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# THE HOME-LY KAILYARD NATION: NINETEENTH-CENTURY NARRATIVES OF THE HIGHLAND AND THE MYTH OF MERRIE AULD SCOTLAND

BY RICHARD COOK

In his broad survey, *Modern Scottish Literature*, Alan Bold warns against quick dismissals of the popular late nineteenth-century “Kailyard School” of fiction: “we should be wary of categorizing the kailyarders as sentimental fools; they were men who had a shrewd judgment for public taste and the public responded by adoring the intellectually undemanding entertainment the kailyarders produced.”<sup>1</sup> Bold’s evaluation of the Kailyard (literally, cabbage patch) and its unavoidable presence in Scottish literary and cultural history illustrate the tension between “public taste” and high art, “entertainment” and serious intellect, that still gathers around these national tales. The Kailyard’s national and international appeal has been explained primarily, by critics such as Bold, through a tautology that depends on a self-evident and static “public taste” that has very little to do with history or culture. We are told, in other words, that the Kailyard was popular because it reflected popular, and we are to assume vulgar, tastes. The cantankerous modernist Scots poet, Hugh MacDiarmid, certainly had this in mind when in his 1923 poem, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, he mourned this “preposterous presbyterian breed” of popular fiction which had tossed real Scottish artists “owre the kailyard-wa.”<sup>2</sup> Bold echoes this argument at another moment in describing the less lofty Scottish verse of the 1920s as “a homemade product cultivated in the kailyard and handled by amateurs.”<sup>3</sup> George Blake’s 1951 study of the Kailyard school condemned the prose as a “mass of sludge,” told by a “small fry” caste of bard who strolled “through the heather with a claymore at his belt, or he lingered round the bonnie brier bush, telling sweet, amusing little stories of bucolic intrigue through the windows of the Presbyterian manse.”<sup>4</sup>

The Kailyard’s mass audience forced those wanting to defend high cultural standards into an uncomfortable position because an impressive number of middle-class readers demonstrated more interest in the morally affirmative and conservative sensibilities of these national tales

than in high art and aesthetic criteria.<sup>5</sup> Characterized by its simple versions of pastoral Scotland rather than serious historical representation, Kailyard fiction arranges its exotic scenes of caricatured backwards folk figures around interchangeable conventional tropes and themes of love, covenantry, and sentimentalized rural life to contribute to a mythic depiction of Scottish history. Its authors were journalists and Kirk ministers rather than trained artists and their stories appeared in Rev. Will Robertson Nicoll's religious periodical the *British Weekly* (subtitled *A Journal of Social and Christian Progress*) and William Howie Wylie's *Christian Leader* rather than in high culture literary journals. It was no secret that Kailyard fiction stood outside the walls of acclaimed literature, but this did not prevent its authors from enjoying prolific success. Ian Maclaren's *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (1896), for example, drew such a wide readership, including Queen Victoria and W. E. Gladstone, that by 1908 it had sold 256,000 copies in Great Britain and 485,000 in the U. S. A.<sup>6</sup> *The British Weekly* reported in 1894 that S. R. Crockett's *The Lilac Sunbonnet* had sold 10,000 copies in the first day of publication and promised the quick printing of a second ("making 18,000").<sup>7</sup> Kailyard novels continued to be bestsellers in Britain throughout the period of 1888 to 1901, and, for a six-year period from 1891 until 1897, Kailyard authors ranked in the top ten annually in the American best-seller lists.<sup>8</sup> Kailyard prose was indeed popular, but it also gained the reputation of representing the *real* Scotland—authentic literature peering into the heart of Scottish nation, culture, and life.

I am primarily concerned in this essay with the ideological work the Kailyard performs in constructing its Scottish Highland nation. I use Mary Poovey's definition of ideological work which doubly emphasizes that narratives are the "work of ideology" within a system of representations that function in concert to bring meanings, like nation, to individuals. At the same time, representations like the Kailyard contribute to "the work of making ideology" by constructing and contesting specific versions of nation, consolidating a vision of Scotland while also inevitably revealing the contradictions within these images.<sup>9</sup> With this in mind, I want to argue that Kailyard narratives and their widespread readership fit comfortably with end-of-the-century bourgeois anxieties about the excesses of urbanization, over-population, and moral decay, as well as New Woman politics and the liberal municipalization of social programs. The consumption of Kailyard literature outside of Scotland—in England and even more so in the United States and Canada—suggests that the popularity of these narratives responds to anxieties that extended beyond the realities of Scotland. The vision of an idyllic

community appealed to a bourgeois nostalgia for the stable land and labor structure of aristocratic patronage and the ease of paternalist country gentry life, parish rule, and the strict control of deviant citizenry in the face of increasing economic disparities between the discontented lower classes and the triumphant middle class. In other words, the Kailyard illustrates the nostalgia for a lost condition of a happy national home. The reactionary impulse of the “cabbage patch” fiction mediated contemporary tensions of Western industry by imagining a pure and secure society of cultural harmony.

In the first half of the essay I argue that no nation is essentially real or magically conjured into existence, but that the justification of its existence and truth must live somewhere. Viewing fictions of nation as home enables us to see how the naturalized notions of private property, morality, and gender are woven together in the Kailyard to construct an ideal image of national prosperity and productivity that hegemonically reinforces the values of the ruling class. The Kailyard maintains the integrity of its national home, as the second half of the essay shows, by constructing a culturally coherent affective economy whereby social distinctions of nationality, gender, and race are understood and disciplined according to an emotional caste system. References to class privilege and gender subordination are gently circumvented in favor of essentialized differences of feeling. Like its bourgeois readership, the Kailyard nation imagines its own legitimacy by naturalizing the hierarchies that sustain it.

#### I. BUILDING THE HOME OF NATION

Kailyard fiction, like other national narratives, constructs a vision of a unified and safe space, or home. Terms like home-rule or home-front demonstrate that the rhetoric of nation and nationalism is motivated by a need to locate a limited physical place of origin and social sovereignty.<sup>10</sup> Yet home is also invoked as an affective response describing sentiments of shared experience and the purportedly common understandings of familiarity, comfort, wholeness, safety, unity, and purity. The first association of home refers to the division and distribution of property, the second describes one’s relationship to that property. Nation, as it exists in both idea and practice, operates at the intersection of these two versions of home by providing a fiction that makes private property, along with its limits and borders, essential to its existence. At the same time, the myth contends that the nation democratically avails that property publicly to everyone within it. Plainly, differentiations of

gender, class, race, and age are conveniently brushed aside in this ideological fiction. In the same fashion, the Kailyard home's welcome mat is laid out exclusively for the white male bourgeois subject.

National fictions like those from the Kailyard employ a middle-class domesticated space as the point of origin from which nation, private property, and economy seem organically to emerge.<sup>11</sup> The inside of the private dwelling, enclosed and protected, is constructed to serve a double purpose. On the one hand it becomes over-written with the virtues of the outside state and public marketplace: thrift, duty, discipline, productivity, and efficiency are emphasized in a formal and highly disciplined productive domestic "cabbage patch" economy. Economic forces of industry appear to be natural extensions of home practices. At the same time, home must exist as an idealized permanent and self-generating sanctuary exempt from the realities of work, profit, production, and gender subordination.

Maclaren's 1896 novel, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, represents the village of Drumtochty in similarly doubled and contradictory terms, drawing the Highland village as a fictional home. The narrative opens with a portrait of daily life that renders the children and their natural surroundings nearly indistinguishable. The Highland community is not merely composed of its social elements; the citizens of Drumtochty are almost the land itself:

[The schoolhouse] stood in a clearing with the tall Scotch firs round three sides, and on the fourth a brake of gorse and bramble bushes, through which there was an opening to the road. The clearing was the playground, and in summer the bairns annexed as much wood as they liked, playing tag among the trees, or sitting down at dinner-time on the soft, dry pines that made an elastic carpet everywhere. Domsie used to say there were two pleasant sights for his old eyes every day. One was to stand in the open at dinner-time and see the flitting forms of the healthy, rosy sonsie bairns in the wood, and from the door in the afternoon to watch the schule skail, till each group was lost in the kindly shadow, and the merry shouts died away in this quiet place.<sup>12</sup>

The scene's careful brushstrokes invoke the sentiment of pure harmony between the presence of the school, the randomly arranged woods, and the town children who comfortably move within the landscape's spaces. The road does not penetrate the wilderness; it passes through the opening that the land has allowed it. Nature, institution, and citizen move together as if their collective influence has been organically endowed to provide the social and physical balance necessary to Scottish life.

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Important to this construction, however, is that the Highland home is made radically distinct from the lowland regions of Scotland and the southern lands of England. In order for Drumtochty to be presented as an ideal national space, the narrative works to contrast it with the outside world of degenerate city life. The Highland is not only geographically isolated from the rest of Britain, it is morally and culturally separate. As one Highland Kirk minister explains, “In towns, the Gospel goes by minutes, like the trains at the station; but there is no time-table here” (B, 42). Conflict in Maclaren’s novel revolves around what even by the standards of the 1890s would seem to be relatively minor individual moral struggles with pride, idleness, and lack of charity—all of which are eventually resolved, and all of which, as I will explain below, serve a particular ideological function. Even the problems and scandals that appear in Drumtochty remove themselves from the real conflicts that were in fact a part of Scottish life at the end of the century.

The importance of the topography of Drumtochty might be seen as continuing the legacy of the *Waverley* novels and Walter Scott’s fascination with the face of Highland culture and the features of its inhabitants. This is certainly Edwin Muir’s reading of Scott in his 1936 study, *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer*. According to Muir, Scott’s fiction is involved in recreating a national past in response to English colonization and the threat of cultural erasure: “[Scott] reached back into the past of Scotland to win a complete theme on which to write and a complete order within which to write . . . A people who lose their nationality create a legend to take its place. The reality of a nation’s history lies in its continuity, and the present is its only guarantee.”<sup>13</sup> The Kailyard has been described a half-century later as engaging in a similarly nationalist project, reinventing a continuity of Scottish traditions and imagining an unbroken cultural unity:

Sir Walter Scott was pleased that *Waverley* might ‘really boast to a tolerably faithful portrait of Scottish manners’ and saw his first three novels as an attempt to ‘illustrate the manners of Scotland in three different periods.’ The Kailyarders followed this tradition. . . . [Kailyard novels] would have delighted Scott.<sup>14</sup>

As Katie Trumpener points out in her study of Scott’s use of generic conventions, the *Waverley* novels follow a usually ignored trajectory of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century national tale that would certainly link the Kailyard to Scott’s fiction. She explains that national tales, largely developed by female authors preceding Scott, “address major

issues of cultural distinctiveness, national policy and political separatism.”<sup>15</sup> Central to her argument, however, and to my reading of the Kailyard, is the way in which Scott has been historically regarded as politicizing fiction by incorporating the struggles of authorized European history, while the national tale has been devalued because of its engagement in local (read as feminine) cultural concerns. Its tradition of describing cultural differences in terms of sentiment and sensibility rather than official history, undergirded by a distrust of these dominant explanations, was seen to move counter to enlightenment principles of social progress and empirical truth. According to many of his nineteenth-century readers, Scott then revived the tired form of the national tale, infusing it with the energy of real historical import, giving a manly authority to a female genre while simultaneously co-opting an apparently feminine voice to bring feeling to history.<sup>16</sup> If the Kailyard falls within the literary tradition of *Waverley*, it attaches itself to the traditional reading of the national tale as a de-politicized and de-historicized form that through Scott has been elevated to legitimate value. Portraits of the Highland are therefore drawn to be innocuous national tales rather than history; unmediated images of true social and cultural life, not politically contested representations. The national character of the Scottish folk figure in the Kailyard describes the past rather than a struggle for the present, a neutral memory of a foregone Scotland.

The ideological project of the “cabbage patch” enforces a distance between the image of the lost Highland culture and present conditions, normalizing its contemporary political structures. Kailyard’s focus on local, individual moral struggles functions in its own world of time, inside of its own history and exempt from the effects of urbanization, modernity, and the realities of the outside world. It is a landscape without social divisions or privilege. At the very least it is the bourgeois fantasy of merrie auld Scotland. To this point, Raymond Williams explains, “A working country is hardly ever a landscape.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the condition of the Scottish and Highland citizenry stands in stark contrast to the Kailyard home. At the close of the nineteenth century, an agrarian depression, coupled with the growing lack of croft holdings for Highland farmers, intensified an already steady stream of Highland migrants who were competing for few jobs to the cities. Unemployment, transiency, prostitution, illegitimacy, and homelessness were suffered most acutely by Highland migrants, who often could not speak the language of power, English, and were the target of cultural and class discrimination.<sup>18</sup> Many men, for the lack of better opportunities, joined the military or police force. As one clergyman noted:

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Many who are now [1888] in service—indeed the great majority of them—are those who by training, physique, character or education are unable to do anything else—not fit for trades, ships, &c; indeed they are the illegitimates of the country.<sup>19</sup>

The cultural chauvinism of the comment reveals that as “illegitimates” the Highland peoples were seen as having anything but a proper home in the modern cities of the Scottish or British nation. In Maclaren’s novel, Highlanders are imaginatively provided a home where the political struggles of the past are as invisible as those of the present; the primitive peoples are quaintly placed back into a fictional, mythically indigenous and proper backwards cultural context, not unlike the imperialist’s view of the “native” in the colonies.

Ironically, the Kailyard nostalgia for paternalism, parish rule, and gentry living, as it existed historically before the rise of the burgeoning middle class, certainly would have excluded most middle-class readers who may have longed for it; they most likely would have been peasants instead of lords, laborers rather than professionals. Nevertheless, Kailyard fiction identifies itself with the privileged reader, encoding a distance between narrator and narrated, between reader and text. The condescending portrayals of the placid Highland folk are spoken from the traditional male middle economic and social positions of church precepts, Kirk ministers, or as in James Barrie’s 1891 novel, *The Little Minister*, a school teacher. It was the convention of the Kailyard narrator to speak down to the simple people of the Highland:

I have taught the English language all my life, and I try to write it, but everything I say in this book I first think to myself in Doric. This, too, I notice, that in talking to myself I am broader than when gossiping with the farmers of the glen, who send their children to me to learn English, and then jeer at them if they say “old lights” instead of “auld lichts.”<sup>20</sup>

Being of the “broader” sort, Barrie’s narrator admits his own Highland ties via his unconscious use of the local language, but is clear about the fact that he has learned to move beyond the “gossiping” and simplistic dialect of Scots “Doric” speech. As Mediator, he is a member of the community, but one who has freely transcended it. The cultural hierarchy maintaining the primacy of English over local Scots dialect affirms the narrator’s position above the Highland people who have yet to be elevated to the modern culture of progress. Local language is therefore a habit to be unlearned and replaced by university education and the linguistic tools (English) of wider imagination and intellectual scope.

Dialect is frequently employed throughout the Kailyard to encode the crucial division between the narrator and the folk, the educated and the ignorant, the workers and the professionals, the backwards and the modern. Barrie's earlier work, *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888), for example, is not subtle about crossing local language with the outright stupidity of the "Auld Licht" people. As the Free Kirk narrator "fresh from Oxford" describes,

You could generally tell an Auld Licht in Thrums when you passed him, his dull vacant face wrinkled over a heavy wob. He wore tags of yarn round his trousers beneath the knee, that looked like ostentatious garters, and frequently his jacket of corduroy was put on beneath his waistcoat. If he was too old to carry his load on his back, he wheeled it on a creaking barrow, and when he met a friend they said, "Ay, Jeames" and "Ay, Davit," and then could think of nothing else.<sup>21</sup>

Words like "wob" and "round" bring the language of the narrative voice to a more colloquial speech, but it stands in stark contrast to the representation of the extreme dialect of the caricatured local figures. In speech and manner, the narrator is drawn to be both part of and separate from the Highland community; he is the assimilated native who translates his folk ways to the international marketplace of cultural discovery.

Like Scott's Waverley hero, the story is told from a vantage point authorized by the new fashions of English modernity while still being connected by blood, birth, or sympathy to the Highland ways. In pointing out the exotic idiosyncrasies of the natives, the narrator becomes the master of their peculiarities, infantilizing their intellect, speech, and customs, while offering a non-threatening, placid picture of quaint country life. S. R. Crockett similarly foregrounded the difference of colloquial dialect from standard English with characteristically lengthy passages of careful phonetic approximations of Scots speech. For the English, Canadian, and American reader of popular fiction these moments might have been a chore to decipher, as in the following description of the newly appointed village minister:

Syne he sits doon, decent man, as he had a good richt to do, on the green seat at the endo' the hoose, an' wi' great an' surprising' diligence he reads Scotsman till maybe half-past twal. But he has had cracks forbye in the bye-gaun, wi' a farmer thad had been at the smiddy, wi' John Crier the tea-man, wha is an elder o' hihs an' never contres him in the sesson, an' forbye has sent twa tramps doon the road wi' a' flee I' their lug thinking.<sup>22</sup>

Crockett anticipated that Scots dialect would be a challenge to his English speaking readership. His narratives are framed with numerous editor's footnotes of translations and explanations for a potentially bewildered reader. His novel, *The Lilac Sunbonnet* (1894), was accompanied with a seven-page, double-columned glossary. Compared to later literary projects representing Scottish dialects, however, such as Hugh MacDiarmid's synthetic Scots, the increased interest in literature printed in Gaelic, or even the widespread presence of Gaelic in the Highlands at the end of the nineteenth century, the speech of Crockett's text is no radical departure from what could have been called standard English.<sup>23</sup> Crucial to the Kailyard project was that the English and North American reader feel only marginally alien—and never alienated—from the ways of the Scottish villager. The linguistic difference of local speech supports, rather than undermines, a fictional sense of nostalgic continuity between the Highland and the international cosmopole.

Nevertheless, Crockett's, Barrie's, and Maclaren's sketches were received as legitimate representations of Scottish life. Crockett's *The Stickit Minister*, *The Glasgow Mail* lauded "No one acquainted with Scottish rural life will fail to recognize the truthfulness of these humorous presentations, alike as regards the mental attitude and mode of expression common among the Scottish peasantry."<sup>24</sup> Another contemporary reviewer wrote that Barrie's *Margaret Olgilvy* was "setting before us the most beautiful description of a little Scots village household ever drawn, a picture which every line is ideal yet every touch absolutely true."<sup>25</sup> The bourgeois reader's own position as the outsider peering at the attractive museum piece is legitimized upon entering the Kailyard community. The pawkish construction of the Highland community thus projects the ideal of the private middle-class home onto an entire community as a protected, unadulterated domestic space, which builds the identity of a nation upon a history of a harmonious Scotland that never existed.

The Kailyard home should be seen not only as serving the purpose of mystifying social realities, but ideologically working to perpetuate an image of the home as historically and naturally preceding the contemporary values of industry and profit. The home must be situated outside of the machines of capitalism, while simultaneously resting fully in line with them. Kailyard fiction side-steps this contradiction by appealing to a moral economy that structures and disciplines the behavior of its characters in ways that are never in conflict with the ideals of the profit economy. In fact, in many ways, religion and personal salvation are closely linked to the acquisition of personal property.

*Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* provides a compelling example of the overlap of capital and salvation at the moment when the mother Marget employs the biblical story of the chaff and wheat to console a young Kirk minister who has just performed an unsatisfactory sermon. Yet, in her version of the allegory, the separation of the grain from the flax is likened to the process of a mill: “‘Ye mean,’ said the minister, ‘that my study is the threshing mill, and that some of the chaff has got into the pulpit’” (B, 72). The mediation of spiritual purity by the supplemented “threshing mill” rewrites the biblical story to rest comfortably within the contemporary context of machine-efficiency and heightened productivity. While threshing machines themselves were not nineteenth-century industrial technology (they were introduced in 1775), mill machines in all forms were commonly viewed as emblems of industrial society.<sup>26</sup> For Maclaren, one wonders if the inclusion of this mill in the allegory somehow saves more souls in less time. Godliness and commerce parallel each other as values of salvation and profit. The vision of the Kailyard home, like all private spaces, can only justify its separation from the public by supporting the outside social mechanisms that make private property possible.

Similarly, constructions of nation or national origin like the Kailyard narratives depend on a fiction of gender that doubly positions women as both inside and outside the structure of the home. Women function as the naturalized tenders of the hearth, maintaining the production of the home and family. Kailyard literature is full of bonnie women happily tending the humble environs of their farms, like the courted female in Barrie’s chapter of *Auld Licht Idylls*, “The Courting of T’nowhead’s Bell,” who is never seen outside of the kitchen and is exclusively defined by her activity in it:

The farm kitchen was Bell’s testimonial. Its chairs, tables, and stools were scoured by her to the whiteness of Rob Angus’s saw-mill boards, and the muslin blind on the window was starched like a child’s pinafore. Bell was brave, too, as well as energetic. (A, 126)

Bell’s labor is never directly presented, but cleanliness is to be read as the sign of her efforts. As Anne McClintock describes in her study of nineteenth-century domesticity, the Victorian obsession with cleanliness and whiteness represented an effort to “cleanse” and preserve the middle-class home against uncertain boundaries of class, gender, and race. The Unilever Company slogan put it simply: “Soap is Civilization.”<sup>27</sup> The polished order of the kitchen reinforces the purity of the

domestic space while legitimating Bell's worth as its tender. Yet the enormous work it would take to sustain the ideal level of whiteness is of no real concern to the narrative. Kailyard women contentedly fulfill virtually impossible expectations because to maintain home is to maintain the origin of family, history, and nation.

Yet, while the production and reproduction of the home is placed at the center of women's identities, and at the center of the nation, women's labor must also be made invisible. While I want to argue that the Kailyard imagines the Highland community to be the home of nation, the strict boundaries of domestic space within the Kailyard community must be drawn and enforced to prevent women from entering the arenas of "public" or "official" life. The production of the household or home is again devalued and reduced to the "private" realm of domestic duties. If portrayed otherwise, it would have been necessary to view women and their work as central to the construction of Kailyard home and, by extension, of the nation. History has shown that according to the dominant discourse of nations, women's labor inside the home is not quite work; it is nature. In the Kailyard home, women's labor is conveniently overshadowed and naturalized by the female characters' glee and pride in light of the only occupations—mothers, wives, and servants—they are allowed to have or contemplate:

though Lisbeth was unselfish in a general way, she could not resist the delight of going to church. She had nine children besides the baby, and being but a woman, it was the pride of her life to march them into the T'nowhead pew, so well watched that they dared not misbehave, and so tightly packed that they could not fall. The congregation looked at the pew, the mothers enviously . . . (A, 133–34)

Endowed with abundant fertility, the Kailyard's ever baby-bearing woman is held up as ideally fulfilling the natural function of her sex. Not surprising to this formulation, a father, husband, or any male figure is conspicuously absent from the spaces where child-rearing occurs. The domestic space of the household is purely the territory of women, although they clearly never own it. Noticing the arrangement of women as extensions of the home—both as part of men's property and the keepers of it—reveals the two hands that for centuries women have been expected to play. The Kailyard female is delicate, energetic, generous, wholesome, idle, charitable, and subservient while simultaneously demonstrating qualities of strength, hardiness, efficiency, skill, and the fortitude to be constantly productive for the health of nation and its version of home. The ideological work of the Kailyard Highland

depends on a construction of gender that leaves women no room to move. They are defined by and restricted to the home only so that their labor can be explained away as the natural system of the nation.

## II. NATIONAL FEELINGS AND THE ECONOMY OF AFFECT

In theorizing the home as the imaginary, ideal, and contradictory space within constructions of nation, it is important to keep in mind that the discourse of nation appeals to a collective *feeling* of home as much as it appeals to an image of a particular people, culture, or territory. Affect conveniently affirms the sovereignty of the nation and democratizes it. After all, the laws of bourgeois subjectivity proclaim that emotion is abundantly available to every individual. In this way, a nation can belong to all by giving everyone an emotional home in powerful ways. As Benedict Anderson suggests, nations produce “affective bonds” or, in other words, nations create the feeling of common interest that connects and unifies individuals, giving them a home within the fiction of nation.<sup>28</sup>

The Kailyard School has been described, both positively and negatively, as sentimental. To be sure, the rhetoric of affect is written all over Kailyard narratives and the history of their critical reception. An 1896 review described a Barrie novel as an “excursion into boyhood in pursuit of its sentimental qualities” whose main character was “a creature of fermenting mind, companioning his own emotions.”<sup>29</sup> More often than not sentimentality has been a charge used to dismiss Kailyard narratives. In 1935, George Blake scornfully accused Kailyarders of being “a small group of sentimental, if gifted, Scots, [who] gratified Victorian sentimentality.”<sup>30</sup>

I want to argue, however, that affect functions as an ideological instrument of nation to cloak, ossify, contain, and enforce social differences. Feelings are constructed, on the one hand, as a part of the bourgeois subject’s private life, exempt from the influences of the public sphere and marketplace. At the same time, the bearers of social differences through race, class, and gender are socially assigned the attendant appropriate emotional behaviors and responses that uphold the natural harmony of the nation. I suggest that in the discourse of nation, the social rules of affect enforce modes of relation and the codes of interpersonal emotional exchange between individuals. Reading the economy of affect allows us to see how social divisions are revealed and reified while transgressive behaviors are disciplined and contained.<sup>31</sup> Affective elements of nation, like Anderson’s “affection,” are thus not part of an *a priori* category, but are historically specific and, as was the

case for the Kailyard, are profoundly invested in hegemonic gendered bourgeois values.

As Ernest Gellner has explained, “Nationalism . . . invents nations where they do not exist.”<sup>32</sup> As I have argued above, Kailyard authors rely on imaginary versions of the Scottish Highlands as original Scottishness that distinguish them from England or the industrialized lowlands of Scotland. Not only are they geographically separate, they are completely self-contained and relatively untouched by the influences of modernity, or even history for that matter. A primary strategy for drawing this distinction lies in the descriptions of the region’s unique and essential temperament. Barrie and Maclaren attach a particular set of feelings to the Highland communities they paint in order to establish a sense of individual character. Barrie’s “Auld Licht” village of Thrums, for example, portrays a pervasive sense of laconic severity, chilly fortitude, and only brief moments of affection amidst an overall emotional insularity: “The only really tender thing I ever heard an Auld Licht lover say to his sweetheart was when Gowrie’s brother looked softly into Easie Tamson’s eyes and whispered, ‘Do you swite [sweat]?’” (A, 77). Similarly, Maclaren establishes for his town, “Men do not weep in Drumtochty” (B, 80) and “Our women do not kiss one another like the city ladies” (B, 88).

Some strong-handed ideological work is being done in each case. These specific Highland practices of emoting, while being common and properly exchanged in these moments, are collapsed almost completely into the private space of the individual. Emotions are not freely shared, but are strictly preserved and personally contained. Barrie’s romantic couple hardly hold a conversation, let alone exchange passionate words or mingling glances. Affect for the Kailyard is thus a kind of private human energy, a tough love that must be economized, saved, and sparingly parceled out only when necessary. Men’s grief in Maclaren’s novel is shown by a tear-stained letter or, as the narrator explains, a weeping heart: “No Scottish man can ever sing, ‘God of our fathers, be the God of their succeeding race,’ with a dry heart” (B, 60). Connecting each “Scottish man” to one another is the feeling of nation, Anderson’s “affective bond,” which is abstractly expressed by the soul rather than by a direct presentation of tears, within the body rather than on its surface. The outward expression of feelings is a rare occurrence, often to the extent that Highland peoples are frequently turned into emotionless drones. The Kailyard tends to prefer rugged individualism over community, and isolation over social interaction.

Yet a regular, but thrifty, affective exchange between individuals is nevertheless maintained in order to demonstrate a consistent emotional

commerce that would support a community activity. For example, a wedding celebration in Barrie's novel describes a festive gathering, but never in a way that would violate even the strictest conventions of Victorian domestic propriety. Its participants are so disciplined that there is no possible threat of a carnivalesque free-play of emotion: "That night there was revelry and boisterous mirth (or what the Auld Lights took for such) in Tibbie's kitchen. At eleven o'clock Davit Lunan cracked a joke. Davie Haggart, in reply to Bell's request, gave a song of distinctly secular tendencies" (A, 85). If a joke and the secular song denote the boundaries of social expression, we can be sure that the Highlanders are no threat to the reigning political order. An excess of collective emotion is never a danger because affect is neatly contained by the individual in her or his allegiance to morally proscriptive institutions like the Kirk. In this way, affect contradictorily supports the public/private division of bourgeois subjectivity. Emotions are common modes of exchange, but only certain kinds are valued under particular circumstances. And, as I shall demonstrate later, the myth of common feeling buckles under the weight of gender, revealing that the national sentiment depends on an unequal distribution of affect.

Barrie and Maclaren's prose works hard to unify their Highland communities through the construction of a collectively shared sentiment or an emotional home. They present national feeling as naturally specific rather than simply divergent, idiosyncratic, or temporary. Therefore, to understand Kailyard narratives as fictions of nation, it is necessary to view the temperament of the Highland as inscribed in the organic make-up of the land as well as of its inhabitants. For Barrie, the landscape of Thrums not only sets the mood of the story, it directly explains the mood of the Highland people:

I watched the water twisting black and solemn through the snow, the ragged ice on its edge proof of the toughness of the struggle of the frost, from which it has, after all, crept only half victorious. A bare wild rosebush on the further bank was violently agitated, and then there ran from its root a black headed rat with wings. Such was the general effect. I was no less interested when my startled eyes divided this phenomenon into its component parts, and recognized in the disturbance on the opposite bank another fierce struggle among hungry animals for existence: they need no professor to teach them the survival of the fittest. (A, 4)

The narrator watches natural selection occur right before his eyes. And while we might be impressed by the violent enactment of evolution, we also might be puzzled to notice that geology, too, is collapsed into

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Darwin's theory as the river and the frost take on the characteristics of species battling each other for survival.

Yet the liberties Barrie takes with nineteenth-century science do not end there. The hardness and "solemn" state of the land parallels the temperament and affective economy of the Highland folk, and as a result, nature is projected onto the human form. The "agitated wild rosebush" offers the brief moment of beauty's emergence from the "toughness" of its surroundings, much like the rare "tender moment" between lovers that Barrie describes later. The people, as part of the land, are organically tied to, and emotionally in tune with, the land's fierceness. Such logic, no doubt, lays the ground for the brutal forms of social Darwinism and racial evolutionism that ran rampant in late nineteenth-century discourses to support Enlightenment political economy and imperialism. For Scotland Highlanders, this meant more immediately a long and tragic history of improving the apparently backwards Highland practices. As one early nineteenth-century advocate explained, "Nothing could be more at variance with the general interests of society and the individual happiness of the people themselves than the original state of Highland manners and customs."<sup>33</sup> In policy, the resistance to "manners and customs" translated into land enclosure acts, forced migration to the cities, and widespread poverty among Highland farmers and industrial workers. The construction of the Kailyard nation erases the violent history of Scotland in reconstructing an affective economy that is simultaneously pre-modern and backwards while being civilized enough to support contemporary middle-class attitudes.

In Barrie's narrative, Highlanders hold the racial distinction of being organic holders of pure Scottishness, as affect becomes the way of reading the body's relationship to the nation. The affective racialization of the Highland Scots paradoxically must distinguish them as a pre-modern pure people and idyllically arrest them in a fictional version of an ideologically and racially uncontaminated past. At the same time, as national ideals for Barrie's present-day readers, the Highlanders must possess thrifty, efficient, and resilient emotional characteristics that support the contemporary market-place ideology. The Kailyard Highlander is self-motivated, self-reliant, and self-disciplined—values that fit nicely with end-of-the-century middle-class moral arguments against unemployment, pauperism, vagrancy, and illegitimacy. Strengthened by the church, the moral rearmament of the 1890s placed paramount importance on the reformation of individual character over municipal interventionist policies, claiming poverty was self-inflicted and the

result of idleness, drink, and poor moral standards. As the Presbytery of Glasgow argued in its 1891 Report on the Housing of the Poor, "The work of the Corporation and the work of the Church must go hand in hand," suggesting the necessary centrality of Christianity's socially corrective effect.<sup>34</sup> Reactions like these were hardly aimed exclusively at Scotland's urban condition, nor were they solely in response to the problems of poverty. As Elaine Showalter explains in *Sexual Anarchy*, the "fin-de-siècle" in Britain was characterized by pervasive insecurities about new morally "degenerative" cultural categories, like the feminist New Woman and homosexuality, that represented increasing ambiguities in gender and sexuality, and threatened the borders of Victorian middle-class identity.<sup>35</sup> The Kailyard reaffirms these boundaries by imagining the Highland character safely within the limits of bourgeois values.

In this way, we can read affect's function in disciplining as well as constructing ideological configurations, particularly of gender. Transgressions beyond the emotional harmony of the Highland home occupy a great deal of narrative space in Kailyard fiction. Women are drawn as the keepers of emotional excess and remain consistent with some of the more regressive conventions of gender in nineteenth-century literature. This is not to say that women have more emotional capital; they are permitted to be more emotional than men only in the privatized, feminized space of the home. Just as one might view historical relations of women to the home and property, women in Kailyard fiction are given great emotional power, but only insofar as this affective power is wholly invested in distributing its energy to the maintenance of the home. Narrative and community crises occur when women's affective energies are directed outside of the domestic realm.

A central moment of discord in Maclaren's *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* revolves around young motherless Flora Campbell's flight from the world of Drumtochty to the corrupting "wicked city" of London (*B*, 94). While we are never quite sure of the specific reasons behind Flora's escape, her letter to her father indicates a history of her excesses of individual expression, "you will not be troubled any more by my dancing or dressing," which have been predictably exacerbated by the lack of a woman's presence in the home: "Oh, if I had had my mother, then she would have understood me, and I would not have crossed you" (*B*, 81). The crisis in the town is most palpably noticeable in terms of a disharmony of affect. The father shows scorn and erases the name of Flora from his family Bible while the council of Kirk ministers publicly grieves at the loss of a wayward soul. However, it is the Widow Howe

who drafts the letter “in place o’ yir mother” which magically arrives in Flora’s hands in London, and convinces her to return:

I am writing this tae say that yir father luves ye mair than ever, and is wearing oot his hert for the sicht of yir face . . . there will be sic gledness in oor wee glen when ye come hame, what think ye o’ the joy in the Father’s Hoose? (*B*, 85)

The metaphorical weight of effacing the daughter’s name from the Bible and the use of “Father’s Hoose,” or church, above suggest that Flora’s flight has also led to a moral fall. Her whimsical desire for liberty implies that she has gone to London to become a prostitute since, according to Scotland’s own 1881 version of the Contagious Diseases Act, the only “test of a prostitute” was that she was “known to be going about the streets by the police, following no other occupation, and earning her living in that way.”<sup>36</sup> Despite the fact that any woman who could not give satisfactory proof of her employment could be labeled a prostitute, at the end of the nineteenth century, being on the street in whatever form meant not only moral degradation, but social disease. Responding to the period’s general concern about the number of women who worked outside of the home, Maclaren’s narrative locates the problem in individually capricious women who lack moral fortitude. The reality, of course, was that young women were leaving the land to fill factories, workshops, and domestic service positions in towns because of economic necessity rather than a desire to do personal mischief.<sup>37</sup> In Maclaren’s novel, the purity of the home is interchangeable with the moral and physical health of the entire nation.

Speaking not only for the mother, but *as* the mother, Mrs. Howe initiates and administers the exchange of affect to restore order. In other words she is the emotional worker, carrying the father’s grief (rather than her own) to the daughter, distributing affect in the name of domestic harmony. Apparently, her own emotional investment is of little consequence. Her role is to uphold, maintain, and communicate the emotional work that has been done by the father. Mrs. Howe’s entreaty manages to tap Flora’s natural affective relationship to her home, bringing on a psychic vision of her merrie and true place: “I saw my home, with the dogs before the door, and the flowers that I planted and the lamb coming for her milk, and I heard myself singing, and I awoke . . . my heart wass [sic] melting within me” (*B*, 94). In this image, Flora’s emotional expression of song is linked with the chores of the home, which her father completes with the same tender care as we see “Flora’s

plants laid out in the sun, and her father watering them on his knees. One was ready to die" (B, 83). Domestic labor and women's affective expression are thus brought back to their correct place once Flora suffers the emotion-gone-wrong of a "melting" heart. In contrast to her earlier personal revelry in dress and dance, Flora's joyful singing is an expression of affect that supports and surrounds her domestic labor. Flora's transgression is resolved by her return to the domestic sphere, re-instantiating the natural economy of affect, gender, and the home in the community. Flora's heart is cured, her father restores her name to the family, the ministers are morally encouraged, and the crisis disappears with the young woman disciplined and re-contained properly in the home. Not surprisingly, the narrative dispenses with Mrs. Howe's character and excludes her from the conclusion of the story. She has played her part in the plot as the emotional manager of affective domestic harmony. Her labor is not recognized by her own emotional relationship to it—pleasure, joy, love—rather it is recognized by its ability to serve the good of the national home.

Nations depend on discourses of affect to construct and inspire a sense of unity and commonality while simultaneously naturalizing the social divisions that make nations possible. Kailyard narratives, in like form, erase differences as they erect them, authoring myths of racial and cultural distinction while reinforcing divisions of inequality and histories of subordination. Thus, it is important to see emotions as a constructed regulatory home wherein the historical tensions between fictions of nation and its appeal to natural formations of gender, race, and class are mediated and masked. The popularity of the Kailyard school no doubt parallels, reflects, and perpetuates the ideals of the turn-of-the-century growth of the industrial complex and middle-class ideology. In this way we might view the images of the national home in the late nineteenth century as perhaps one of the most efficient and convenient ways to sell the message of capitalism.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Alan Bold, *Modern Scottish Literature* (London: Longman, 1983), 105.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, ed. Kenneth Buthlay (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), 60.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal* (London: Routledge, 1983), 55.

<sup>4</sup> George Blake, *Barrie and the Kailyard School* (London: Arthur Baker, 1951), 51.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that there was not an absolute consensus among contemporary critics on whether or not Kailyard fiction counted as legitimate high art. Influential

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reviewer W. E. Henley wrote in the *National Observer* that James Barrie's *The Little Minister* (1891) was "what cannot fail to prove the novel of the year: a year, be it remarked, that has witnessed the production of work by such men as George Meredith (*One of Our Conquerors*), Thomas Hardy (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*), and Rudyard Kipling (*The Light that Failed*)" (qtd. in Whigham Price, "W. Roberston Nicoll and the Genesis of the Kailyard School," *Durham University Journal* 86 [1994]: 77). The first few decades of twentieth-century criticism brought with it a more unified voice against the aesthetic value of Kailyard texts.

<sup>6</sup> For a history of Nicoll's publishing activity with Kailyard authors in his journal, the *British Weekly*, see Price, 79.

<sup>7</sup> Islay Murray Donaldson, "Crockett and the Fabric of *The Lilac Sunbonnet*," *Studies in Scottish Fiction: Nineteenth Century*, ed. Horst Drescher and Joachim Schwend (New York: Verlag Peter Lang, 1985), 305.

<sup>8</sup> See Thomas Knowles, *Ideology Art and Commerce* (Goteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1983), 23; this is the only book-length analysis of Kailyard fiction and its consumption.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Poovey writes in *Uneven Developments* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), "I give the phrase ideological work two different emphases. In one sense, it means the 'work of ideology': representations of gender at mid-century were part of a system of interdependent images in which various ideologies became accessible to individual men and women. In another sense, however, the phrase means 'the work of making ideology': representations of gender constituted one of the sites on which ideological systems were simultaneously constructed and contested" (2).

<sup>10</sup> Benedict Anderson defines nation in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), "I propose the following definition of nation: it is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (5–6).

<sup>11</sup> A significant part of this argument is borrowed from Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), a compelling analysis of nineteenth-century colonialism and narratives of domestic harmony. Her central argument is that the ideas of Victorian domesticity in Britain and in the colonies became suffused with the colonial ideas of race: "as domestic space became racialized, colonial space became domesticated" (36).

<sup>12</sup> Ian Maclaren, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (New York: Hurst and Co., 1896), 7. Hereafter parenthetically cited in the text and abbreviated *B*.

<sup>13</sup> Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (New York: Speller, 1938), 160–61.

<sup>14</sup> Eric Anderson, "The Kailyard Revisited," *Nineteenth Century Scottish Fiction*, ed. Ian Campbell (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1979), 146.

<sup>15</sup> Katie Trumpener, "National Character, Nationalist Plots: National Tale and Historical Novel in the Age of Waverley, 1806–1830," *ELH* 60 (1993): 685.

<sup>16</sup> See Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), esp. chap. four, "From 'National Tale' to 'Historical Novel'" (105–33), which outlines the generic relationship of Scott's fiction to the novels of Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan.

<sup>17</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), 120.

<sup>18</sup> For an analysis of Highland population and migration in nineteenth-century Scottish cities, see Charles Withers, "Class, Culture and Migrant Identity: Gaelic

Highlanders in Urban Scotland,” in *Urbanising Britain: Essays on Class and Community in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Charles Withers and Gerry Kearns (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 55–79.

<sup>19</sup> As quoted in J. A. D. Blaikie, “The Country and the City: Sexuality and social class in Victorian Scotland,” in *Urbanising Britain*, 95.

<sup>20</sup> James Barrie, *The Little Minister* (New York: Russel, 1898), 14.

<sup>21</sup> James Barrie, *Auld Licht Idylls* (New York: Scribners, 1906), 11. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated A.

<sup>22</sup> S. R. Crockett, *The Stickit Minister* (London: MacMillan, 1893), 146–47.

<sup>23</sup> According to census data of 1891, over a quarter million people throughout Scotland (6.3%) spoke Gaelic, of which 40,000 spoke Gaelic only. The percentages of Gaelic speakers in the Highlands were substantially higher. Charles Withers has shown in *Gaelic in Scotland: The Geographical History of a Language* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1984) that this translated to almost 18,000 speakers in Glasgow and between 50–80% of Highland inhabitants still speaking Gaelic as their primary language.

<sup>24</sup> As quoted in page three of the back advertisement of the MacMillan’s 1894 American fifth edition of *The Stickit Minister and Some Common Men*.

<sup>25</sup> See the review of Barrie’s *Margaret Olgilvy* in *Blackwoods Edinburgh Journal* 162 (April 1897): 481–83.

<sup>26</sup> E. P. Thompson illustrates in his *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1963) that new forms of production, especially between 1790 and 1850, were widely seen as emblems of the new industrial way of life: “steam power and the cotton-mill=new working class. The physical instruments of production were seen as giving rise in a direct and more-or-less compulsive way to new social relationships, institutions and cultural modes” (191).

<sup>27</sup> McClintock’s *Imperial Leather* argues that the nineteenth century saw a shift from scientific racism to commodity racism whereupon domestic cleanliness was heavily imbued with metaphors of national “whitening” and purification. See esp. chap. five, “Soft-soaping Empire” (208–31).

<sup>28</sup> Anderson, 64.

<sup>29</sup> See the review of Barrie’s *Sentimental Tommy* in *Blackwoods Edinburgh Journal* 162 (Dec 1896): 800–13.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Bold, *Modern Scottish Literature*, 107.

<sup>31</sup> My argument owes much to Ann Cvetkovich’s second chapter, “Theorizing Affect,” in *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1992), where she argues: “If affect is historically constructed, it can then become, as Foucault suggests of sexuality under the rule of the repressive hypothesis, not the mechanism for the liberation of the self but instead the mechanism for containment and discipline of the self” (31).

<sup>32</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1965), 4.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Saree Makdisi’s study of Walter Scott’s *Waverley*, “Colonial Space and the Colonization of Time in Scott’s *Waverley*,” *Studies in Romanticism* 34 (1995): 155–87. Makdisi provides a brief history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century enclosure policy in the Scottish Highlands.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Richard Rodger, “Employment, Wages and Poverty in the Scottish Cities,” *Perspectives of the Scottish City*, ed. George Gordon (Aberdeen: Aberdeen Univ. Press, 1985), 27.

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<sup>35</sup> Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Viking, 1990), 9.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in “Reports of the Select Committee on the Contagious Diseases Act” (1881) in Linda Mahood and Barbara Littlewood, “Prostitutes Magdalenes and Wayward Girls: Dangerous Sexuality of Working Class Women in Victorian Scotland,” *Gender & History* 3 (1991): 166–67. Mahood and Littlewood’s history of urban Scotland’s efforts to expand its apparatuses of social control locally situates the trends throughout the British empire to “rehabilitate” and discipline poor and disenfranchised women. They argue that in an effort to save women, institutions formed around the category “Magdalenes,” “newly fallen daughters of pious parents” who had a minimal history of offences but were not yet considered “criminal.” Successful rehabilitation and moral restoration still meant the return of these women to middle-class domestic settings: marrying, or remaining with relatives, or in domestic service. Many “Magdalenes” left these institutions to become factory workers or self-employed tradeswomen, while others challenged the bourgeois moral code altogether by ignoring it, resisting it, or leaving the institution permanently (168).

<sup>37</sup> See Blaikie, 95.