Scott's Legacy to Scottish Historical Fiction

By Douglas Gifford

I propose two arguments. First, that Scott's Scottish historical novels, despite their customary fortunate endings for their privileged fictitious protagonists, are in the end more often than not about how history defeats their principal non-fictitious protagonists; and second, that the influence of Scott's novels about a recurrently divided Scotland led to an impressive, though neglected, post-Scott school of Scottish fiction, a tradition which includes Stevenson, Neil Munro, SR Crockett, John Buchan, Violet Jacob, and Naomi Mitchison.

I begin with a brief and familiar overview of Scott's treatment of Scottish history. I remember realising, when beginning to come to grips with the range of Scott's writing, that there were unexpected and notable absences in the coverage of the historical fiction (as opposed to the broader canvas of The *Tales of a Grandfather* (1828-9).Might we not have expected Scott, as the celebrant of Scotland's history, to have been tempted by subjects such as, say, Columba, Kenneth MacAlpin, Macbeth, Malcolm Canmore? What too of Wallace? And Bruce? (though Bruce is thrillingly treated in the all too neglected *Lord of the Isles* of 1815). Likewise there is no novel (as opposed to the tragedy of Flodden in *Marmion*) to develop the story of the cultural glory of the reign of James IV and its disastrous conclusion in 1513 at Flodden.

What then are Scott's period choices? From Scott's beginnings, as in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) Scott's recurrent patterning is clear, from the divided allegiances of the poem's Borders conflict of Scotts against Kerrs and Cessfords, to late fiction like 'The Two Drovers' (1827) where the oppositions of national contrasts are presented in microcosm through the contrast of Robin Oig, passionate representative of a dying culture, and Harry Wakefield, representing English dominance and apparent civilisation. Virtually all his poetry and fiction, even when set in England or abroad, centres on situations and times of civil war and momentous cultural oppositions of the past against present, disorder against order, emotion and often savage enthusiasm against prudence and reason,

whether the clash be of Normans against Saxons, Cavaliers against Roundheads, Crusaders against Saracens, Constantinople Christians against threatening heathens.

In terms of Scotland, two great periods of division and clash of disorder and order preoccupy him – on one hand, that of the seventeenth century and Scotland's religious divisions and the Covenanting wars; and, on the other, the eighteenth-century Jacobite rebellions with its focus on the profound differences between older Highland society and culture and that of the developing Lowlands. And what are his great themes? As early as 1817 Samuel Taylor Coleridge (in his *Biographia Literaria* of 1817) identified the great theme at the heart of Scott's fiction as one of division: 'the contest between the two great moving principles of social humanity; religious adherence to the past and the ancient, the desire and the admiration of permanence' on one hand, and on the other, 'the passion for increase of knowledge, for truth as the offspring of reason – in short, the mighty instincts of progression and free agency […]'.

Arguably the most significant perceptions of Scott critics in the twentieth century were to do with the significance of his great themes, and how Scott was fascinated by the ways in which Scottish identity – and Scott himself – was trapped between political and cultural loyalties of the past, and the present, as the point of change into what he saw as a necessary but prosaic and unloved future. Scott's own loyalties were often severely strained, from his acknowledgement that, had he been alive at the time of the '45, his heart would have led him to join the Prince, despite the prudence of his head.

But it is not my purpose to review the well-known Scott contradictions between the prudent Unionist lawyer and passionate lover of Scotland's history and culture. I have elsewhere argued that Scott, recognising Scotland's centuries of debilitating civil divisions, and the post-Union erosion of Scottish cultural characteristics, sought in his fictions to create a story, what might even be called a myth, of Scottish regeneration. We know he had ambitions, only partly fulfilled, to set forth in fiction the regions of Scotland to itself, from Shetland to the Borders, illustrating periods of greatest change.

I now move to more contentious ground. Arguably, in portraying Scotland, and the matter of Scotland, in terms of helping his fellow Scots come to terms with history, Scott was bound to fail, Scotland's internecine history a current too dark

and strong for even Scott's talents to control.

To put it otherwise, Scott's Scottish fiction overall amounts to a tragic metanovel, exploring what might superficially appear exotic, colourful, and even romantic; but read perceptively, presenting a sad understory of repeated disillusion and defeat. So often his most noble characters, from Flora MacIvor to Rob Roy, from Prince Charles to Redgauntlet, are symbols of the failure of the past; and even when events seem to work out fortunately, we are reminded that – as in the case of Henry Morton's return to a Protestant Scotland – that the Protestant settlement was not achieved by Morton or indeed Scotland itself, but almost as a by-product of the English decision to welcome William of Orange and the Glorious Revolution. For all Scott's noble attempts at an affirmative, healing and mythic Scottish fiction (and I include his long poems here), and his permitting personally happy endings to the likes of Edward Waverley, Frank Osbaldistone and Henry Morton, and the host of what Scott called his 'insipid heroes'. I contend that Scott's historical vision, deeply divided between emotion and reason, like Scotland itself, was essentially bleak. This distinction between individual happiness on one level and historical tragedy on the other is important as a model for the novels of the heirs of Scott which I discuss.

I argue that two contrasting aims underlie Scott's fiction. On one hand, from 'The Lay' onward, is a lawyer's movement towards reconciliation, of forgiveness for Scotland's troubled past; on the other, a poet's bleak regret that division and divided loyalties have been our Scottish inheritance.

Of course Scott was not alone in this underlying tragic vision of his country. The fiction of John Galt, especially in *Ringan Gilhaizie* (1823) and *The Entail* (1823) shares much of Scott's patterning of a Past contrasted with a less than ideal Present. James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) even more strongly presents what becomes the central theme of our later historical fiction; that of the recurrent dilemma of the divided self, in a divided family and community, set in a divided and often bigoted nation. And the role of their central protagonists is to bear witness to the endless ways Scotland has destroyed itself.

Scott died in 1832, Hogg in 1836, Galt in 1839. With their deaths there followed a long period of *anomie* in Scottish literature. This is the period of Scots in Britain and Empire, influential to an extent hardly imaginable now, but also a half-

century when Scottish culture was at its lowest ebb. With the Disruption of 1843 ending the General Assembly's role as Scotland's forum for Scottish autonomy, with the ensuing domination of religious debate over culture, together with what David Daiches saw as the pernicious effects of Victorian gentility, and *Blackwood's Magazine* now into its British and imperial hey-day, Scottish literature was in eclipse. There were important writers like Carlyle, Macdonald, Oliphant, and James Thomson. All of these, however, left Scotland, and as often as not their work is set within an English rather than Scottish context. Post-Ossian Celtic Twilight became immensely popular, marginalising genuine Gaelic poetry – and there was the huge success of 'Kailyard' fiction. There was little significant fiction or poetry working seriously with the material of Scottish history and culture. And when Scottish literature revived in the 1880s with Stevenson, it was Scott's darker emphasis on irreconcilability and elegy, the note struck by the ending of *Redgauntlet* rather than his attempts to create narratives of Scottish regeneration, which would dominate major historical fiction – so that when in 1893 Stevenson draws to a bitter end David Balfour's involvement in the major historical events of *Kidnapped* (1886) and *Catriona*, it is very much with the disillusioned mood of the ending of *Waverley* or *Redgauntlet*. As with Scott's young and ensnared protagonists, David Balfour's role throughout his travels around Scotland is that of witness to corruption and intrigue following the Appin murder of the Red Fox, and to witness the divisions between Highland and Lowlands – as well as the sophisticated villainy of Edinburgh Great Ones. His adolescent naivety cannot alter the black course of history. Stevenson clearly felt this was an important statement, since, unusually for a writer of short novels and stories, often unfinished, he continued David's story, so that *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* can be read as the ambitious novel David Balfour. Failing to save innocent James of the Glen from hanging, summing-up his actions at the end of Part One of *Catriona*, before leaving for Holland, David expresses a disillusion with Scottish history and politics which echoes Scott, but arguably with an even more sceptical detachment – which will increasingly become the hall-mark of the historical Scottish fiction of his followers like Neil Munro and John Buchan:

> But I had had my view of that detestable business they call politics – I had seen it from behind, when it is all bones and blackness, and I was cured for life […] a plain quiet path was that which I was ambitious to walk in, when I might keep my head out of the way of dangers and my conscience out of the road of temptation. For, upon a retrospect, it appeared that I had not done so grandly after all; but with the greatest possible amount of big speech and preparation, had accomplished nothing […]

Kidnapped (1886) and *Catriona* (1893), *The Master of Ballantrae* (1888), and *Weir of Hermiston* (1896) re-established Scott's model of young men witnessing Scotland caught up despite themselves in mighty events, in mainly negative ways. They share Scott's use of polarised protagonists in David Balfour and Alan Breck, the brothers Ballantrae, and so many of his stories. I suggest that these are more than inherited stereotypes, and that their various creators mean them to represent divided Scotland and its archetypes of division, in mind as well as allegiance. Here too are Scott's main themes; the failure of the past against a corrupt present, disorder against order, apparent romance undercut by more sordid reality, history's young protagonists trapped amidst ancient and pointless conflicts. All can be read as subsets of Coleridge's perception of Scott's grand central theme. Here too are versions of Scott's 'insipid heroes'. David Balfour, Henry Ballantrae, young Archie Weir are the disillusioned descendants of Edward Waverley, sadder and wiser by Ullswater, having achieved nothing but the risk of his neck; Frank Osbaldistone, saved by a Highland outlaw; even Henry Morton, returning to Scotland as outlaw and disguised. And in reviving Scott's central themes, Stevenson passes on the type to Munro, Crockett, Buchan and others. (They are refashioned in father-and-son opposition as the central opposition in semi&hy; historical novels, such as *The House with the Green Shutters* of 1901, and *Gillespie*, 1914.)

I return to my argument that Scott's fiction had two contending currents, that of reconciliation and forgiveness for the past on one hand, and a bleak recognition of fundamental Scottish irreconcilability on the other. And in moving all too briefly to discuss Scott's heirs, I begin with their adoption of his second and negative inheritance, the tradition of divided self, the divided family and community, in a nation riven by religion and politics.

Neil Munro (1864-1930) began with marvellous short stories in *The Lost Pibroch* in 1896, followed by the best of his many fine historical novels: *John Splendid* of 1898, *Gilian the Dreamer* (1899), and *The New Road* in 1914. *John Splendid* is set in Inveraray at the time of Montrose's depredations, and his stunning victory over Argyle at Inverlochy. Typically, as in his later novels, we have the Balfour-Breck contrasting pair, locked in a bond of necessity, in dour stay-at-home Colin Elrigmore, contrasted with the dashing soldier of fortune, John ('Splendid') McIver. A mature reading of the novel reveals that Munro, like Scott, is revealing 'Splendid's' feet of clay, as part of the tragic weaknesses of Highland

culture and unquestioning clan loyalties. *Gilian the Dreamer*, set in a decaying Inveraray after the Napoleonic wars, likewise exposes the hollow *braggadocio* of its pensioned Highland officers, now anachronisms, with the talented boy Gilian, the dreamer and misfit, part of their dysfunctional family, destroyed like Archie Weir or young John Gourlay of *The House with The Green Shutters* by a traditional male authority with its anachronistic values and adherence to the past. *The New Road* of 1914 is arguably Munro's finest novel, well able to stand beside *Waverley* or *Rob Roy*. Here is yet another typical pair, in young Aeneas McMaster, son of an Inveraray merchant, and Ninian MacGregor Campbell (clear kinship here with Rob Roy), who journey across Scotland like Balfour and Breck, witnesses to the Highland corruption of Simon Lovat, the treacherous black spider at the heart of Scotland's political duplicity. And what is the New Road? It is General Wade's opening up of the outlaw Highlands; but it is also the future's deathknell for the disorderly past, the end of the clan system, of an ancient way of life, and arguably of the language and culture of Gaeldom.

Samuel Rutherford Crockett (1859-1914) was a prolific writer of vigorous historical fiction; but his desperate need to make money (he gave up his Free Kirk ministry in 1895 to be a full-time novelist) for his large family, together with extended illness, caused him to move erratically between Scottish and foreign historical fiction, between Kailyard and Celtic Twilight, and even between light romance and Zola-like realism. But his early Galloway covenanting novels like *The Men of the Moss Haggs* of 1895 and his *The Gray Man* of 1896 (following Scott's little-known drama of 1830, *Auchendrayne; or The Ayrshire Tragedy*) are impressive in their stark presentation of Galloway and Ayrshire divided as much as Scott's Borders in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. *The Moss Haggs* replicates the Balfour-Breck realism-romance contrast in pairing dour Whig William Gordon with his cousin, the exotic cavalier Wat Gordon, a maverick Royalist outlawed in the time of Claverhouse's persecution. Crockett draws heavily on James Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* of 1818 as well as *Old Mortality*.

That said, at his best Crockett's sense of the anger, despair and hatred of Scotland's contending factions is as powerful as anything of Scott or Stevenson. *The Gray Man* explores the ancient divisions of Ayrshire and Galloway as rival branches of the powerful Kennedys fight for territorial supremacy in the seventeenth-century, echoing Scott's internecine combats. And the tragic story of the Black and Red Douglases, once more powerful than their Scottish monarchs,

fascinated Crockett; *The Black Douglas* (1899) and its sequels takes the great families into head-on collision with James II – their quarrel ending twice in the savage murder of two of their great earls by the king. And Crockett has his own version of *Rob Roy*. His trilogy of novels, *The Raiders*, *The Dark o' the Moon*, and *Silver Sand* (1894, 1902, and 1914) centre on the pairing of three generations of naive young Galloway men set Balfour-like against the elusive gypsy Earl Johnny Faa, King of the gypsies (also known as the wandering tinkler Silver Sand). Silver Sand and his gypsy clan in their Galloway mountain fastnesses are Crockett's 'children of the mist'. This time Scott's tragic opposition of past and present, disorder and order, is reflected in the trilogy's slow inevitability, as Crockett shows, like Scott in *Rob Roy* and *Redgauntlet*, that the day of noble outlaws is past. The final novel in the trilogy (*The Dark o' the Moon*, which although published twelve years before *Silver Sand*, belatedly tells of the middle part of Faa's life) ends in the glorious but fatal defiance of modern authority and power by the ancient gypsy clans in their last doomed battle. All Crockett's Scottish historical fiction moves around the clash of establishment authority and outlaw protest, from the Kennedy tragedies of the 1400s, through the wars of the Covenant, to the last violent disruption of the anti-Clearance movement of the Galloway Levellers in the eighteenth century, thus yet again echoing the terms of Coleridge's assertion of Scott's dominant theme.

The success of his 'shockers', as John Buchan (1875-1940), called them, have obscured the fact that he wrote several fine Scottish historical novels. And Buchan continued the tradition begun by Scott (and Galt and Hogg) – that of radical re-assessment of Scottish history and culture. Buchan's novella *Sir Quixote of the Moors* appeared in the same year, 1895, as Crockett's *Men of the Moss Haggs*. Once again we are in the world of Covenanters being ruthlessly hunted, now in the central Ayrshire and Lanarkshire moors. But with *John Burnet of Barns* in 1898 the full inheritance of Scott and Stevenson becomes clear, with decent young John locked in opposition to his evil cousin Gilbert, whom John feels (like the relationship in The Justified Sinner between Hogg's Robert Wringhim and his attendant devil) 'is bound up in some sinister way with my life'. And in *A Lost Lady of Old Years* in 1899 Buchan creates a subtle variation on the dualisms of Scott and Stevenson in his pairing of his young Francis Birkenshaw, the dour and morally uncertain adventurer, with Simon Lovat, the corrupt yet charismatic Highland double-dealer. Midwinter of 1923 takes Jacobite Alastair Maclean into England (with no less a figure than Dr Johnson as his friend and accomplice) only

to be betrayed by his alter ego and fellow Jacobite, the smooth arch-traitor Nicholas Kyd.

But the undoubted masterpiece of this late period of the tradition is Buchan's *Witchwood* of 1927. Here are Scott's themes – religious bigotry, the clash of the ancient Royalist loyalty of Montrose with the Whig allegiances of Argyle, which will conclude the novel at the slaughter of Philiphaugh in 1645. The new young minister of Woodilee, David Sempill, is indeed simple in his religious idealism. His vision of the good community is destroyed by the hypocrisy and wiliness of his polar opposite, the church elder, Ephraim Caird of Chasehope. The divisions, dualisms, and recurrent tragedies of Scotland are shown at every level in this last and arguably greatest fiction of the Scott tradition. Woodilee, a microcosm of Scotland, is surrounded by the ancient Black Wood of Caledon, a symbol of the darkness of the superstition and hypocrisy which benight the community. It is the secret place of witches' orgies, the dark side of Calvinism. To David, the Scottish innocent, however, the wood is the place where he meets Katrine Yester, by far the kindest and worthiest of Woodilee – but she dies, and with her symbolic death, dies any hope for the bigoted community. David, rejecting his ministry, goes off into an uncertain future as an exiles continental soldier of fortune. There are many other fine novelists of the period who belong to this tradition who deserve revival and study, such as Violet Jacob with *Flemington* (1911) and Naomi Mitchison with *The Bull Calves* of 1947, which ambitiously takes up Scott's theme of reconciliation, regeneration and forgiveness. I reiterate my central argument, that this tradition of Scottish historical fiction, apparently preoccupied with setting out the internecine divisions of Scotland, should be seen as an important and powerful movement in Scottish fiction. Its achievement lies outstandingly in its imaginative stocktaking of the realities rather than the conventional romances of Scottish history, and in its insistence on probing beneath the surface and shallow Victorian representations of Scotland as presented through Celtic Twilight and Kailyard simplification.

There is, however, in later Scottish fiction a final, affirmative and enduring strain inherited from Scott. I can only nod here to the richness of Scottish fiction's distinctive treatment of landscape, enduring and magnificent, despite the tragedies enacted upon it, as in Grassic Gibbon and Neil Gunn; and the equal richness of deployment of our three languages and their range of users, Highland,

Lowland, Borderers. And these extraordinary yet very ordinary speakers in an enduring landscape are in the end a counter affirmation, transcending the passage of historical tragedy. When Scott tried to find a symbol of regeneration and forgiveness for Scotland, he created Jeanie Deans, the real and yet symbolic heart of Midlothian, Midlothian itself symbolic of a wider Scotland. That is to say, at grass roots level, Jeannie, the 'daughter of a cowfeeder' as Lord Jeffrey called her in *The Edinburgh Review* of 1820, is presented by Scott as representing what is enduring and essential in Scotland to be set against its all too recurrent corruption and division. She converts her enemies; Scott symbolically places her in the end of the novel in Roseneath, his idiosyncratic symbol of Highlands and Lowlands, (which Scott represented as an island and as a miniature Scotland regenerated by Jeanie and her minister, as an example and microcosm of Scottish reconciliation.

The significance of this departure from the usual English model of missing heirs restored, instead being replaced by an assertion of something timeless, transcending history, to be found in humble goodness, reverberates through later Scottish fiction. Galt and Hogg shared this democratic thrust; the young men of Stevenson, Munro, Crockett and Buchan, emerge from the ordinary people of Scotland, like Grassic Gibbon's Chris Guthrie, and Neil Gunn's Finn McHamish. Even the works of contemporary Scottish fiction by writers like Alasdair Gray and James Kelman insist on asserting the human ordinariness of their protagonists, just as most recently James Robertson has done with the vast yet utterly recognisable yet ordinary cast of his ambitious Scottish book of the year *And the Land Lay Still* (2009). David Daiches memorably argued in his pioneering essay of 'The Achievement of Walter Scott' (that the 'heroes' or significant people in Scott's novels are the ordinary Scots – the Mucklebackits, the Dinmonts, the Edie Ochiltrees – and of course Jeanie Deans. Scott's legacy continues.

References & Further Information

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recurrently divided Scotland led to an impressive, though neglected, post-Scott school of Scottish fiction, a tradition which includes Stevenson, Neil Munro, SR Crockett, John Buchan, Violet Jacob, and Naomi Mitchison.

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In terms of Scotland, two great periods of division and clash of disorder and order preoccupy him – on one hand, that of the seventeenth century and Scotland's religious divisions and the Covenanting wars; and, on the other, the eighteenth-century Jacobite rebellions with its focus on the profound differences between older Highland society and culture and that of the developing Lowlands. And what are his great themes? As early as 1817 Samuel Taylor Coleridge (in his *Biographia Literaria* of 1817) identified the great theme at the heart of Scott's fiction as one of division: 'the contest between the two great moving principles of social

humanity; religious adherence to the past and the ancient, the desire and the admiration of permanence' on one hand, and on the other, 'the passion for increase of knowledge, for truth as the offspring of reason – in short, the mighty instincts of progression and free agency […]'.

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Scottish fiction (and I include his long poems here), and his permitting personally happy endings to the likes of Edward Waverley, Frank Osbaldistone and Henry Morton, and the host of what Scott called his 'insipid heroes'. I contend that Scott's historical vision, deeply divided between emotion and reason, like Scotland itself, was essentially bleak. This distinction between individual happiness on one level and historical tragedy on the other is important as a model for the novels of the heirs of Scott which I discuss.

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Of course Scott was not alone in this underlying tragic vision of his country. The fiction of John Galt, especially in *Ringan Gilhaizie* (1823) and *The Entail* (1823) shares much of Scott's patterning of a Past contrasted with a less than ideal Present. James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) even more strongly presents what becomes the central theme of our later historical fiction; that of the recurrent dilemma of the divided self, in a divided family and community, set in a divided and often bigoted nation. And the role of their central protagonists is to bear witness to the endless ways Scotland has destroyed itself.

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sordid reality, history's young protagonists trapped amidst ancient and pointless conflicts. All can be read as subsets of Coleridge's perception of Scott's grand central theme. Here too are versions of Scott's 'insipid heroes'. David Balfour, Henry Ballantrae, young Archie Weir are the disillusioned descendants of Edward Waverley, sadder and wiser by Ullswater, having achieved nothing but the risk of his neck; Frank Osbaldistone, saved by a Highland outlaw; even Henry Morton, returning to Scotland as outlaw and disguised. And in reviving Scott's central themes, Stevenson passes on the type to Munro, Crockett, Buchan and others. (They are refashioned in father-and-son opposition as the central opposition in semi&hy; historical novels, such as *The House with the Green Shutters* of 1901, and *Gillespie*, 1914.)

I return to my argument that Scott's fiction had two contending currents, that of reconciliation and forgiveness for the past on one hand, and a bleak recognition of fundamental Scottish irreconcilability on the other. And in moving all too briefly to discuss Scott's heirs, I begin with their adoption of his second and negative inheritance, the tradition of divided self, the divided family and community, in a nation riven by religion and politics.

Neil Munro (1864-1930) began with marvellous short stories in *The Lost Pibroch* in 1896, followed by the best of his many fine historical novels: *John Splendid* of 1898, *Gilian the Dreamer* (1899), and *The New Road* in 1914. *John Splendid* is set in Inveraray at the time of Montrose's depredations, and his stunning victory over Argyle at Inverlochy. Typically, as in his later novels, we have the Balfour-Breck contrasting pair, locked in a bond of necessity, in dour stay-at-home Colin Elrigmore, contrasted with the dashing soldier of fortune, John ('Splendid') McIver. A mature reading of the novel reveals that Munro, like Scott, is revealing 'Splendid's' feet of clay, as part of the tragic weaknesses of Highland culture and unquestioning clan loyalties. *Gilian the Dreamer*, set in a decaying Inveraray after the Napoleonic wars, likewise exposes the hollow *braggadocio* of its pensioned Highland officers, now anachronisms, with the talented boy Gilian, the dreamer and misfit, part of their dysfunctional family, destroyed like Archie Weir or young John Gourlay of *The House with The Green Shutters* by a traditional male authority with its anachronistic values and adherence to the past. *The New Road* of 1914 is arguably Munro's finest novel, well able to stand beside *Waverley* or *Rob Roy*. Here is yet another typical pair, in young Aeneas McMaster, son of an Inveraray merchant, and Ninian MacGregor Campbell (clear

kinship here with Rob Roy), who journey across Scotland like Balfour and Breck, witnesses to the Highland corruption of Simon Lovat, the treacherous black spider at the heart of Scotland's political duplicity. And what is the New Road? It is General Wade's opening up of the outlaw Highlands; but it is also the future's deathknell for the disorderly past, the end of the clan system, of an ancient way of life, and arguably of the language and culture of Gaeldom.

Samuel Rutherford Crockett (1859-1914) was a prolific writer of vigorous historical fiction; but his desperate need to make money (he gave up his Free Kirk ministry in 1895 to be a full-time novelist) for his large family, together with extended illness, caused him to move erratically between Scottish and foreign historical fiction, between Kailyard and Celtic Twilight, and even between light romance and Zola-like realism. But his early Galloway covenanting novels like *The Men of the Moss Haggs* of 1895 and his *The Gray Man* of 1896 (following Scott's little-known drama of 1830, *Auchendrayne; or The Ayrshire Tragedy*) are impressive in their stark presentation of Galloway and Ayrshire divided as much as Scott's Borders in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. *The Moss Haggs* replicates the Balfour-Breck realism-romance contrast in pairing dour Whig William Gordon with his cousin, the exotic cavalier Wat Gordon, a maverick Royalist outlawed in the time of Claverhouse's persecution. Crockett draws heavily on James Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* of 1818 as well as *Old Mortality*.

That said, at his best Crockett's sense of the anger, despair and hatred of Scotland's contending factions is as powerful as anything of Scott or Stevenson. *The Gray Man* explores the ancient divisions of Ayrshire and Galloway as rival branches of the powerful Kennedys fight for territorial supremacy in the seventeenth-century, echoing Scott's internecine combats. And the tragic story of the Black and Red Douglases, once more powerful than their Scottish monarchs, fascinated Crockett; *The Black Douglas* (1899) and its sequels takes the great families into head-on collision with James II – their quarrel ending twice in the savage murder of two of their great earls by the king. And Crockett has his own version of *Rob Roy*. His trilogy of novels, *The Raiders*, *The Dark o' the Moon*, and *Silver Sand* (1894, 1902, and 1914) centre on the pairing of three generations of naive young Galloway men set Balfour-like against the elusive gypsy Earl Johnny Faa, King of the gypsies (also known as the wandering tinkler Silver Sand). Silver Sand and his gypsy clan in their Galloway mountain fastnesses are Crockett's 'children of the mist'. This time Scott's tragic opposition of past and

present, disorder and order, is reflected in the trilogy's slow inevitability, as Crockett shows, like Scott in *Rob Roy* and *Redgauntlet*, that the day of noble outlaws is past. The final novel in the trilogy (*The Dark o' the Moon*, which although published twelve years before *Silver Sand*, belatedly tells of the middle part of Faa's life) ends in the glorious but fatal defiance of modern authority and power by the ancient gypsy clans in their last doomed battle. All Crockett's Scottish historical fiction moves around the clash of establishment authority and outlaw protest, from the Kennedy tragedies of the 1400s, through the wars of the Covenant, to the last violent disruption of the anti-Clearance movement of the Galloway Levellers in the eighteenth century, thus yet again echoing the terms of Coleridge's assertion of Scott's dominant theme.

The success of his 'shockers', as John Buchan (1875-1940), called them, have obscured the fact that he wrote several fine Scottish historical novels. And Buchan continued the tradition begun by Scott (and Galt and Hogg) – that of radical re-assessment of Scottish history and culture. Buchan's novella *Sir Quixote of the Moors* appeared in the same year, 1895, as Crockett's *Men of the Moss Haggs*. Once again we are in the world of Covenanters being ruthlessly hunted, now in the central Ayrshire and Lanarkshire moors. But with *John Burnet of Barns* in 1898 the full inheritance of Scott and Stevenson becomes clear, with decent young John locked in opposition to his evil cousin Gilbert, whom John feels (like the relationship in The Justified Sinner between Hogg's Robert Wringhim and his attendant devil) 'is bound up in some sinister way with my life'. And in *A Lost Lady of Old Years* in 1899 Buchan creates a subtle variation on the dualisms of Scott and Stevenson in his pairing of his young Francis Birkenshaw, the dour and morally uncertain adventurer, with Simon Lovat, the corrupt yet charismatic Highland double-dealer. Midwinter of 1923 takes Jacobite Alastair Maclean into England (with no less a figure than Dr Johnson as his friend and accomplice) only to be betrayed by his alter ego and fellow Jacobite, the smooth arch-traitor Nicholas Kyd.

But the undoubted masterpiece of this late period of the tradition is Buchan's *Witchwood* of 1927. Here are Scott's themes – religious bigotry, the clash of the ancient Royalist loyalty of Montrose with the Whig allegiances of Argyle, which will conclude the novel at the slaughter of Philiphaugh in 1645. The new young minister of Woodilee, David Sempill, is indeed simple in his religious idealism. His vision of the good community is destroyed by the hypocrisy and

wiliness of his polar opposite, the church elder, Ephraim Caird of Chasehope. The divisions, dualisms, and recurrent tragedies of Scotland are shown at every level in this last and arguably greatest fiction of the Scott tradition. Woodilee, a microcosm of Scotland, is surrounded by the ancient Black Wood of Caledon, a symbol of the darkness of the superstition and hypocrisy which benight the community. It is the secret place of witches' orgies, the dark side of Calvinism. To David, the Scottish innocent, however, the wood is the place where he meets Katrine Yester, by far the kindest and worthiest of Woodilee – but she dies, and with her symbolic death, dies any hope for the bigoted community. David, rejecting his ministry, goes off into an uncertain future as an exiles continental soldier of fortune. There are many other fine novelists of the period who belong to this tradition who deserve revival and study, such as Violet Jacob with *Flemington* (1911) and Naomi Mitchison with *The Bull Calves* of 1947, which ambitiously takes up Scott's theme of reconciliation, regeneration and forgiveness. I reiterate my central argument, that this tradition of Scottish historical fiction, apparently preoccupied with setting out the internecine divisions of Scotland, should be seen as an important and powerful movement in Scottish fiction. Its achievement lies outstandingly in its imaginative stocktaking of the realities rather than the conventional romances of Scottish history, and in its insistence on probing beneath the surface and shallow Victorian representations of Scotland as presented through Celtic Twilight and Kailyard simplification.

There is, however, in later Scottish fiction a final, affirmative and enduring strain inherited from Scott. I can only nod here to the richness of Scottish fiction's distinctive treatment of landscape, enduring and magnificent, despite the tragedies enacted upon it, as in Grassic Gibbon and Neil Gunn; and the equal richness of deployment of our three languages and their range of users, Highland, Lowland, Borderers. And these extraordinary yet very ordinary speakers in an enduring landscape are in the end a counter affirmation, transcending the passage of historical tragedy. When Scott tried to find a symbol of regeneration and forgiveness for Scotland, he created Jeanie Deans, the real and yet symbolic heart of Midlothian, Midlothian itself symbolic of a wider Scotland. That is to say, at grass roots level, Jeannie, the 'daughter of a cowfeeder' as Lord Jeffrey called her in *The Edinburgh Review* of 1820, is presented by Scott as representing what is enduring and essential in Scotland to be set against its all too recurrent corruption and division. She converts her enemies; Scott symbolically places her

in the end of the novel in Roseneath, his idiosyncratic symbol of Highlands and Lowlands, (which Scott represented as an island and as a miniature Scotland regenerated by Jeanie and her minister, as an example and microcosm of Scottish reconciliation.

The significance of this departure from the usual English model of missing heirs restored, instead being replaced by an assertion of something timeless, transcending history, to be found in humble goodness, reverberates through later Scottish fiction. Galt and Hogg shared this democratic thrust; the young men of Stevenson, Munro, Crockett and Buchan, emerge from the ordinary people of Scotland, like Grassic Gibbon's Chris Guthrie, and Neil Gunn's Finn McHamish. Even the works of contemporary Scottish fiction by writers like Alasdair Gray and James Kelman insist on asserting the human ordinariness of their protagonists, just as most recently James Robertson has done with the vast yet utterly recognisable yet ordinary cast of his ambitious Scottish book of the year *And the Land Lay Still* (2009). David Daiches memorably argued in his pioneering essay of 'The Achievement of Walter Scott' (that the 'heroes' or significant people in Scott's novels are the ordinary Scots – the Mucklebackits, the Dinmonts, the Edie Ochiltrees – and of course Jeanie Deans. Scott's legacy continues.

(c) The Bottle Imp