

This chapter introduces the novel's author, John Galt, a Scottish writer of romantic novels who experimented with themes, techniques, and styles during his lifetime. He wrote in a panoply of forms and genres, drawing on his experiences of living, working, and traveling in Scotland, England, France, Italy, and the Mediterranean. His fiction was initially published in many editions, but the most recent edition, issued in 1820, contains only a single volume. It is republished in some editions with commentary by Angela Esterhammer, a professor of English at the University of Toronto, as well as other publications. The title of the novel, "Glenfell," comes from a poem by Andrew of Padua, a friend of Galt's father, James Park. In fact, according to Esterhammer, the story is actually a satire on George Bernard Shaw's Glasgow setting, set during the reign of King George III. The book also includes three short novels: Glenfell, entitled An Edinburgh Tale of the Nineteenth-Century; The Rejected Theatre; and The Circulating Library, a collection of short stories written by Galt. The periodicals in which these works appear are selected from the first six issues of Gentleman's Weekly Review, dated 1818, 1819, and 1820 respectively. There is also a brief introduction to The Periodical Novelist, a magazine for young and middle-class readers, published in 1821. Galt is even-handed in his portrayals of actors and other minor characters, ranging from a respectable manager of an opera house in Palermo to an agent of a London publishing house. Galt's educational writing for Phillips also has a large influence on Andrew of Padua. In fact, the story is very much like some of the educational writing Galt had done for Phillips as well as some of his own fiction. For instance, when Andrew contracts with an Italian printer named Masano to publish his improvisations, Galt himself would have been the publisher. Similarly, The Omen is basically a collection of short stories that Galt wrote during a period of "unusual anxiety and depression", which caused him to lose most of his money due to a family financial crisis. He did however write a sequel to this story called The Menor, which was published in 1825. The first edition was republished in 1826. The second edition appeared in February 1826 as a limited edition of four chapters. All three of these editions were highly praised by reviewers. There are many literary critics who felt that they misunderstood the original story; but none of them were willing to pay much attention to the alterations made to it after its publication.