speaking *in propria persona*, these are the moralizings of the dominie/precentor who narrates the story. It is a particularly crude passage, but "brae" and "brig" are the only clues to its Kailyard origin. The tone is that of a keepsake, or a matterless sermon. The over-familiar "we" and "you," the mixing of a perfectly good analogy with an insipid metaphor, the uninspiring generalization "as boys we ran up the brae," the implication that one thinks ill of "tragic little Thrums" only on penalty of seeming callous, are in no way characteristic only of Scottish literature in the late eighties and early nineties. One may deplore "the cold-haggis-and-gingerbeer atrocities of prose Kailyardism," but the atrocities were committed by a rearguard fighting a stubborn holding action. The rearguard belonged in style, as in interests, to an earlier part of the century.

Graham complained of sentimentality, but there were a number of other reasons, spoken and unspoken, for his opposition. "I am a Scotchman" he wrote, asserting his contrariness even in the choice of proper noun. Despite his checkered background, Graham seems always to have considered himself Scottish. His international experience gave

---

6 Letter to Edward Garnett, 25 May 1898. All letters to Garnett quoted are in MS in the Academic Center Library, University of Texas. I have not revised Graham’s punctuation.


8 Grieve, p. 56.
him an edgy awareness of how one country misjudges another. Graham was a self-conscious Scot, anxious that his country should be well-regarded. He feared a contempt engendered not by English malice, but by Scottish misrepresentation. Crockett and company were selling shoddy goods. "Your Piddlewinkies and McSneehins say that Scott was Tury, Jacobite, unpatriotic, unpresbyterian. . . . They say (your Rev. McOffertories) that Scotchmen were not like the types that Scott depicted, and in proof of what they say call on the public to read their valued works." The book version of this passage, published three years later, in 1899, complains even more explicitly of the effect on the English reading public: "England believed them, and their large sale and cheap editions clinched it, and today a Scotchman stands confessed a sentimental fool . . . oppressed with the tremendous difficulties of the jargon he is bound to speak, and above all weighed down with the responsibility of being Scotch." England had accepted a narrow definition of Scottishness, and accredited false representatives.

As George Blake has pointed out, it would be almost impossible to tell from late nineteenth century fiction that anyone in Scotland lived anywhere but in farms and villages. There was no Scottish Tales of Mean Streets. One of the themes which distinguishes The House with the Green Shutters from nearly all its Scottish contemporaries is the workings of business, on the large scale of the developing Ayrshire coalfield, and on the local but grim scale of the rivalry between Gourlay and Wilson. Scotland was in transition, and could no longer be rendered only in terms of mid-century rural seclusion. Graham, as befitted a founder of the Scottish Labour Party, was also conscious of the effects of rapidly expanding industry and commerce. His city sketches have London, Paris, Buenos Aires, and Madrid for settings, but Glasgow is often used as an example of a city in the power of industrialism and ignored by "the stern, hard, hyper-Caledonian faith which . . . looks upon the miserable east end of Glasgow as a thing ordained by God."  

It is in showing the spread of British trade and values overseas that Graham most often associates Scotland with commerce. In "Dagos,"

9 "A Survival," SR, 81, 542, 30 May 1896; and The Ipané, p. 162.
10 Blake, p. 9. S. R. Crockett's Cleg Kelley stories, about a boy from an Edinburgh "land," are an unexciting exception.
it is the Scottish captain who expresses an insensitive attitude to foreigners. The clergies who debase the Arab girl in "Buta" are Scottish; so is the dour missionary in "A Convert." 12 A nation which exported her sons so freely, in a way existed as much abroad as at home. Graham’s hatred of economic, political, and cultural imperialism prompted a harsh treatment of this side of his country.13

Paradoxically, Graham took issue with the Kailyarders for ignoring much of the past as well as the present. For some of them, the most important event in history seems to be the disruption, and the earliest, the signing of the First Covenant. Many of Graham’s sketches allude to the medieval, or even remoter past. Indeed, for Graham, man is a late and transient feature of a landscape which itself also changes. His own District of Menteith is "a shadowy district." 14 The present is a projection of the past; history defines and dominates. To understand Keir Hardie, it is necessary to understand Wallace. Origins may indeed so dominate a man, that he cannot find a place in the modern world; it may be that Scotsmen have a gift for being defeated.15 Rather as some Southern critics have insisted that defeat in the American Civil War bred a sense of tragedy in the face of a smugly successful Union, Graham emphasizes the gallant failures of Scottish history. The idea of history as a triumphant progress of worth and enlightenment was totally distasteful to him. Scotland is a memento mori to the complacent.

In a shorter perspective, Crockett also used history to define the present. The example of the persecuted Covenanters helps a Galloway boy resist the blandishments of episcopacy. Barrie, Crockett, and Watson ("Ian Maclaren") were all closely linked to the Free Kirk. Whether these authors are dealing with Auld Lichts, United Presbyterians, or members of the Established Church, the attitude is one of affection.

13 An exception is "San Andrés," Charity (London, 1912), pp. 116–32. One of the points of this story though, is that while retaining many Highland beliefs, the settlers have become good gauchos.
15 "A Retainer," Hope, pp. 176–77; and Menteith, pp. 78–79.
The Sabbath morning broke over the farm like a benediction.

The old Cameronian kirk sits on a hill, and is surrounded by trees, a place both bieldy and heartsome. The only thing that the Cameronians seriously felt the want of was a burying-ground round about it.\textsuperscript{10}

With this we may compare part of Graham's description of a village.

Two churches and two public houses, and a feud between the congregations of each church as bitter as that between the clients of the rival inns. . . . Much faith and little charity, the tongue of every man wagging against his neighbour like a bell-buoy on a shoal.\textsuperscript{17}

The kirk is a divisive and destructive force. Faith is all, and works nothing. There is no room for gentleness: "The deity worshipped there is Dagon, or some superferated Moloch born in Geneva." One may indeed wonder if these two authors are talking about the same institution in the same country. Whichever view of the matter was accurate, and perhaps neither was, either a mild or a militant Kirk would have enraged Graham. On one hand, a church valiant for truth but indifferent to love would be a high barrier to social reform; on the other hand, a church which had become merely a congenial habit would make trivial any emotion it touched. In general, the Kailyarders themselves presented Calvinism, in Chesterton's words, as a creed "to be expounded to boys with a scowl and remembered by men with a smile."\textsuperscript{18} In Graham's view, you could be ecstatically religious, or ragingly anticlerical, but neither joyless nor meekly pious.

Although glorifying men and women who stick to their beliefs, the Kailyarders were basically latitudinarian in matters of faith and conduct. Extremes were carefully to be trimmed. One of the redeeming features of \textit{Beside the Bonnie Brier Burn} is the introduction of Highland characters. The rapt prayers of Donald Menzies especially, bring some life to the book. But the stress is on reconciliation with ordinary folk. Watson was himself the son of Highlanders, but there is little suggestion that the suppression of unfamiliar habits and ways of speech is anything but desirable. The Highlanders are variously overrigid in


\textsuperscript{17}"Salvagia," \textit{SR}, 82, 270.

their beliefs, or given to mysticism, but they must be brought to accept and be accepted by Drumtroth.

The District of Menteith, the home of Graham's Scottish ancestors, lies along the Highland Line. The contrasting ways of Highlanders and Lowlanders always caught his attention; they were part of Scotland's diversity.

What I object to is the assumption that the "douce" and Presbyterian, "pawky" three-per-centing of the kailyard men has quite eclipsed the pre-Culloden type. I say it lingers in spite of Butcher Cumberland, in spite of School Board education, kodaks, bicycles, excursion trains, cheap knowledge, magazines, and Liberal politics; it lingers if only to disprove Darwin.18

The "pre-Culloden type" belongs to a preindustrial world. He is the stranger within the gates of a stronghold of commerce, mocking bourgeois pretensions by ignoring them. His fairly recent ancestors were as foreign as Arabs or Afghans.20 In his relations with the South, he has been treated as a colonial subject. Graham's mind delighted in analogies: something he had seen in Morocco would remind him of Texas; Paraguay recalled Spain. The first purpose of the analogy between Arab and Highlander was to startle. The second purpose was not necessarily to suggest that the two races really did have much in common, but to reveal the strange beneath the familiar. The casually outlandish reference was something of a fatal Cleopatra for him; one comes to expect the comparisons and the exotic words. All the same, after reading the Kailyarders in any quantity, it is pleasant to be reminded of the world's wideness.

J. H. Millar's New Review article takes a High Tory attitude to Barrie and the others. Their literary crimes aside, they were party to the alliance between Dissent and the Liberals.21 W. R. Nicoll's protégés could always be expected to display a well-meaning piety towards social problems. On the Left, Graham, a very nominally Liberal M.P. from 1886 to 1892, denounced both parties, but saved his best scorn for the Liberals. Theirs, he claimed, was the party of trade, a situation

21 New Review, 12, 394.
which was bound to make them ruthless; they compounded their faults by hiding them behind worthy platitudes and contrived indignation. The Tories were at least frank about their motives. Graham was likely to be angered by any sign of false or uncruous sympathy. Graham’s comments to Edward Garnett on Mrs. Mary Mann’s East Anglian Dullditch are illuminating here:

My God, even Barrie could do nothing more horrible. . . . Do you see . . . the odious attitude of superiority to the poor Dullditch Devils? Why? Are they not her (and our) fellow sufferers. . . .

Are not, I ask, poor Dullditchers worthy of incidental compassion. I do not mean that she should sneer as do Barrie, Crockett and Co., but, who made her a judge over Dullditch. What I mean is, let her lash, and expose, and laugh, and set down everything, but do not let her patronise. Mrs. Mann is too cold; Barrie too warm; both, in their different ways, talk down to their characters and their readers. “Fellow sufferers” should not be manipulated in this way.

There was a variety of reasons then for Cunninghame Graham’s objection to the Kailyarders and their popularity. His objections, in summary, were to narrowness of mind and vision, as well as to a self-congratulatory and misleading smugness. With these reasons in mind, he named his “biting satire” of false and unimaginative dreams of grandeur “The Imperial Kailyard.”

II


22 “The rich sweater though he cheers for Gladstone . . . and even votes Home Rule . . . still remains a sweater, and will sweat a workman, cringe to a titled fool, break up a workman’s union, in the self-same way as he was wont before salvation.” “Graham Up,” Star (London), 25 August 1890, p. 2.
23 Letter, 13 December 1902.
made extensive verbal revisions of the first three sketches mentioned, but found it hard to alter their structure. "For instance 'Heather Jock'—it is impossible for me to cut out the beginning paragraphs, for this reason. I am an essayist and an impressionist, and secondly a storyteller but have the storytelling faculty very weakly." 26

In fact there are a number of pieces in The Ipané where narrative outweighs commentary; "Bristol Fashion" and "Snackoll’s Saga" show that Graham did have a "story telling faculty." Other pieces describe a particular situation and comment on it; the account of William Morris’ funeral is an example. Then there is "Niggers," which could only be called an ironic diatribe. "A Survival," "Heather Jock," and "Salvagia" use a curious blend of all three methods. The essayist squeezes the impressionist, who in turn squeezes the storyteller; the bed is very crowded. Graham had much he wanted to say, and seemed to want to say it all at once.

"Salvagia," the second in order of magazine publication, is the least satisfactory because structurally the most out of tune. It begins by anathematizing the notion of a divine providence, moves on to a description of manners in a Scottish village, and ends with the simultaneous drowning of a widow’s four sons; her stoic reaction to the catastrophe illustrates what Graham has been saying.

The opening is a blunt expression of attitude: "Almost the most horrible doctrine ever enunciated by theologians is, in my opinion, the attribution of our misfortunes to Providence." Graham is on one side, the religious on the other. His attitude is indignant but detached: the idea of an all-providing supreme being who "serenely contemplates so many evils" is distasteful, but the same idea " consoles humanity for their misfortunes." In the minds of the faithful of all creeds, the more remote and implacable, the more estimable the divinity. The village of Gart-na-cloich, "where the providential scheme is held in its entirety" is then introduced. By an ironic image, Graham couples the ugliness of the village with its adherence to "the providential scheme":

---

26 Letter to Garnett, 6 August 1896.
"Do not red-haired and freckled, cowhoughed maidens usually attend a fancy ball attired as Mary Queen of Scots, and think their fatal beauty deals destruction on the sons of men?" The young hopeful at the ball is the equivalent of the village which fancies itself under the eye of a God who, in Graham’s view of things, has withdrawn completely from the universe. The "cow-houghed maiden" nurses a comfortable illusion, but one which will not help her cope with the world.

The village is ugly, the gardens without flowers. There is much faith and little charity. Men stand on street corners "Not quite civilised, nor yet quite savages, a set of demi-brutes, exclaiming, if a woman in a decent gown goes past, "There goes a bitch." The view of the village looks forward to Barbie rather than back to Thrums. The whole description inverts the values of Stevenson’s contrast of Scotland and England. Stevenson calls the ordinary Scot superior to the English countryman by virtue of education.27 Graham exclaims: "O education, how a people may be rendered brutish in thy name!" and finds "the bovine dweller in East Anglia" a prince of courtesy compared to the Scot. "Stony indeed the country, stony the folks, the language, manners, and all else pertaining to it." Significantly, in the midst of all this denunciation, Graham slips from "I" and—referring to travelers from outside—"you," to "we;" for all the hatred, the attack comes from inside. The use of "we" persists to the last paragraph, where "I" is used in confronting Mistress Campbell’s mourning.

The description of the village, of Scottish manners, and of Mistress Campbell’s household, is embroidered with comments on the religious theme: "Going to church with us replaces charity;" "In no Salvagian village is there any room for a gentle God." Theological language is used ironically: "A rusty sickle lying in the mud, gave promise of the interior graces of the house." In this sense, the story, if it can be called that, does relate to its themes; we are aware that Scotland, theology, and Mrs. Campbell’s stoicism are of a piece. But the integration is unsatisfactory; there is a surfeit of unchewed opinion which

makes the story's ending hard to swallow. The ending is peremptory; a few lines cover the drowning and the widow's reaction to it.

There the four sons of Mistress Campbell went to bathe, and all were drowned. Passing the village, I heard the Celtic Coronach, which lingers to show us how our savage ancestors wailed for their dead, and to remind us that the step which separates us from the other animals is short. I asked a woman for whom the cry was raised. She answered, "For the four sons of Lilias Campbell." In the dull way one asks a question in the face of any shock, I said, "What did she say or do when they were brought home dead?"

"Say?" said the woman; "nothing: n'er a word. She just gaed out and milked the kye" (pp. 202–3).

The movement of this passage is a little too hurried, slowed down only for the conscious archaeology "the Celtic Coronach." Its abruptness should shock us, and yet we are left with the impression of a skimmed finish. We have been told that the linn is dangerous, we have been told that the widow's "chief pride, after her sons, was centered in her cows;" we have been prepared sufficiently to grasp what happens, but not to feel it. Graham has said too much, and shown too little.

The theme of "A Survival," English misconceptions of Scotland, and Lowland misconceptions of the Highlands, is better suited to the form of essay illustrated by anecdote than "Salvagia." Graham is less splenetic, more in control of what he wants to say; he exercises his mockery rather than his contempt. "I know virtue which has long left London and the South still lingers about Ecclefechan, hangs about Kirtiemuir, is found at Bridge of Weir, and may yet save us when England is consumed with brimstone" (pp. 162–63). The at times facetious tone is a product of a much lighter situation. In "Salvagia" Graham looks in fury at a cruel world; the world of "A Survival" is filled with mutually incomprehensible people whose absurdity is comic.

Graham would not "have Englishmen believe that the entire Scotch nation is composed of ministers, elders, and maudlin whiskified physicians;" and mounts a historical exhibition of false ideas about Scotland. He sets out to prove that "in Scotland there still exists some few remains of the pre-Knoxian and pre-bawbee days." To illustrate this point, he gives the case of a "Scot of Scots, enriched by sweating of some sort, but still a kindly man." This Scot is a Liberal, and a "moralist." Despite his low opinion of landlords, he is himself a
bonnet-laird, happy in the possession of a title. Inverquharity, as he likes to be known, stands for much that Graham disliked, but he is played with and not destroyed. He is a good example of the alliance of money, religion, and Gladstonian Liberalism about which we hear so much in Graham's polemical writing. Inverquharity claims that race has little influence on a man: "For take a Highlander and place him in the same conditions as a Lowland Scot, and he at once alters his mode of life, becomes industrious, and soon assimilates himself to those with whom he dwells" (p. 165). He tries the experiment of settling a family out of Wester Ross on one of his farms. Graham sees the result; the farm is swiftly transformed into a croft: "Turning I saw the Offerance through the rain, black but uncomely, ragged and windswept—a picture of the old-world Scotland, which has almost disappeared. Sloth was not altogether lovely, but prating progress worse" (p. 173).

The Highlanders are certainly not sentimentalised. The children are busy delousing themselves, the father is half drunk, the womenfolk are planting potatoes in the most wasteful manner possible. Before rushing to call Graham a bigot, it is worth remembering that he finds "prating progress worse" than the crofter's sloth. Inverquharity's cant is more objectionable than Donald's drunkenness. The crofters are not brought in to be defamed, they are introduced to widen the definition of Scottish, and not to narrow the definition of Highland.

The interest of "Salvagia" and "A Survival" is largely historical. Here are two pieces written, at least in part, as an early reaction to Kailyardism.\(^28\) They combine features of Millar's essay, and Brown's novel, postdating the former, predating the latter. "Heather Jock," the third of the Scottish sketches in The Ipané, shares this historical interest, but is more successful artistically.

As we have seen, Graham confessed himself unable to revise "Heather Jock," on the grounds that he was an essayist and impressionist. In deference to Garnett, he did in fact trim down the speculative opening of the Saturday Review version for book publication. A para-

\(^{28}\) A comment by George Douglas Brown serves as a warning against reading authors in simple terms of action and reaction: "Those who hint that I've deliberately set myself to say 'black,' whenever Barrie and Maclaren say 'white,' are talking burble." Letter quoted in: James Veitch, George Douglas Brown (London, 1952), p. 156.
graph on education as "a cruel and fallacious, though no doubt necessary process" was eliminated. The surviving pair of introductory paragraphs, on the social condition of madmen and idiots, are distinctly more relevant to the subject of the sketch, William Brodie, known as Heather Jock, "a wandering singer and buffoon." According to Graham: "To differ from the crowd, whether as a genius, an idior, a politician . . . will shortly be a crime." Brodie, who traveled the West of Scotland in a feather headdress, singing "Annie Laurie" with jumps and grimaces, certainly differed from the crowd. "No one asked his reasons but accepted him just as he was." Scotsmen are credited with the ability to put aside appearances: "But, being practical, we see as little honour in haggling for thousands as for half-pence." Perhaps there is a touch of irony here, but we may note a more charitable attitude to Graham's fellow countrymen.

The first half of "Heather Jock" is devoted to describing him, and speculating on his appeal. He is picturesque, but in a grotesque manner: "he seemed a sort of cross between a low-class Indian, such as one sees about a town in South Dakota, and an orang-utang which had somehow got itself baptised." It is the very grotesqueness of such descriptions that saves them from being patronizing. The bizarre choice of details and analogies cuts one off from the sentimental. Jock is not to be pitied; he is, or was, a curious phenomenon. Graham wrote a number of stories which investigate the viewpoint of outcasts; this is not one of them. We see Jock through Graham's eyes, and the focus is important. The reference to South Dakota, for example, is hardly one that an unobtrusive author might make.

So far we have been dealing with what is virtually an essay in the tradition of Lamb and Hazlitt. Particular and general are played off against each other; opinion and description fall into place. The direction is clear down to the paragraph beginning: "Our northern wit," which seems to be broadening towards a conclusion. "Heather Jock, like other memories of youth faded away, and the constant spectacle of much superior buffoonery . . . bore in upon me that all the world is but a pantomime, badly put on the stage by an incompetent stage manager." The Shakespearian echoes, the note of triteness, the sense of a moral being rounded off, might lead us to expect the finale here.

This is not the case. As I have suggested, we are not being shown Heather Jock, but Graham looking at Heather Jock. There is a sudden
shift to Argentina, "One day in Tucuman, amongst the orange gardens" starts a virtuoso sentence which runs for a whole paragraph. It is full of circumstantial detail; quotes a Gaucho phrase, explains how to mount a restless horse, reflects on the fate of stay-at-homes, and ends "I chanced to get some letters." The breathless list guides one over the abrupt transition. The establishment of a new setting is done with assurance; physical detail brings out the scene's foreignness. The letter carrier's "iron spurs, like fetters on his naked feet, clanked on the bricks of the verandah." His brother, accompanying him with the mail, has just been killed by Indians. Graham takes the bag "with the feeling, firstly, that it had cost a man his life, and then with the instinctive dread which, when in distant lands, always attends home news." The letters contain, besides many items of no interest, a clipping recording the death of Heather Jock. The clipping prompts more thoughts about the dead eccentric who "would strive no more... with people just as foolish if more wicked than himself," and leads to a reminiscence within a reminiscence. Graham remembers how, in Argentina, he remembered William Brodie; this stacking of memories in transparent layers is a favourite habit.

The epitaph on Jock might again seem a suitable, though obvious, place to end. But once again Graham moves on, giving his share of moralizing, but in such a way as to keep it in the background. The real finish comes with the retrieving of the dead messenger's body, and the imagined superimposition of the two dead men and their countries. "At the fandango, after the funeral... above the voices of the dancers when they broke into the chorus of the "Gato," above the neighing of the horses shut in the corral for fear of Indians, I seemed to hear the jangling of the dead fool's bells, and listen to the minstrelsy, such as it was, of the hegemonist of Bridge of Weir" (pp. 186–87).

The disturbing effect of "Heather Jock" comes not because Graham's opinions are mured, or placed discreetly, but because in themselves they are only a partial explanation of what has taken place. Ostensibly, we have read a sketch preserving the memory of an original, "a vanishing type" as Graham would call him. Seen in this way, the South American episode is an unwanted traveler's tale, contraband self-indulgence. Graham as narrator is of course the link. His expressed reactions are as important to the second part as they are to the
first. But by simple juxtaposition, the two situations, Scotland and Argentina, become much more complicated. The contrast of a country where a crazy singer provides the only excitement, and a country where the postman might be killed on his rounds, illuminates both. Jock's queerenss takes on an ironic value; his death is the only item of home news to interest Graham; bringing the news has cost a man his life. But even the irony is not emphasized in such a way as to define the story. Although it starts as an essay, and although there is no reason to believe it is not autobiographical, "Heather Jock" has the uncertainty of fiction, rather than the certainty of fact.

III

I am not asserting that any fiction is better than any fact; that a narrative acquires immediate nobility by using the techniques of the short story. In the case of Cunninghame Graham's early Scottish sketches, this may however be true. When trying to revise these sketches for The Ipand, he wrote: "No, no, I loathe the Scotch too much, to treat them without irony." 20 Satiric indignation pure and simple, as in "Niggers," came easily to Graham; the difficulty was with illuminating incident. Once one starts to handle characters and events, the enraged expression of opinion becomes a hindrance. One has to find ways of subordinating the indignation, and directing the ironic fury. In "Salvagia" the indignation is everything; it demands acceptance or rejection. In "Heather Jock" there is plenty of commentary but it belongs to the character of the narrator, who is himself a party to the events. The process is taken a stage further in "Pax Vobiscum"; 20 values here are hardly defined at all, there is much left unspoken.

Graham’s attitude to Scotland mellowed. By 1903 he could write to Garnett: "I find I want the north now." 31 There is a possible biographical reason for this. His sixteen years' struggle to maintain the family estate of Gartmore ended in 1900. He could now feel that choice rather than responsibility bound him to Scotland. At the same

29 Fragment of a letter to Garnett, n.d. Graham worked on the revisions in August 1898.
30 Westminster Gazette, 25 February 1899, pp. 1–2; never reprinted.
31 14 November 1903.
time, one can make out a case for saying that Graham's work, after
*The Ipané*, and *Thirteen Stories*, and perhaps *Progress and Success*,
lost in vigour what it gained in polish. On one hand, uncontrolled
energy, on the other, work that seemed to flow quite naturally into
prepared moulds. The range of technique in the later Scottish work is
certainly wider; the stories themselves smoother, but sometimes lacking
a compensating acidity. There are, all the same, a number of successful
stories and sketches which show that Graham had found new ways
of embodying his feeling about Scotland.

Increasingly the landscape becomes as significant in the Scottish as
in the South American sketches. In the pampas, the distances are great
between gaucho houses; men often appear dwarfed, free but powerless.
In Scotland, Graham writes of men who "were strangers; holding
their property but on sufferance from the old owners, who had named
every stone." The emphasis is always on transience. "Nothing is stable. . . . Men come and go, the Saxon speech replaces Gaelic; even
tradition insensibly is lost." 33 There are fewer references to the
chimneys of St. Rollox; Graham turns to regions where nature con-
trols man.34 "Still it may be that though the outward visible sign was
so repellent, the unexpected and interior softness of the . . . men was
bred in them by their surroundings, for certainly their hard, material
lives, and their black, narrow, anti-human faith could not have given
it."

The quotation is from "At Dalmary." 35 This is a sketch of
mourners at a funeral. It ends with the widow beginning "mechanically
to smooch the peats and tidy up the hearth." There are some resemblances
to "Salvagia," but the differences are much more obvious. Graham
now uses the occasional Scottish word in narration, rather than only in
dialogue. The Scots are still called "a race of men who knew no
shadows, either in life or in belief," but they have an "unexpected and
interior softness." The minister ends his prayer "with the defiance to

33 *Thirteen Stories* (London, 1900); *Success* (London, 1902).
34 "At Dalmary," *Hope*, p. 64; "Mist in Menteith," *Hatchment*, p. 111.
35 Two pieces in *Brought Forward* (London, 1916), do have a Glasgow
background; "Brought Forward," a story about the effect of the First World
War (pp. 1–10), and "With the North-East Wind," an account of Keir
Hardie's funeral (pp. 51–59).
36 *Hope*, pp. 61–73; the quotation is on pp. 65–66.
humanity that must have wrung so many tears of blood from countless hearts, saying the Lord had given and that the Lord had taken, blessed be his name;" but there is no railing against those who accept the dogmas and consolations of religion. The outside of the house is as derelict as the one in "Salvagia," but there is no irony at the expense of "interior grace." Physical description is more precise and more important. There is much less sense of the particular being forced into duty as the general. The scene is allowed to develop for its own sake: "A workman in his ordinary clothes took the tall, white-faced horse close by the bit, and, with a jolt which made the kist shift up against the backboard, the cart set out . . . with now and then a wheel running up high on one side and now and then a jerk upon the trace-hooks, when the horse, cold with his long wait, strained wildly on the chains" (p. 72).

The majority of the Scottish pieces are sketches of people or places. There are, however, some pieces in which Scottishness is given dramatic form. The comic "M'Kechnie v. Scaramanga" is one of these, giving a presbyterian shipowner's account of his tussle with a Madonna-revering Mediterranean crew. Another, is "Beatrock for Moffat," one of the best-known of Graham's stories. With his English wife and his brother, a dying Scotsman is traveling north for the last time. He dies on the platform at Beatrock, the junction for Moffat. Graham wrote to Garnett: "If you could understand that in NB, we never curse God and die, you may see my point of view better in "Beatrock for Moffat."

The story contrasts the two brothers' acceptance of death—"we'll hae a heartsome funeral"—with the "loving, tactless wife" whose attempts at consolation can only seem evasive. The brothers have been "reared on the fiery faith of Moffat Calvinism;" the wife imagines Paradise as "a sort of music hall." It is a battle between "Cockney and Scotch conceit," each unaware of the other's rationale. The contrast is developed as the train steams towards Scotland. Andrew, the dying man, recognises landmarks—Shap Fell, Ecclefechan—and comments on them. So does the narrator. Marking the stages of the journey heightens the suspense. We do not know whether Andrew will reach Moffat; the journey is a weary one.

36 Progress, pp. 199–217; Success, pp. 139–54.
37 Fragment, n.d.
38 As James Steel Smith puts it, in his excellent "R. B. Cunninghame Graham as a Writer of Short Fiction," English Literature in Transition, 12
to Graham's consciousness rather than Andrew's. Preston and Garsang are associated with the Recusants; the Trent recalls Paraguay or Brazil. The author intrudes too much, forgets that he has characters to deal with. This is unfortunate, because it makes it all the more difficult to take the characters at face value. We are clearly meant to prefer the brothers; their speech is vigorous, and their command of the situation firmer. The wife is such a caricature that preference hardly arises. There is either too much or too little Graham; too little to establish him as a force within the story, too much for him to stay discreetly on one side.

If Graham may have made "Beattock for Moffat" too schematic, in "Miss Christian Jean" he once more showed his ability to deploy the imprecise, the seemingly amorphous. This piece changes direction so completely that one is at first bewildered by what has or hasn't taken place. It opens with an examination of two landscape paintings, so badly done that the countryside looks unreal. The two pictures bring back memories of the house where they used to hang—a hardly disguised Gartmore. Description of the house leads to description of its strange neighbourhood, using the familiar motifs of the inhabitants as aliens, and the overlapping of Highlands and Lowlands. Mention of the Highlands raises memories of drovers Graham had seen in his youth. They are a vanished "type" like the Laird who is now introduced, and is the subject of the remainder of the sketch. The Laird, Wallace of Gartchorracan, is a praiser of times past, whose "inner nature always seemed to be just struggling forth almost against his will." Eventually, and with many digressions, Wallace talks about the life, death, and burial of his aunt, Miss Christian Jean. At the climatic point, describing how he and the butler had had to kist—to encoffin—the aunt themselves, and how he had washed his hands in snow afterwards, Wallace breaks into broad Scots, a clear sign of his emotion: "That's how I kisted my Aunty Christian Jean, pur leddy, a sair job it was, and dreich."

The range of digression, particularly in Wallace's narration, is re-

(1969), 61–75; "Things pass by. We pass them by. We do not really meet, and we go whirring further on into other neighborhoods" (p. 71).

38 *His People* pp. 213–35.
markable. Describing family prayers at Miss Christian Jean’s, for instance, Wallace quotes a sailor cousin who was reminded of a service at sea. The cousin is part of the framework of memory, and so is presented elaborately for this one appearance: "ye mind that he was drowned in one of those Green’s ships, fell from aloft whilst they were reefing topsails in a dark night somewhere about the Cape.” And this is not the whole description. Memory is one of the story’s themes, and it seemingly randomness, its habit of yoking disparates together, is enacted in the way Wallace remembers his aunt, and the way Graham remembers Wallace. There is no normal logic in the sequence; the links come by association, and have the compulsiveness of dreams. Everything has been set in motion by the sight of the two pictures: "So everyone connected with the house of the two works of art became mixed up somehow with them in a mysterious way, as well as things inanimate and trees . . . making them strange and half unreal, as in a landscape in a dream” (p. 217).

The subsidiary theme of loneliness and community is bound up with the theme of memory. Memory is painful for Wallace, it shakes his stoic front; and Graham is troubled by "places of which I once was part, places which still ungrateful live on, whilst that of me which lived in them is dead.” Each man has his own scourge of memories. At the same time, reminiscence is a social act, and possibly therapeutic. To Wallace: "Nothing was more congenial . . . than to unpack his recollections of the past." And Graham of course is publishing his recollections.

"Miss Christian Jean” was not produced easily. “I have written and rewritten the damned thing . . . and it will not come out to my satisfaction. I know what I want, but I cannot say it.” Yet the finished product succeeds both thematically and dramatically. Wallace’s monologue brings him to life far more than simple description would have done. His and Graham’s memories are intensely personal, but we are made aware of memory as a process common to all men. The planned indirection, the surprising changes of emphasis, have the power to unsettle characteristic of Graham’s best writing.

In the later stories, there are no remarks about the Kailyard. The enemy has simply disappeared. It may be that Graham felt more at liberty to follow his own instincts once he was assured that Maclaren

---

40 Letter to Garnett, 10 March 1906.
and Crockett were virtually spent. By the turn of the century, the Kailyarders had too mild a taste; the public stomach was stronger, and ready for an astringent dose of George Douglas Brown. It is a characteristic irony of Graham’s literary life that he should have written with acid when the sentimental was in vogue, and then, at a time when muted realism became popular, have turned out work that was increasingly nostalgic. In writing, as in everything else, Graham always went his own way.

Scottish scenery fitted Graham’s sense of the elegiac. He once explained the Portuguese word *saudades* in terms of his nostalgia for a particular stretch of hill road. The landscape of the Highlands has “The silence of an empty land, from which the people had been driven sore against their will.” The grounds of an old house are nightmarish in their dereliction: “The passing of a roe through the deep underwood . . . sounds ominous . . . as if some monstrous creature of a dream was going to appear.” 41

The later work concerns itself with Scottish scars and Scottish ruins. Graham was not a revivalist; he was not advocating a return to a bloody medieval past, or distant Celtic beginnings. Speaking in 1913, in support of striking Dublin transport workers, Graham said: “But after all, man must have a little bread, as well as sunbursts and green flags and Brian Boru and the Celtic movements.” 42 His nationalism was based on both historical and economic grounds. Historic causes live as long as their effects. Although a historian, Graham hardly ever wrote sketches actually set in the past. Only the perspective is historical; the view is of the present. Old and crumbling houses, old and stubborn neighbours are the recurring subjects. They are part of the condition of Scotland. A modern Scot of any sensitivity should know his country’s history as a reality that is always there. Stevenson and Scott recreate the past; Graham will not abandon the present. This point is worth emphasizing; the historical novel is so important in nineteenth century Scottish literature. Especially for Stevenson, and for Crockett and Buchan his imitators, the modern and the historic are two different

worlds; at some moment in the recent past, there is a barrier beyond which costume must be worn. No such barrier exists for Graham. His mind moves in space and time with the speed of random association. He has an instinct for the simultaneous and the synoptic.

According to the occasion, this simultaneity breeds irony or melancholy. In this situation they are twins. The contrast of old and new, domestic and exotic, may be sad, or it may be absurd. Irony prevails in the earlier work, sadness in the latter. Ultimately, his contribution to Scottish literature must be judged on the strength of individual works—we must forget the abominable "Fate" (His People), perhaps the most sentimental piece he ever wrote, and remember "Heather Jock" and "Miss Christian Jean." But the double, or multiple vision operating in so much of his Scottish work is in itself valuable. Far more than Stevenson, who was at least as much an expatriate, Graham attempted a synthesis of Scottish and foreign experience.

Graham's influence in Scotland seems to have been slight. He did contribute to Gath na Blàadhna during its brief run, but he published mainly in London periodicals; the Saturday Review, the Speaker, the Nation, and the English Review. His books were well received in the Scottish press; W. M. Parker wrote a fulsome chapter on him in Modern Scottish Writers; but he was more frequently thought of as a writer on Spain, South America, or Morocco. In Scotland he was known but not widely read; talked about, but not followed. His situation was too individual to form the basis of a school.

C. M. Grieve has a valuable discussion of Graham's apparent rootlessness. Finding Scotland unsatisfactory, he investigates other countries, and as a consequence: "He remains a foreigner there; he becomes exotic here. Scotland deals centrifugally with its artists instead of centripetally. And in Cunningham Graham it has lost... one who was


44 William Power, in an unidentified source, ascribes Graham's lack of popularity to the sharp taste of his writing: "The vein of cynical humanism that runs through all his books is as different as possible from the cloyingly insular sentiment of the Kailyarders;" quoted in: Hugh MacDiarmid, Cunninghame Graham: a Centenary Study (Glasgow, [1952]), p. 20.
potentially the greatest Scotsman of his generation." 45 This disorientation may be a strength rather than a weakness. It is the source of Graham's ability to disturb the reader. But that same disturbed reader will be less likely to think of Graham as a Scottish writer. He always ran the risk of being thought a writer on everybody's periphery.

This brings me back to my original question. What is the point of calling Graham a Scottish writer at all? Why discuss the sketches set in Scotland as a separate entity? The simplest answer is that Graham considered himself a Scot. That he also considered himself of part Spanish background, an ex-gaucho, and a friend of sheikhs, is beside the point. Despite C. M. Grieve's comment, Graham was highly conscious of roots. Though at his ease in many places, he was suspicious of the blandly cosmopolitan. He had a sense of Scottishness, of there being a particular fate to being a Scotsman. It was important to him to understand his origins, and having understood them, to set them against the whole of his experience. He always carried with him an ironic sense of his own nature: "It is an arguable point whether a Scotsman ever is a renegade, so deep into his being has bitten the affection for the life, the customs, mists, the mountains, and traditions of the land which he has taken such good care to leave." 46

Dartmouth College

45 Grieve, p. 49.
46 "A Renegade," Progress, p. 182.