Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham was born in 1852 in London of a Scottish soldier-father--his mother was of Spanish descent--and died in 1936 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, just one of the many countries in Latin America that he visited frequently and loved so much. The fact that he also travelled extensively and knew intimately the southern countries of Europe, parts of Asia, North and South Africa, as well as North and Central America, has tended to underscore the image of Graham as the great cosmopolitan figure which he certainly was. However, by heritage, upbringing and temperament he was also very much the Scot--Scotissimus Scotorum, as he once called a much admired compatriot. Although he was keenly aware of his position throughout his life, as a Scottish laird, a Scottish Radical M.P. (1886-92), and from his earliest days a member of the Scottish Home Rule Association and an active advocate of a Scottish parliament, Graham was never a narrow parochial nationalist to the extent that he allowed his patriotism to degenerate into xenophobia, nor his concern with Scottish culture to develop into regional narcissism or an incestuous preoccupation with national trivia.

Although one tends to identify Graham with the cause of Scottish nationalism more in the 1920s and 1930s because of his vigorous and visible campaigns and speeches on behalf of the Home Rule movement of that period, even in the early years of his radical political career he had no difficulty in reconciling his socialist principles with his nationalist views. In 1886, the year he was elected to parliament as Radical M.P. for North West Lanark, he became a member of the Scottish Home Rule Association, and was a vice-president of that body of which Keir Hardie was also a member. In 1888 he helped to form the Scottish Parliamentary Labour Party of which he became the honorary president and Keir Hardie the secretary. This first independent labour party was to be the forerunner of an Independent Labour Party of Great Britain, founded in 1893 largely due to the efforts of Graham, Hardie and other Scottish socialists. Although this was a great step forward for organised labour, it has been suggested by some nationalists that the fusion of the Scottish Labour Party with its English and Welsh counterparts did a great disservice to the nationalist
movement in Scotland—despite the continued allegiance of Graham and Hardie to the cause of self-government throughout their lives.

When Graham's official political career ended in 1892, the labour movement was already making great strides. Although he continued to support the underdog, speaking out and writing against the exploitation of the working-classes, his active participation in political matters appeared to wane for a couple of decades during which, one can conveniently state, he was consolidating his literary career. Although he was writing articles, stories, sketches, letters to the press for magazines, journals, and newspapers, his first published book did not appear till 1895. Notes on the District of Menteith, purportedly a travel guide for tourists and others, is still a valuable aid to those who visit that beautiful misty area around his family estate at Gartmore and the family burial place on the Lake of Menteith—places that he knew intimately and described with sympathy, realism and perspicacity. It is, however, much more than a travel guide. Graham's pithy and trenchant remarks on the Scottish countryside, character, culture, customs, history, politics and a host of other topics which he was eminently qualified to treat, raise the book above the mere regional level to philosophical and metaphysical heights—claims that he would have rejected with scorn. Of the many collections of literary sketches that he produced in his forty-year career (Success, Faith, Hope, Charity, Progress, His People, A Hatchment, Brought Forward, Redeemed, Writ in Sand, Mirages, and others), some fifty sketches are dedicated to Scotland, its people, its character and its customs.¹

"It is difficult to tell whether Mr. Cunningham Graham is a politician or a literary man." So wrote Neil Munro as early as 1906.² The answer is, of course, as history has shown, that he was both. It is tempting to try to categorise Graham, both in his life and in his writings, and fit him into convenient periods—and understandably so, if one wants to impose some kind of order on his tumultuous life and works, both literary and political. After the hectic events of the 1880s and 1890s, there appears to be a kind of lull in his active political life—


apart from the anomalous, incomprehensible attempt to win a seat for the Liberals in the 1918 election, despite his virulent attacks on that doomed party during the previous three decades. This was a momentary aberration, ill-conceived, ill-advised, and probably a grand gesture, an emotional response to the failure of the 1914-18 War to save the world from itself, and a token stand in the wake of this futile war to end all wars. The fact that he even participated in the Great War also contradicts his beliefs and statements of the past against all imperialist, colonialist powers and their cruel campaigns against helpless natives wherever they may be. His justification for participation (as a humane horse-recruiter) was that even a pacifist has to support his country against barbarism in a just war, once the terrible decision has been taken.\(^3\) No doubt he would have felt and acted the same way during World War II, if he had survived. With the advent of peace in 1918 Graham's "quiet period," ironically, comes to a close in that his involvement (with Scottish nationalism) becomes even more visible—not that his political (or philosophical) pronouncements had ceased to appear in the many collections of sketches, histories and biographies which he wrote between 1895 and 1920 at the rate of almost one a year—not a bad record for an "amateur of genius", as he was once labelled.

What Neil Munro had failed to see at the turn of the century was that one cannot separate the political and the literary man in Cunninghame Graham, since it is the writer who gives voice to the political concerns which often become the stuff of his artistic sketches e.g. the pieces on the funerals of William Morris and Keir Hardie, not to mention the overtly political pamphlets like The Nail and Chainmakers (1889), Economic Evolution (1891), and The Imperial Kailyard (1896), whose ironic title deliberately links the two aspects of Graham's work and highlights the point that I have been making about Graham's nationalism transcending the local to reach universal heights. One ought to, one has to, know one's country, he argued, before proceeding to the larger unit. Rabindranath Tagore describes this phenomenon thus: "Love your country and every tradition of your country, search for them with the great search of a lover. Be true to your country first, and when you are rooted and grounded in your

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\(^3\) This attitude, however, does not excuse his crude attacks on pacifists, conscientious objectors, and especially his Labour opponent, Tom Johnston, a former supporter. It goes without saying that Graham does not come out of this sad business very well - - a rare, uncharacteristic, but nonetheless deplorable episode in his political life.
country, then you can grasp the whole world." There is no contradiction, then, in the international, cosmopolitan figure of Cunningham Graham being associated with the Home Rule movement, since he regarded nationalism as but the first step that one takes towards internationalism. Even at the height of his early political career (socialism) in 1887 he was stressing "the spirit of national independence, without which men indeed, even a Scotchman, is but a tinkling bagpipe." This is a sharp reminder to those who see Graham's nationalist activities in the twilight of his life as a belated effort to make up for lost time. Graham's correspondence, however, reveals that he was already heavily involved in the nationalist cause even before the halcyon days of the late 1920s and early 1930s when he was a conspicuous figure at meetings in Stirling, Paisley, Edinburgh, Glasgow and elsewhere. One remembers his famous speech (August 1920) on Sir William Wallace, "the very light and lamp of liberty and the symbol of Scotland wherever three or four Scotsmen met throughout the world and spoke of their native land." Graham always had a soft spot for Wallace, probably because he preceded Bruce in his fights for independence and is less identified with the success that the latter obtained at the hands of the historians. One also remembers Graham's famous quotation that he applied to all the Wallaces of the world: "For those who fail, for those who have sunk still battling beneath the muddy waves of life, we keep our love, and that curiosity about their lives which makes their memories green when the cheap gold is dusted over, which once we gave success."

Graham was a gifted orator, as well as a writer, who often spoke without notes, taking his inspiration from his historic surroundings and rousing his partisan audience to heights of patriotism and nostalgia with a facility that lesser mortals envied:

Wallace is Scotland: he is the symbol of all that is best and purest and truest and most heroic in our national life. You cannot figure to yourselves Scotland without Wallace. He prepared the way, and is preparing the


5 In a speech given at Glasgow, cited by Tom Hubbard, in a perceptive article, "Revaluation: R.B. Cunningham Graham," Cencrasus, No. 8 (Spring 1982), 27-30.


7 In the sketch of the same name from Success (London, 1902), 2.
way, with your assistance for a National Legislature in Scotland. He is a man whose memory can never die. So long as grass grows green, or water runs, or whilst the mist curls through the corries of the hills, the memory of Wallace will live.\(^8\)

Rhetoric it may be, but it is very effective. Even more interesting from the point of view of Graham's perception of nationalism as part of a wider spectrum is his comparison of Wallace with other great liberators, thus transcending national frontiers: "he has taken his place beside the patriots of the world--beside Garibaldi, Mazzini, and Bolívar; beside all the men who have struggled and apparently failed, but not really failed, because no generous thought that ever came into the world is really lost--it persists through the ages, and bears fruit in places where one would not look for it."\(^9\) When one recalls that this speech was delivered in 1920, it highlights Graham's early commitment to the nationalist cause, and to his view of Scotland not as an isolated petty kingdom but as a flourishing independent state which will take its place not only in the Dominion, but in Europe and eventually in the whole League of Nations.

Graham may have been the polished cosmopolitan traveller, but he was acutely aware of his own country's role, its duty and its destiny. His nationalism, as Tom Hubbard rightly points out, is a logical step, given his response to a variety of societies and cultures that he was familiar with, especially the Scottish dimension: "Nationalism is the first step to internationalism, the goal which every thinking man and woman must place before their eyes; but without nationalism you can have no true internationalism."\(^{10}\) Although this particular statement is from a later (21 June 1930) speech at Stirling, it is an echo and a true reflection of his sentiments reiterated throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In a letter of resignation (23 November 1920) to Roland Muirhead, secretary of the Scottish Home Rule Association, he disagrees with the association's view (which he misinterprets) of Black and Tans reprisals

\(^8\) *Self Government*, 6.


\(^{10}\) Also cited by Hubbard, 28.
in Ireland and their consequences:

... I have been & shall continue, I hope, undisturbed by the violence of these criminals [the Irish rebels], a convinced Home Ruler. I have no objection to Dominion Home Rule, so long as the British Empire is master in its own house, & controls the ports, & armed forces of the crown. As a Scotchman I detest assassination, & despise those who resort to it, and I believe no nation was ever freed by recourse to such dastardly methods. Such were not the ways employed by Wallace & by Bruce. I fear I must ask you to remove my name from the Scottish Home Rule Association ...\(^\text{11}\)

Not all might agree with Graham's summing up of the efficacy of violence and terrorism as a means of achieving independence. In this particular case, however, which reveals how strongly Graham felt about personal principles vis-à-vis the movement, the wounds were soon healed and throughout the 1920s he was a very visible figure and a popular speaker on behalf of Home Rule, which in no way compromised his early beliefs, political or otherwise, since he had always supported national causes in Europe, Africa, and not least in Ireland, whose example he often cited in support of an independent parliament for Scotland within the Dominion situation. He became president of the Home Rule Association in 1924, a position which he held during the life of that organisation. When the National Party of Scotland was formed in 1928 he became president of that body, and in the same year stood as the Nationalist candidate for the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University against Baldwin, losing by a mere sixty-six votes (1044 to 978), mainly as a result of the women's votes going to the Prime Minister as a debt of gratitude. The irony is that they were unaware how much Graham had done in the 1880s and 1890s for the suffragette

\(^{11}\) For permission to quote from the letters of Cunninghame Graham I am grateful to Lady Polwarth. These materials including pamphlets, programmes, speeches, note books, newspaper cuttings, and other documents are housed at the estate of Lord and Lady Polwarth, Harden, Hawick; the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; the Humanities Research Centre, University of Texas at Austin; and Special Collections, Baker Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. I should like to thank Lady Polwarth and all of these centres for their help and co-operation during many research trips over the last thirty years or so.
cause.\textsuperscript{12}

In his speech at the Inauguration Demonstration of the National Party of Scotland held in the King's Park, Stirling on 23 June 1928, Graham with his now familiar mixture of acidity (at the expense of Baldwin, Lloyd George and the House of Lords sweaters) and the now indispensable sentiment, reiterated his favourite comparison of the valour of the traditional liberators (Wallace and Bruce) with that of the great classical heroes (the Greeks at Marathon, the Romans at Cannae), thus reforging the links between the national and universal struggles. Although he mercilessly condemned out of hand the false sentimentality of the kailyarders,\textsuperscript{13} he was not against using a little of the "genuine" sentiment, as he called it (for example, his constant boast that his forbears had fought with Wallace at Falkirk), when it suited his purpose. He was shrewd enough to recognise the complex, or at least double-sided, character of the Scot (especially abroad) who is moved more by sentiment than by commerce:

Speak to them of Wallace and Bruce, of Burns, of the misty straths, the highland hills, the rolling streams, and then you will see the perverted genius of the Scots arise, because in Scotsmen there are two natures—one hard to the outward touch as the back of an armadillo, the other deep down passionate and tender.\textsuperscript{14}

Of course, there are also political, legal, economic grievances to lay before the Scotsman, but it is sentiment that really moves mankind, he argued.

Every year until his death in 1936 he spoke at the "Scotland's Day" meetings in the King's Park, Stirling, to commemorate the Battle of Bannockburn (1314), and at Elderslie to pay homage to the cou-

\textsuperscript{12} See, for example, his article "The Real Equality of the Sexes," \textit{New Age}, 11 July 1908, 207.

\textsuperscript{13} For example, the romantic, escapist fiction of Ian MacLaren, S.R. Crockett, and J.M. Barrie, set against an artificially rustic background, which has a tendency to wallow in emotionalism.

\textsuperscript{14} Stirling Speech, 23 June 1928.
rageous loser Wallace. On 21 June 1930 at Stirling a New Covenant was prepared by the National Party of Scotland and presented to the gathered assembly. In his speech Graham, as always reciting the litany of small nations who have gained their independence often after a bitter struggle (Iceland, Norway, etc.) or gained dominion status (New Zealand, Canada, etc.), recalled the old days when, inspired by his illusions, he had fought for the establishment of the Labour Party, which in fact did not bring about the desired millenium but became a party vying for office just like the others. As in his other speeches Graham underscores the need for a Scottish sentiment and idealism which must be the basis of any new independence movement (cf. Lenin and Gandhi, for example). Had he lived in the time of Fletcher of Saltoun, he confesses, Graham would have resisted the humiliating union. The first step, then, of any Scottish national movement must be the creation of a new parliament in Edinburgh.\(^{15}\) It should be noted, as I have insisted throughout in my links between politics and culture, that the political catalyst would, in Graham's opinion, contribute to the growth of a Scottish Renaissance in literature, music, painting and the like. It is no coincidence that the Scottish Nationalist movement of this period included people like Compton Mackenzie, Hugh MacDiarmid, Lewis Spence, William Power, who were not only active members of the association sharing the political platform with Graham, but first-rate artists in their own right who recognised and appreciated Graham's contribution not only to the political scene but to the enhancement and propagation of Scottish culture and the national identity. MacDiarmid in particular ("I valued Cunninghame Graham beyond rubies") admired Don Roberto in death as in life, not only as a great Scottish nationalist but also as potentially the greatest Scotsman of his generation and the only one to "win to the second rank as an imaginative artist."\(^{16}\) When the words of the new covenant were proclaimed, Cunninghame Graham was the first to sign the document:

We the undersigned, holding a high ideal of our nation's destiny, believe in the urgent necessity of self-government for Scotland. In the faith that a regenerated Scotland will take a leading place among the

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\(^{15}\) This would give the Scots, he stated sarcastically, "the blessing of a national parliament, with the pleasure of knowing that the taxes were wasted in Edinburgh instead of in London" *Notes on the District of Menteith* (London, 1895), 19.

\(^{16}\) In *Contemporary Scottish Studies*, First Series (London, 1926), 49-57.
nations of the world in all peaceful progress, we solemnly pledge ourselves to do everything in our power to restore the independent national status of Scotland. We bind ourselves to act on our belief that the mandate of a majority of Scottish citizens is sufficient authority for setting up an Independent Parliament in Scotland.

Despite the solemnity of the event and the emotionally charged situation, with much talk of idealism and national sentiment, Graham was also a realist, demonstrating in his own life and actions the very ambivalence of the Scots which he identified in his writings. His sentimental view of the pre-Union past and the post-Independence future did not preclude a bitter indictment of the present failings of the Scottish character. Thirty years before in an early collection of sketches, *The Ipané* (1899), Graham launched a scathing attack on the laziness, coarseness, drunkenness and general viciousness of the Scottish race in sketches like "Salvagia" and "A Survival." Cf. this description of the exemplary village of Salvagia:

No trees, no flowers, no industry except the one of keeping idiots sent from Glasgow, and known to the people as "silly bodies". Much faith and little charity, the tongue of every man wagging against his neighbour like a bell-buoy on a shoal. At the street corner groups of men standing spitting. Expectoration is a national sport throughout Salvagia. Women and children are afraid to pass them by. 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".17

This Zolaesque naturalism, or "exaggerated realism," even before the appearance of George Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901), is an obvious attempt to counter the excessive sentimentalism of the Kailyard school, "those awful McCrockets and Larens" who cultivated the image of the pawky Scot, the "meenister," the kilted buffoon, the sentimental fool and other stereotypes perpetrated by the likes of Harry Lauder and other creatures of that ilk who shall,

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deservedly, remain nameless.

Although in his old age Graham had moderated his stance and his language in the halcyon days of Scottish nationalism in the early 1930s, he never completely abandoned his acerbity in dealing with those, especially the Scots themselves, who demeaned the national image or betrayed the Scottish cause, traitors in their own house, anti-patriots doing the bidding of foreign masters. If John Balliol ("Toom Tabard" or "Empty Jacket") is a historical example of such types, Graham reserves his most biting scorn for those whom he calls "the modern McSneeshins":

We rule the British Empire. See how McWharble is Under-Secretary for Useless Affairs (one of the Doodles of that ilk) the High Commissioner of Tristan D'Acunha, and my Lord Monnypenny bears a pewter rod about the court! We are all proud of being Scots, they say, and prove it in the tongue of Grub Street, "up to the hilt," by wearing kilts at public banquets, and bellowing maudlin ditties about Alloway Kirk and Bonnie Lassies O'. Thus having publicly professed their patriotism, and their descent from Wallace apostolically, they still continue to praise the Lord and cheat when the kirk bell chaps out, or competition renders it expedient.18

If this passage does not quite match up to the raw bitterness of the anti-Kailyard pieces of the late 1880s, it is still a sharp indictment of those who would sell their country and their souls not merely for economic aggrandizement or political advancement, but by a cultural betrayal of the whole Scottish identity. More than those partisans who were only politically motivated, Graham saw beneath the surface to the more important, the more lasting, cultural values, the essence of authentic Scottishness worthy of being cultivated and emulated for the future well-being of a new potentially independent nation. Hence his view of a new parliament being only the first stage of the regeneration process towards a Scottish cultural Renaissance in which literature, music, painting, etc. would be fostered and nurtured—not in isolation, of course, but as a national art first of all, then part of a European and finally a world tradition. This was consistent with his view of earlier Scottish writers

like Dunbar and Henryson, and later Smollett, Burns, Scott and Galt, all of whose names appear frequently in his writings, as part of a broader picture—further proof that his cultural concern, like his political nationalism, was no narrow, parochial thing.

Just as he constantly affirmed that the Union of the Parliaments had been detrimental to Scottish political (and economic) independence, so too did he believe that the Reformation, John Knox and the spirit of Calvinism had had a debilitating and vitiating effect on the Scottish character. Although Graham was not a Catholic, his family background, travels and experiences in Spain and Latin America had inculcated in him an appreciation of several aspects of the Catholic faith, especially the human qualities of the brave missionaries and the much maligned conquistadores in the New World. He did not view the Conquest, however, through rose-coloured glasses, nor did he condone the cruelty, bigotry and intolerance of the Iberian adventurers. Nevertheless, he was one of the few writers of his time who made any attempt to understand the Spanish mind, and he did much to redress the balance and rectify the abuses of the "black legend" of Spanish brutality, as propagated by Protestant, Anglo-Saxon historians like Prescott and Robertson. Always the enemy of cant and hypocrisy, and fearful of the pernicious influence of the triple-headed monster (Commerce/Progress/Civilisation) on unsophisticated societies, Graham felt that Scotland had been a more individual, therefore a greater, country in "pre-Knoxian and pre-bawbee days."

It was perhaps for this reason that he admired the work of Neil Munro, who seemed to epitomise the dual nature of the Scot, the present and the past, bilingual, and with a foot in both the Celtic and the Saxon camps, a reminder of what Scotland had once been—"full of the nostalgia of the men who named our hills, our glens, our corries, and our lochs and straths, giving them names that for sonority are unequalled in the world." Written in the heat of the Scottish Covenant movement of the early 1930s, Graham's words are the literary, cultural, and even sentimental reflection of a political ideal that was (he probably realised deep down) never to be attained—no doubt part of its attraction to the quixotic side of Don Roberto. In the last years of his life, never forgetting the influence of his own Menteith district, which was also geographically ambivalent and swirled in mists and myths,

Graham was to write sketches which captured the essence of a glorious and mythical history. "Tobar Na Réil" (Well of the Star), "Inch Cailleach" (Island of the Nuns), and "Euphrasia" all represent a nostalgia for a return to an ancient Scotland, steeped in myth and legend, peopled by fairies, giants and legendary heroes, and constitute an old man's longing for a Golden Age of Scotland which is perhaps as much spiritual as political. Neil Munro was doubly admirable in Graham's eyes for not falling into the Kailyard trap and for not peopling his novels with stereotypes and caricatures for English consumption. Munro's works survive because they are Scottish, written for Scotsmen, and contain the national essence. But as Graham maintained throughout his life, he who knows, appreciates and manifests his nationalism in artistic terms will surely be on the road to universal acclaim, for not having prostituted himself: "Perhaps he [Munro] was our finest Scottish writer, that is for Scots, for most Scottish writers write for the English public, limning a snivelling sentimental Scot who never existed and I hope never will exist ..."^20

Graham was a Scotsman, and like most educated Scotsmen he had travelled abroad and had many different experiences in foreign lands—thus incarnating in his own person the tradition of the Wandering Scot—including England, where he lived, worked and wrote for a great part of his life. Thus he was not anti-English. He just happened to be aware of the differences between the two races. As I have suggested several times, here and elsewhere,^21 the Scot's nationalism is not a barrier to his ability to go out into the world to mingle with and appreciate other nations and their cultures. In his experiences in Argentina, North Africa, Texas/Mexico and elsewhere Graham would have found the English not a good mixer and less tolerant than his more primitive Scottish neighbour of the lack of "progress" and "civilisation" which he found abroad. In this sense, then, the Scot can be and is a convinced internationalist as well as a fervent nationalist, whereas the Englishman tends to be an imperialist nationalist. Roland Muirhead describes the difference thus: "An Englishman looks for a bigger England, while the Scot feels that each unit of the British Empire should be an autonomous state and only linked together with such

^20 "The Inspiration of Neil Munro," 3.

bonds as independent States can make through the League of Nations."  

Rather than anti-English, then, Graham preached a pro-Scottishness, and the preservation and fostering of the authentic Scottish values, not the post-Calvin, post-Union, post-bawbee an which are but a poor imitation and an imposition of the English standards which now prevail in what Graham often sarcastically labels "North Britain." To copy is to debase and adulterate the genuine essence: "So naturally enough, the Scotland of today seems ... wersh, the national character being moulded after the Southern form; the whisky no sae nippy in the mouth, religion turned but a dreich Erastian affair, and even hell-fire merely a wee bit spunkie in the lum." Some of the virulence of the political oratory of the 1880s and 1890s manifests itself again in Graham's condemnation of the inevitable "brain drain" from Scotland to England and the American tourists' invasion of the highlands, and in his picture of the whole country as "a cross between a rich man's pleasure ground and a sweater's hell"  

These links between the nationalist ideas of the 1930s and his socialist principles of the 1880s are not tenuous and reveal the surprising consistency of his thought at the two extreme points of his political life which are not the opposite poles as some critics have suggested. It is interesting to compare the tone and the demands of his (1 February 1887) maiden speech in Parliament (eight-hour working day, universal suffrage, nationalisation of the land, abolition of capital and corporal punishment, free secular education, graduated income tax, prison reform, and other such ideas which are the stuff of the twentieth century) with, for example, an interview published in Reynolds's Illustrated News (20 January 1929) in which he gives facts and precise figures relating to unemployment, slums, mining conditions, highland neglect, drainage works, canal construction, etc., as they relate to Scotland. These views echo, in detailed and updated fashion, a speech that he had made to the House of Commons exactly four decades earlier when he affirmed that Home Rule "comes, in my opinion, from no sentimental


23 Introduction to Scotland Revisited, 2-3.  

24 Scotland Revisited, 3.
grounds whatever [although he was to argue many times later that it does], but from the extreme misery of a certain section of the Scottish population, and they wish to have their own Members under their own hands, in order to extort legislation from them suitable to relieve that misery." Forty years later in the *Reynold's News* interview (20 January 1929) he re-echoes those sentiments with more national pride: "It appears to us--we have an old proverb: 'Lord gie us a guid conceit of ourselves,' which is a quite unnecessary prayer in Scotland--that we are at least as fit to govern ourselves as any of the other dominions."

The ambivalence of the man, which reflects the dual nature of the Scottish character, is revealed in his speeches and the private correspondence of the early 1930s, especially to other nationalists, like Compton Mackenzie, and especially to Roland Muirhead, in which he invokes the sentimental grounds eschewed in the 1889 House of Commons speech. Whilst on the one hand he could write to Muirhead: "Give the old Tory [Duke of Montrose] time to see the sentimental side, and we shall have him with us I think" (8 November 1930), in another letter some months earlier (8 February 1930) he was condemning the (false) sentimentality of the Scottish character seduced by artificial stimuli and commercial exploitation of Scottish culture to the neglect of practical, economic, and political matters:

There is certainly much apathy at home, & a sort of *self content*, that indisposes people to act. The absolute neglect of Scottish *national* affairs by the Labour Party should open peoples eyes, if anything can open them. What makes me despair at times, is, the (I think) perverted channels into which Scottish sentiment runs. Burns Clubs, St. Andrew's Nights, *Whisky*, & talk about the Misty Hebrides (by men who speak no Gaelic) are all very well in their way, but *practical* matters cut no ice, & England treats Scotland as a dependency. It is very galling to one's national pride & I wonder all Scotsmen do not resent it.

It should be repeated, in all fairness, that Graham was not averse to exploiting this same sentimentality (condemned here) at the various meetings in Stirling, Elderslie and elsewhere, in the presence of sympathetic audiences. But as he was wont to respond, when confronted with the criticism of his opponents, there is nothing basically wrong with sentiment in politics--idealism was at the root of most national movements. In a striking speech at the Usher Hall, Edinburgh
in 1934, he reminded his staid audience that the Sermon on the Mount was not exactly a business document, and that the writings of Buddha and the Koran of Mohamed appealed entirely to the moral self.

However, as he revealed in the *Reynold's News* interview, and in other articles, reports and letters to the editor, Graham was capable of producing the statistics when required, depending on his audience. Faced with the canny burghers of the national capital, Graham’s analysis of the financial system and the tax structure under the then existing regulations (1934) won some support from the commercial classes for its demonstration of the fact that Scotland was being overtaxed. But more comfortable as he was with moral, spiritual and cultural matters, Graham reserved his most telling remarks for the description of Edinburgh as a shell of a city, an "empty tabernacle without a soul and vivifying influence," which had lost the best of its sons and its brains to the English overlord. Only a Scottish Parliament could restore national self-respect and the proud attributes which had been lost since the Act of Union. As always, he hammers home the importance of the link between the political and the cultural: "Self-government would do more for Scotland in the spiritual, mental and moral sense than any other immediate reform that was possible." In other words, a Scottish Parliament would restore Edinburgh to its rightful position (like Dublin in Ireland) as a centre of Scottish art and commerce, as she was in the brave days of old. It should be pointed out that at the same Edinburgh meeting Compton Mackenzie in an impassioned speech urged their supporters not to sell their cause for that infernal word "devolution"--which ought to be spelt "devilution," he added. Like Mackenzie, Graham was not willing to compromise, even with those inside the nationalist movement. During the discussions between the National Party of Scotland and the Scottish Party of the Duke of Montrose, Graham wrote to Muirhead (25 December 1933) expressing his fears about suggested tactics to win independence by stages from the London government:

I am not and never will be in favour of what is called "stepping stones." One false step from stone to stone, and you are in the water. Moreover, as much energy would have to be expended as would build a bridge i.e. a National Parliament and administration in Scotland. Naturally it will be the effort of Westminster to try and modify Scottish opinion by throwing out sops as a burglar throws them to a watch-dog. Let us beware
of this and while eating the sops, growl all the time and show our teeth.

At the Scotland's Day Demonstration held in the King's Park, Stirling on 23 June 1934, at which Cunninghame Graham was again the chief speaker, a telegram was sent to the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald: "This great meeting of Scots men and women here assembled on Scotland's National Day, calls upon you to implement your lifelong protestations of belief in self-determination for Scotland." MacDonald's reply is polite, supportive in principle, but not very encouraging in practice:

I have your telegram, for which many thanks. You may depend upon it that I am as keen as ever for National Self-Government for Scotland, although I cannot agree with the spirit of some of its advocates. Surely the present condition of the world is a proof that a narrow political nationalism contributes to nobody's good, and is one of the hotbeds in which enmities and wars breed. If a thousand and one personal matters make it impossible for me to do as much for Scottish affairs as I should like, believe me the reason is that there are only twenty-four hours in a day, and that human flesh and blood cannot exert itself beyond reason.\(^\text{25}\)

The Prime Minister is referring, of course, to the growth of National Socialism in Hitler's Germany, and the unique brand of (apparently) efficient Fascism practised in Italy by Mussolini--for whom, by the way, Graham had some words of praise in the early days. But Il Duce's subsequent behaviour resulting in the invasion of Abyssinia soon made him anathema to Graham. Although Don Roberto was an aristocrat by birth, breeding and position, his political creed was based on democratic principles and his political life devoted to improving the social and economic plight of the working man, oppressed people everywhere, and all underdogs, individual and national, by means of the democratic process, which he considered best served in Scotland by a separate Parliament. Graham is the last person in the world who could be accused of a narrow nationalistic outlook, given his heritage, nature,

\(^{25}\) The contents of the telegram and the Prime Minister's reply were both published in Scots Independent (May 1936), 7.
experiences, and view of life. In a letter to Muirhead (27 June 1934) he summarises his reply to MacDonald, stating amongst other things: "I do not agree, that nationalism (not of necessity narrow) makes for war, but that it makes for peace. In any case, I said, 'we cannot go against the trend of the modern spirit--Ireland, Finland, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, etc. etc.'" Graham, of course, died (1936) before the naked aggression of Hitler in Europe, Mussolini's illegal forays in Africa, Franco's so-called national crusade in Spain, the inevitable outbreak of war in 1939, and the coming together of the Axis powers. It is sadly ironic also to view with hindsight the fate of almost all of those little countries, Graham's exemplary independent states, given their cynical and brutal appropriation by totalitarian countries of the right and the left, both at the beginning and at the end of World War II.26

Despite the gathering storm, Graham soldiered on in the nationalist cause, armed with his usual mixture of realism and idealism, politics and sentiment, although not unaware of the possible dangers of impending doom, as he had already implied in Portrait of a Dictator (1933), his history of the nineteenth-century Paraguayan tyrant, Francisco Solano López. Nonetheless, at the annual Wallace Commemoration Meeting at Elderslie on 24 August 1935, in a vigorous speech he re-affirmed his faith in the nationalist cause: "I here, and now, re-dedicate myself to the great cause of Scottish freedom; so long as my strength lasts, I shall continue to advocate an Independent Scotland." Unfortunately his strength was not to last much longer. In his final years he made frequent trips abroad for his health (France, Spain, Italy, Ceylon, South Africa, etc.) in order to escape the harsh, debilitating Scottish winters. In January 1936 he made his final pilgrimage to the adventurous scenes of his youth spent on the Argentine pampas of the 1870s. He died 20 March 1936 in Buenos Aires--where his death was widely mourned--as if to remind his enemies (and his friends) that he was indeed no narrow nationalist. As he had arranged, his body was taken home to be buried beside his wife in the ruined Augustinian priory on the island of Inchmahome in the Lake of Menteith. Mourners came from all over Britain to pay homage to the "noblest Scotsman of them all," as William Power described him in his funeral oration. In a letter of condolence (13 April 1936) to Don Roberto's nephew and heir

26 Recent events in the former U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe in general have, ironically, overtaken the post-war land-grabbing, not always with happy consequences, it is fair to say, in the face of excesses committed in the name of nationalism.
(the future Admiral Sir Angus Cunninghame Graham), Power, president of the Scottish PEN, grieves the nation's sad loss:

... In Mr. Cunninghame Graham Scotland has lost its leading national figure, and its greatest personality in recent times, as well as its finest literary artist ... He was our leader, our inspiration, our doyen, and our bright particular star. His radiance, like the sunlight, fell on all, however humble and obscure. He had the kindliness, the courtesy, the humility, of the supremely great man, and followed with sympathetic appreciation the work of all his fellow-writers in Scotland ... We know that Scotland will never look upon his like again.

It would be fitting, and tempting, to end with the eulogistic epitaph to the man and the writer, but the political reality is that despite Graham's efforts in the 1930s and the Scottish National Party's share of the Scottish vote in the 1935 (and the 1945 post-war) election was barely a disappointing 1.3%. In the 1960s and 1970s, given the growing disillusionment of voters with both major parties, the nationalist vote rose from 11% in 1970 to 30% in 1974. However, during the crucial referendum of the late 1970s, this protest vote failed to materialise into Graham's dream of an independent Scotland and appeared to have levelled off, the momentum now lost.  

Like Graham in the 1930s, we cannot predict with any certainty the political future of Scotland, but we do know its present and we have a view of its past, as seen through the life and miracles of Cunninghame Graham. On whether he was a political success (as a nationalist) or not, history will eventually make a judgement—not an easy task, since he was never a conventional politician, either as a Liberal or a Scottish Nationalist. In his early days he identified more with the socialists than with his own (Liberal) party or his own (upper) class, preferring to associate with the underdogs of the fledgling Labour movement. With the progress of the official Labour party in the early years of this century there was no place for an amateur idealist like Graham. Besides, many of the policies that he had fought for had now become

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27 At the time of writing, as Britain awaits an election (April 1992), the nationalist question appears to be an important political issue again, if one is to believe the early opinion polls which are quoting increasing support for the nationalist cause.
reality. His liaison with the nationalist cause was rooted in a mixture of idealism, sentiment and politics rather than just pure political expediency. Nor was he the typical Scottish Nationalist either. Regarded with high esteem, even awe, by the ordinary party members, he was often prepared to question the official party (line) for reasons of personal pride or political principles (cf. his 1920 resignation over Irish Home Rule problems). Hugh MacDiarmid, who was one of the few to appreciate fully Graham's contribution to Scottish politics and culture, once stated that Graham and Compton Mackenzie "in council with the officials and branch delegates of the Scottish National Party were like a pair of golden eagles, with their wings clipped, in a crowded poultry-run, full of poultry far gone with the 'gapes'".28 Like McDiarmid's, however, Graham's legacy to Scotland transcends the purely political plane, of which nonetheless it is a genuine and valuable reflection. His forty years of sketches, biographies, histories, translations, prefaces, pamphlets, reports, etc. represent a solid corpus of work which is a manifestation of the vital sensibility of the people of Scotland from the 1850s (and earlier) till his death in 1936, mirroring the culture, civilisation, religion, politics, economics, philosophy and social mores of his people.

If there has been a tendency to highlight these writings of Graham which reflect the political activities at the two extremes of his life (Socialism/anti-Kailyard, Scottish Nationalism/misty idealism), one should not neglect the solid intermediate bulk of his work written between 1900 and 1920 which presents in stories and sketches, histories and biographies, a realistic and authentic portrayal of places and people, of death and parting, of types and characters, of customs and events, which capture the essence of the Scottish people, its character and identity, and make a valuable contribution to Scottish life and letters: places and landscapes ("The Grey Kirk", "Mist in Menteith", "The Laroch"); the Scottish character ("A Vigia"); scenes and situations ("A Braw Day", "Falkirk Tryst", "At Dalmary"); the Scots abroad ("M'Kechnie v. Scaramanga", "A Convert", "Christie Christison"); and some fine short stories ("Beatock for Moffat", "At the Ward Toll", "A Princess", "Brought Forward"), all Scottish in setting or characterisation, but owing much to the travels, reading and experiences which made up the.

international figure which Cunninghame Graham undoubtedly was.\textsuperscript{29}

If Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham had never made a nationalist speech in his life, he would still have contributed immeasurably to the cause, nourishment and survival of Scottish culture, through the universal medium of his art which transcends geographical and chronological frontiers.

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\textsuperscript{29} For a fascinating discussion of European literature and its leading figures (e.g. Chekov, Turgenev, Maupassant and other (short-story) writers, see the voluminous correspondence between Graham and the editor/critic Edward Garnett (in Texas and Edinburgh in particular) in which they exchange interesting ideas and illuminating opinions on the masters of Spanish, French, Italian, Russian, German and English literature.