Edinburgh Edition of the Works of

John Galt

Three Short Novels

Glenfell
Andrew of Padua, the Improvisatore
The Omen

Edited by
Angela Esterhammer

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Glenfell

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The Edinburgh Edition of the Works of John Galt

General Editor: Angela Esterhammer

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Published so far:
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JOHN GALT

Three Short Novels

Glenfell
Andrew of Padua, the Improvisatore
The Omen

Edited by Angela Esterhammer

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS

2020

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For more information visit our website: edinburghuniversitypress.com

Edinburgh University Press Ltd
The Tun – Holyrood Road
12 (2f) Jackson's Entry
Edinburgh EH8 8PJ

Typeset in Arno Pro at the University of Toronto
and printed and bound in Great Britain

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 4744 0208 8 (hardback)
ISBN 978 1 4744 0209 5 (webready PDF)
ISBN 978 1 4744 0210 1 (epub)

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PREFACE TO THE EDINBURGH EDITION OF THE WORKS OF JOHN GALT

John Galt was among the most popular and prolific Scottish writers of the nineteenth century. He wrote in a panoply of forms and genres about a great variety of topics and settings, drawing on his experiences of living, working, and travelling in Scotland and England, in Europe and the Mediterranean, and in North America. Yet only a fraction of his many works have been reprinted since their original publication. In 1841–43 Galt's most important publisher, Blackwood, reprinted seven of his novels in volumes 1, 2, 4, and 6 of the *Blackwood's Standard Novels* series. In 1895, the Blackwood firm republished these novels, with one change to the selection, as the eight-volume *Works of John Galt*; this collection was reissued in 1936, again with one additional novel. Modern annotated editions of some individual works have appeared since then. However, the *Edinburgh Edition of the Works of John Galt* presents for the first time a much fuller range of Galt's fiction in authoritative texts, together with materials that add to an appreciation of his historical surroundings and his cultural heritage. Each volume includes an introduction that places Galt's work in the context of history, genre, and the print culture of the period; annotations that explain specialized vocabulary as well as historical, geographical, literary, cultural, and philosophical allusions; and other features such as a glossary of Scots words and expressions, maps, and excerpts that illuminate Galt's sources and his contemporary reception.

Galt wrote and published his work quickly, sending portions of manuscript to the printer to be set in type as soon as he finished them; he and his publisher would frequently correct proofs of part of a text while he continued writing the remainder. Although he was usually busy with several projects at once, his correspondence documents his involvement in all stages of the publication process and shows that he undertook proof-corrections himself, except in cases where he developed especially close working relationships with a publisher or fellow writer and allowed that person editorial control. However, with few exceptions, no manuscripts or proofs of Galt's published fiction have survived. For many of his works, only a single edition appeared during

his lifetime. Sometimes there were one or more further editions, lightly revised and corrected; in other cases, the text was originally published in a periodical and then revised for publication in book form. As a general editorial principle, subject to adaptation based on research by the editors and the particular publishing history of each text, the present edition adopts as the copy-text the latest version in which Galt is known to have had a hand. In the case of texts first published in periodicals and later revised by Galt to appear as a book, the book publication is preferred as the copy-text. Each volume of the present edition includes the editor's account of the composition and publication history of Galt's text, with reference to extant versions in the form of periodical publications, multiple book editions, and manuscript materials. All editorial emendations to the copy-text are recorded in a list of emendations at the end of the volume. The *Edinburgh Edition of the Works of John Galt* presents Galt's fiction accurately as it appeared during his lifetime, reflecting his intentions to the extent that they can be ascertained.

Galt's work was thoroughly interwoven with the publishing practices and reading habits of his age. He wrote for currently popular publication venues such as monthly magazines and literary annuals; he acquiesced to the expected format of the three-volume novel, but also attempted to popularize alternative forms such as single-volume novels and shorter fiction. His works therefore present a revealing picture of the literary marketplace during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. The *Edinburgh Edition of the Works of John Galt* highlights these insights through the editors' contextualizing notes on early-nineteenth-century print culture and through the presentation of Galt's texts on the page. With respect to page layout, font, punctuation, and many other details, this edition seeks to replicate the look of Galt's original editions while providing an enjoyable reading experience for modern readers. The editors hope that the results will make Galt's clever, insightful, multifaceted, often innovative fiction accessible to a wide range of readers and researchers, and reaffirm Galt's importance within literary history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The production of this volume has been, in many respects, a team effort. Members of the Editorial Board, editors of other volumes of *The Works of John Galt*, the staff of Edinburgh University Press, and librarians in the United Kingdom and North America consistently responded to queries and requests with expert knowledge and good advice. Rob Dunbar, Ian Duncan, Penny Fielding, Robert P. Irvine, and Anthony Mandal, in particular, generously shared their expertise on a variety of topics relevant to this volume. Sincere thanks are due to my research assistants at the University of Toronto. Delaney Anderson, Alexander De Pompa, David Johnstone, Ronan Mallovy, Sana Mohtadi, Tatiana Poluch, Zoe Sebastien, and Meg Zhang worked on this volume at many stages; Kaylee Baxter, John Kozub, and Jovana Pajovic provided extensive assistance in preparing and setting the final text. The University of Toronto gave generous financial support to this project and Victoria College contributed a congenial and productive working environment for the team. Thanks also to the McLaughlin Library at the University of Guelph for providing the original title-page images of *Glenfell* and *The Omen*, and to Harvard University Library for the title page of *Andrew of Padua*.

Angela Esterhammer
Victoria College, University of Toronto

CHRONOLOGY OF JOHN GALT

1779
John Galt is born (2 May) at Irvine, Scotland, as the oldest child of John Galt (1750–1817), a ship's captain involved in West Indian trade, and Jean Thomson (1746–1826).

1787–88
Attends the Old Grammar School in Irvine.

1789
Father becomes a ship-owner and moves the family to Greenock. Attends school in the Royal Close.

1795–1804
Clerk in Greenock Customs House, then in the mercantile office of James Miller & Co.

1797
Founds a literary and debating society with two former schoolfellows, William Spence and James Park.

1798
Death of brother James at Montego Bay (17 July).

1803
Publishes a memoir of Greenock poet John Wilson in John Leyden's *Scotish Descriptive Poems*. Extracts from "Battle of Largs, a Gothic Poem" appear in the *Scots Magazine* (April 1803 and January 1804).

1804
Invites James Hogg to a public dinner in Greenock and meets him there. Moves to London (May). Publishes *The Battle of Largs* in book form, then suppresses it.

1805
"Essay on Commercial Policy" in the *Philosophical Magazine*, edited by Alexander Tilloch (November). Enters into business with Hugh McLachlan, factor and broker.

1807

"Statistical Account of Upper Canada" in the *Philosophical Magazine* (October).

1808

Bankruptcy of the McLachlan-Galt business (April). Enters into business with brother Tom, who soon departs for Honduras.

1809

Admitted to Lincoln's Inn to study law (18 May), but after four months embarks on travels in the Mediterranean and Near East, at times in the company of Lord Byron. Visits Gibraltar, Sardinia, Malta, Sicily, Albania, Greece, and Turkey; journeys overland between Constantinople and Vidin for the sake of a mercantile scheme that proves unsuccessful.

1811

Returns to London (October); abandons the study of law.

1812

Voyages and Travels in the Years 1809, 1810, and 1811; *The Tragedies of Maddalen, Agamemnon, Lady Macbeth, Antonia, and Clytemnestra*; *The Life and Administration of Cardinal Wolsey*, about which Galt receives a complimentary letter from Walter Scott. Briefly edits *Redhead Yorke's Weekly Political Review*. Travels to Gibraltar to open a branch office for Kirkman Finlay & Co. (June), but the business falls through.

1813

Returns to London to seek medical treatment. Marries Elizabeth Tilloch (20 April). Death of brother Tom in Honduras (2 August). *Letters from the Levant*; contributions to *Lives of the Admirals*. Last encounters with Byron.

1814

"On the Art of Rising in the World" and "On the Principles of the Fine Arts" in the *New Monthly Magazine*. Edits and contributes dramas to *The New British Theatre* (4 vols, 1814–15). Visits France, Belgium, and Holland on a potential business venture (May). Birth of son John (13 August).

1815

The Majolo (vol. 1). Birth of son Thomas (12 August). Becomes Secretary of the Royal Caledonian Asylum, a children's charity established by the Highland Society in London. Death of friend William Spence.

1816

The Life and Studies of Benjamin West, Esq. (vol. 1); *The Majolo* (2 vols).

1817

Death of father (6 August). Birth of son Alexander (6 September). Death of friend James Park. Begins writing for Richard Phillips' *Monthly Magazine*.

1818

The Appeal: A Tragedy, in Three Acts performed at Edinburgh with prologue by J. G. Lockhart, epilogue by Walter Scott. Moves to Finnart near Greenock to work for Reid, Irving & Co., but the business venture is aborted.

1819

"The Late Mr. William Spence" in the *Monthly Magazine* (May). Returns to London to lobby Parliament as agent for the Edinburgh & Glasgow Union Canal Company. Begins writing school textbooks under pseudonyms for publishers Phillips and Souter, as well as children's books including *The History of Gog and Magog*. Publishes occasional articles in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*.

1820

Glenfell; *Andrew of Padua, the Improvisatore*; *Life, Studies, and Works of Benjamin West* (2 vols); *The Wandering Jew*; *All the Voyages round the World*; *A Tour of Europe*; *A Tour of Asia*; *The Earthquake*; "The Atheniad, or The Rape of the Parthenon: An Epic Poem" in the *Monthly Magazine* (February); "The Ayrshire Legatees" in instalments in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (June 1820–February 1821). The Union Canal bill is successfully passed by Parliament. Appointed agent for claimants in Upper Canada (now Ontario) seeking compensation from the British government for losses sustained in the War of 1812.

1821

Annals of the Parish; *Pictures, Historical and Biographical*; *The Ayrshire Legatees* (in book form); "The Steam-Boat" in instalments in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (February–December). Resides in Edinburgh during the latter part of the year while writing for Blackwood.

1822

Sir Andrew Wylie, of that Ilk; *The Provost*; *The Steam-Boat* (in book form); "The Gathering of the West" in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (September); *The Entail*. Visits Scotland during the summer; in Edinburgh during the visit of George IV (August), then in Greenock; returns to London in December.

1823

Ringan Gilhaize; *The Spaewife*. Moves his family from London to Musselburgh near Edinburgh.

1824

The Bachelor's Wife; *Rothelan*. Forms the Canada Company to broker the sale of Crown lands and promote settlement in Upper Canada; appointed as its Secretary.

1825

Travels to York (now Toronto) via New York as one of five commissioners sent to Upper Canada on a fact-finding mission (January to June). Presented with the Freedom of the Burgh of Irvine. Death of father-in-law Alexander Tilloch. Travels to Scotland after his mother suffers a stroke (December).

1826

The Omen; *The Last of the Lairds*; "Bandana on Colonial Undertakings" and "Bandana on Emigration" in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (August–September). Death of mother (18 July). Appointed Superintendent of the Canada Company, which is granted a royal charter (19 August). Embarks for New York (October); reaches York in Upper Canada (12 December). Studies the operations of land companies in upper New York State.

1827

Visits Quebec for a month (February). Founds Guelph (23 April) and Goderich in Upper Canada. Visits the settlement of Galt (now part of Cambridge, Ontario) which William Dickson named in his honour.

1828

Sustains a lasting injury from a severe fall. His wife and sons join him in Canada; sons attend school in Lower Canada.

1829

Recalled from management of the Canada Company (2 January). Arrives in Liverpool (20 May) and proceeds to London. Committed to King's Bench Prison for debt (15 July–10 November). Recurring spells of illness begin. "My Landlady and Her Lodgers" in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (August).

1830

Lawrie Todd; *Southennan*; *The Life of Lord Byron*. Wife and sons return from Canada (June). Briefly edits *The Courier*, a London evening newspaper. Begins contributing regularly to *Fraser's Magazine*, the *New Monthly Magazine*, and literary annuals.

1831

Bogle Corbet; *Lives of the Players*; short stories (including "The Fatal Whisper," "The Unguarded Hour," and "The Book of Life") in *The Club-book*, edited by

Andrew Picken. Forms and becomes Secretary of the British American Land Company for settlement of the Eastern Townships in Lower Canada.

1832

Stanley Buxton; *The Member*; *The Radical*; "Our Borough" in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (October). Begins writing for *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (e.g., "The Howdie," September–October 1832). Suffers a stroke (October); illness becomes more crippling.

1833

Eben Erskine; *Poems*; *The Stolen Child*; *The Ouranologos*, a joint venture with painter John Martin; *Stories of the Study* (containing "The Dean of Guild," "The Jaunt," and "The Seamstress," among others); *The Autobiography of John Galt*. Resigns from the British American Land Company due to illness. Sons John and Thomas emigrate to Canada.

1834

The Literary Life, and Miscellanies, of John Galt; "The Mem, or Schoolmistress" in *Fraser's Magazine* (August). Son Alexander leaves for Canada to work for the British American Land Company. Moves to Greenock and settles with his wife at the home of his sister, Agnes Macfie. Death of William Blackwood.

1835

Efforts of an Invalid (poetry). Continues to write and publish short fiction, chiefly in *Fraser's Magazine* and *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (e.g., "Tribulations of the Rev. Cowal Kilmun," November 1835–January 1836).

1836

"A Rich Man" in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (June–August).

1838–39

Edits *Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth*.

1839

Dies at Greenock (11 April). *The Demon of Destiny and Other Poems* published posthumously. Elizabeth Tilloch Galt joins her sons in Canada.

INTRODUCTION

The present volume of the *Edinburgh Edition of the Works of John Galt* brings together three short novels that display different facets of Galt's creative abilities. *Glenfell* is his first publication in the style of Scottish fiction for which he would become best known; *Andrew of Padua, the Improvisatore* is a unique synthesis of his experiences with theatre, educational writing, and travel in the Mediterranean; and *The Omen* is a haunting gothic tale. Each story was originally published in one short volume – a form that Galt preferred, but one that found little favour with publishers, circulating libraries, and readers in an age dominated by triple-decker novels. Thus, the history of how these tales came to be written and published demonstrates Galt's entrepreneurial efforts to bring shorter fiction onto the literary market. With their easily readable scope and their vivid themes, each of the three stories has a distinct charm. At the same time, they cast light on significant phases in Galt's career as a writer and on his versatility in experimenting with new themes and styles.

The Periodical Novelist, or *The Circulating Library*

Glenfell and *Andrew of Padua* were part of the same publishing venture: a series of short novels for which Galt, albeit anonymously, seems to have been a prime mover. During the years 1819 and 1820, he lived in London and published heavily with the firms of Richard Phillips and John Souter. Besides contributing articles to Phillips' *Monthly Magazine*, Galt compiled pedagogical works on history and geography for the use of schoolchildren; most of these appeared under the pseudonyms "Reverend T. Clark" and "Captain Samuel Prior." He was forty years old, and his writing career up to this point comprised moderately successful accounts of his travels in the Mediterranean, biographies, dramas, articles on political economy and other non-fictional topics, and a large number of school textbooks. His only fictional publication, a two-volume tale entitled *The Majolo* that appeared in 1815–16, had fallen flat.

Nevertheless, in 1819 the publisher Phillips and his regular writer

Galt collaborated to start a monthly series of fiction aimed at private purchasers as well as circulating libraries. This series of "superior new Novels and Novellettes" was first announced in the October 1819 issue of Phillips' *Monthly Magazine*; it was to consist partly of "translations from the French, Italian, German, Spanish, and oriental languages" and partly of original works for which "some of the first writers of the day have pledged their co-operation."[1] Over the next five months, it was advertised in the *Monthly Magazine* as a "Periodical Series of Original Novels, Romances, and Tales," "*Novelties* for Novel Readers," and "Classical New Novels."[2] Besides the eminence of the writers and the quality of the translations, a particular selling point was to be the reliable and relatively affordable price of six shillings per volume, regardless of the volume's length. The series was published under two interchangeable titles, *The Periodical Novelist* and *The Circulating Library*, both of which suggest an attempt to capitalize on contemporary reading habits. The "Advertisement to the Series" that was printed at the beginning of volume 1 – that is, Galt's *Glenfell* – is quite explicit about the intention to woo circulating libraries as well as private purchasers by providing a commodity that is available at a "cheap rate," yet counts as "a monthly luxury above all price" (2–3).[3]

The advertisement also intimates that the series will allow for quick publication ("an early view") of work by new authors ("LITERARY AMATEURS"), and that it will be a venue for tales that "would probably have been rejected by the modern publishers of Novels, on account of their brevity" (2–3). This attempt to create an alternative outlet for publication hints at Galt's collaboration in the series from the beginning, since it resembles other projects he had previously undertaken. Some six years earlier, Galt pitched a similar monthly series of dramas to publisher Henry Colburn, to be entitled *The Rejected Theatre*; it was to include plays that had been turned down by the licensed theatres of Covent Garden and Drury Lane. The provocative title reflected Galt's frustration over the rejection of plays he himself had submitted for performance and his suspicion that the theatre managers had not bothered to read them properly, if at all.[4] *The Rejected Theatre* was soon

[1] *The Monthly Magazine; or, British Register*, 48 (1819), p. 262.

[2] *Monthly Magazine*, 48 (1819), p. 347; 49 (1820), p. 70; 49 (1820), p. 156.

[3] When no further specification is given, numbers in parentheses refer to pages in the present volume.

[4] See *The Autobiography of John Galt*, 2 vols (London: Cochrane and McCrone, 1833), I, p. 264.

retitled, somewhat more neutrally, *The New British Theatre; A Selection of Original Dramas, not yet acted; some of which have been offered for representation, but not accepted*, and four volumes were published over the course of 1814 and 1815. Galt drew on *The New British Theatre* in various ways when writing tales for the *Periodical Novelist* series, as is especially evident in *Andrew of Padua*'s engagement with the world of the theatre. But *The Periodical Novelist* proved even more short-lived than *The New British Theatre*; after three volumes – two of them written by Galt – it quietly folded. Because of Galt's heavy involvement with this monthly series and because of what it reveals about some of his earliest forays into the marketplace for fiction, the title pages and prefatory material for the *Periodical Novelist or Circulating Library* are included in the present edition.

Glenfell; or, Macdonalds and Campbells

Galt's two anonymously published contributions to the series are nevertheless remarkable, each in its own way. The first one appeared on 15 January 1820 as a duodecimo volume of 328 pages with a three-part title: *Glenfell; or, Macdonalds and Campbells. An Edinburgh Tale of the Nineteenth Century*. Although long forgotten, this delightful story is key to an understanding of Galt's development as a writer because it is his first publication in the style that soon after made him famous: the humorous, socially and historically insightful tale of Scottish life.

Both of *Glenfell*'s subtitles are significant for locating the book within historical and literary contexts. The subtitle *Macdonalds and Campbells* simultaneously raises and defuses expectations of a dramatic historical plot that might have centered on centuries-old feuds between the Macdonald and Campbell clans, evoking unresolved tensions within Highland society that Galt's Scottish readers would have associated with the 1692 Massacre of Glencoe. But, with its omission of definite articles, the phrase "Macdonalds and Campbells" (rather than "the Macdonalds and the Campbells") carries somewhat different connotations, hinting instead at the confusion of names and identities that underlies the novel's comic plot. The action of *Glenfell* plays itself out among several Macdonalds and several Campbells residing comfortably in the small compass of Edinburgh's New Town, which had just completed building at the time the novel appeared and was attracting Highland families to the city in increasing numbers. Although Galt's family came from lowland Ayrshire, he had Highland

connections, especially at this point in his career. Due to his work with the Caledonian Asylum, a charitable organization for orphaned Scottish children, he had been involved with the Highland Society of London since 1814; in 1818, he became a Director of the Highland Society in Greenock, a town that already had a significant Highland population when Galt was growing up there during the 1790s. Later, in his memoirs, he mentions the Gaelic associations of the Galt name and his own possible ancestry in the Highlands of Perthshire.[5] While the disruption and depopulation of Highland communities from the mid-eighteenth century onward forms a larger historical backdrop to the novel, the action of *Glenfell* confines itself to a small, domestic scale. Its sphere is that of professional and fashionable life; its characters range from members of the middle class such as the businessman Mr. Ruart to hereditary nobility such as the Laird of Glenfell who, while he has taken up the practice of law in Edinburgh, remains a clan chief. Most importantly, it is about the ways these classes have begun to intermingle – in the friendship of Glenfell and Ruart, who are former schoolmates, in intermarriages between classes and clans, and in the relocation of Highlanders to Edinburgh and Glasgow. By focusing on social interactions among Macdonalds, Campbells, and other Highland families in these rapidly changing communities, Galt anticipates the perspective his fiction would take vis-à-vis larger historical movements in *Annals of the Parish* and other novels of the following years.

Glenfell's second subtitle, *An Edinburgh Tale of the Nineteenth Century*, also evokes and undercuts expectations. It gestures toward the genre of the historical novel that Walter Scott had popularized six years earlier; but instead of offering a tale of eighteenth-century adventure in the manner of Scott's *Waverley* (1814), Galt locates his characters in a nineteenth-century social world more akin to those of Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen. All the events of *Glenfell* occur on a restrained domestic scale, beginning with a misdelivered issue of the *Edinburgh Review*, climaxing with a bankruptcy negotiation, and ending with the marriages of Macdonalds and Campbells and Glenfell himself. Urban geography plays an important part throughout *Glenfell*. In 1820, Edinburgh's New Town was brand new; the residential district built by architects Robert Adam and Robert Reid based on the plans laid out by James Craig in the 1760s had just been completed. The handsome architecture designed around a symmetrical grid of roads,

[5] *The Literary Life, and Miscellanies, of John Galt*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood and London: Cadell, 1834), I, pp. 256–7.

squares, and crescents provides the main stage for the characters' movements in *Glenfell*. By introducing a subplot about the Glasgow merchant Mr. Ruart into the story, Galt also depicts the relationship between professional Edinburgh and mercantile Glasgow as he has characters travel from one city to the other along ever-accelerating stagecoach routes.

Galt's experience as a dramatist is clearly evident in *Glenfell*. He based the novel on "Auld Reekie; or, a Mistake in Edinburgh," a play he had written sometime during the preceding decade but only published much later in volume 3 of his *Literary Life, and Miscellanies* (1834). More specifically, *Glenfell*'s plot resembles French *comédie d'intrigue* in the use of mistaken identities, the predominance of dialogue, and an approximate unity of time. The events take place over a very few days, and the scene shifts back and forth between simultaneous goings-on in Edinburgh and Glasgow. There are frequent quotations from and allusions to Shakespeare, which Galt uses to parallel the domestic drama of *Glenfell* with Shakespearean comedies of mistaken identity and hyperbolically juxtapose it with tragedy.[6] All thirty-five chapters begin with epigraphs that are drawn from thirteen different Shakespearean plays and from a wide variety of eighteenth-century British literature. These epigraphs embed Galt's modest tale within an elaborate, if ironic, literary heritage.

Galt's recent, busy months of writing educational texts for Phillips and Souter also influenced the composition of *Glenfell*. As misidentifications of Macdonalds and Campbells proliferate throughout the novel, Galt allows his reader to fall into some of these misunderstandings along with the characters in order to instill a lesson about reading attentively. Not until chapter 5 does the omniscient narrator clear up some of the initial confusion with a pedantic aside: "Here it becomes necessary to apprise the reader that in our Northern Comedy of Errors there are two Macdonalds as well as two Miss Campbells" (20). Further misunderstandings are stirred up, however, by the novel's title character – the young, rich, handsome, poetically inclined lawyer Glenfell, whose impulsive actions and fondness for making rhetorical arguments that he doesn't actually believe cause

[6] Galt's engagement with Shakespeare around this time may also be reflected in a long review article of Nathan Drake's *Shakespeare and his Times* in the April 1819 issue of the *Edinburgh Monthly Review*, which Ian A. Gordon attributes to him (*John Galt: The Life of a Writer* [Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1972], p. 22).

near-catastrophic mistakes. The educative theme shows up again in Glenfell's character development: he is taught by the emotional whirlwind of the novel's events to amend his eccentric, devil's-advocate demeanour and become a "proselyte to propriety" (117).

The story's happy ending involves a *deus ex machina* in the person of rich Mr. Grant, yet another Campbell relative who has just returned to Scotland after thirty-five years in colonial Upper Canada. The colonial motif aligns with Galt's evolving business interests. Although his first voyage to Canada was still a few years away, he had learned enough detail about the country from an emigrant relative to publish a "Statistical Account of Upper Canada" in the *Philosophical Magazine* in 1807, and Canada would become a central focus of his own business affairs by the end of 1820, when he was appointed agent for Canadian claimants seeking compensation from the British government. But in addition to the fortuitous return of Mr. Grant, what makes the novel's resolution possible is the common sense shown by the protagonists. Nineteenth-century Macdonalds and Campbells settle their differences according to social conventions and commercial negotiations rather than violence and retribution. The long-absent Highlander Mr. Grant ironically calls attention to this change in morés when he reflects:

> I am a little sorry that we have been so easily reconciled, for I do not much like this modern moderation of feeling, this debating about the equity of things. I know not why a man whose race and line have for ages withstood the changes of time and chance, should, for the sake of mahogany chairs, plated ware, and cut glass, measure his manners by those of the temporary traffickers in cotton bags and sugar hogsheads. (106)

Glenfell turns the historical romance that its title might have heralded into the irony of the everyday. The novel climaxes not with a battle, but with a bankruptcy hearing; its triumphal celebration is a dinner party enlivened by satire and a dose of slapstick comedy.

Glenfell is thus of significant interest as Galt's first published Scottish novel and the first example of his distinctive approach to depicting the social history of his country. More specifically, *Glenfell* introduces names and scenes that he would develop further in the popular novels that followed. The second cousin of Mrs. Campbell Ardmore, Reverend Mr. Belwhidder (or Bellwhidder), would lend his name to Reverend Micah Balwhidder, the narrator-protagonist of

Annals of the Parish (1821). In *Glenfell*, a key item of Mrs. Campbell Ardmore's banquet finery is borrowed from the Belwhidders, and the Reverend nearly comes into view when he performs the double marriage ceremony at the end of the novel. Galt also reprised the entire scene of Mrs. Campbell Ardmore's autumn banquet, where she puts on a masterful show of gentility and generosity while shrewdly borrowing and wheedling supplies in order to assemble the meal at the least possible cost to herself, in a tale he published three years later, *The Gathering of the West* (1823). Ruth Aldrich, one of the very few critics to have commented on *Glenfell*, notes the general significance of the novel as the first published example of motifs that recur throughout Galt's Scottish fiction, including the selective use of Scots language and the depiction of strong female characters.[7]

Nevertheless, *Glenfell* was not only forgotten but entirely lost from sight soon after its anonymous publication. A review in the *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review* was lukewarm, describing *Glenfell* as "a tale neither destitute of interest, nor possessing any extraordinary degree of merit." Still, the review continues, *Glenfell* is sufficiently "well written" to be a good advertisement for the *Circulating Library* series, which, the reviewer predicts, "will soon rank with the most popular periodical productions."[8] A French translation entitled *Glenfell, ou les MacDonalds et les Campbells: Histoire Écossaise du 19^e^ Siècle* appeared in Paris in 1823, published together with a translation of Maria Edgeworth's 1804 tale "Murad the Unlucky." In a preface, the anonymous translator identifies the author of *Glenfell* as "a true Englishman" (*un veritable Anglais*), noting nevertheless that the interest of the novel for French readers lies in its Scottish setting, since "a justly celebrated author" (that is, Walter Scott) has recently brought so much attention to Scotland.[9] The translator, who seems to assume that *Glenfell* is by a male author but not to know that the author is Galt, notes that a man's perspective on contemporary manners is especially valuable at a time when so many novels are written by women.

Glenfell was never republished, and by the time Galt wrote his memoirs in 1834 he remembered having written it only when reminded by a friend – although he immediately recalled, too, that it "was supposed

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[7] Ruth I. Aldrich, *John Galt* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), p. 44.

[8] *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review*, 101.39 (12 February 1820), pp. 100–1.

[9] *Glenfell, ou les MacDonalds et les Campbells. Histoire Écossaise du 19^e^ Siècle, suivie de Murad le Malheureux, par Miss Edgeworth* (Paris: Persan, 1823), pp. xxx–xxxi.

to have some merit."[10] Copies of *Glenfell* are listed in the catalogues of circulating libraries during the 1820s and 1830s, but after that the novel disappeared from sight for almost a century and a half. A copy of the French translation remained in the British Library, and for literary scholars until the mid-twentieth century *Glenfell* was available only in this translated version. In the second half of the twentieth century, a few copies of Galt's original came to light that are now held by libraries in Britain, Canada, and the United States. The copy in the University of Guelph Library has an inscription on the title page – "The parting Gift of an affectionate Son. Nov. 1824." – that appears to be in Galt's handwriting, making it likely that he gave this copy of *Glenfell* to his mother shortly before departing on his first trip to Canada. The present edition marks the first time *Glenfell* has been published since 1820.

Andrew of Padua, the Improvisatore

Glenfell, volume 1 of the *Periodical Novelist* or *Circulating Library* series, appeared simultaneously with volume 2, an anonymous translation of the recent French novel *Petrarch and Laura* by Madame de Genlis. The third book in the series, published on 15 February 1820, seemed to offer readers further translations of European fiction. According to its title page, this duodecimo volume of 294 pages contained two tales: *Andrew of Padua, the Improvisatore: A Tale from the Italian of the Abbate Furbo* and *The Vindictive Father, or Lorenzo and Claudia, from the Spanish of Leandra of Valladerras*. The provenance of the second tale is somewhat obscured by the idiosyncratic phrasing and spelling of the Spanish title and name, but *The Vindictive Father* is, in fact, translated from "Claudia y Don Lorenzo," one of several inset stories in the nine-volume novel *La Leandra* written by Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor and published in Madrid between 1797 and 1807. It is quite possible that this translation was done by Galt, who amused himself with speed-translation exercises during his travels in the Mediterranean from 1809 to 1811; in his *Literary Life*, he records that during a second trip to Gibraltar in 1812–13 he worked on his Spanish and read in the town libraries.[11]

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[10] *Literary Life*, I, p. 349.

[11] *Literary Life*, I, p. 141. According to an advertisement pasted into the front inside cover of volume 1 (*Glenfell*) when it was published on 15 January,

Andrew of Padua, the Improvisatore, however, is a different story altogether. On the surface, it is a first-person narrative by a famous Italian author named Francisco Furbo. Most of his tale consists of a story-within-a-story told by an old man, Andrew, whom Furbo encounters in Rome. As Furbo treats Andrew to food and wine over the course of a few days, Andrew relates his autobiography – how he gave up an apprenticeship in a counting-house to join the theatre and became an internationally renowned *improvvisatore*, a performer of spontaneously composed poetry and song. But Andrew of Padua is eventually revealed to be a fraud and a trickster; what is more, the entire novel turns out to be a *mise en abîme* of performances within performances. Just as Andrew plays the improviser and the unreliable narrator in relation to Furbo, so Furbo plays the same role in relation to the reader.

In fact, the name of the supposed Italian author, Furbo, means "trickster" – and if that does not make readers suspicious, the elaborate framing devices that surround his tale might do so. To explain the provenance of the story, the anonymous English translator begins by quoting an extract of a letter from the gentleman who supposedly supplied him with the Italian original, which leads on into a pseudo-scholarly "Biographical Sketch of the Abbate Furbo" complete with a history of Furbo's novels and their reception in Italy. The biographical sketch claims to draw on multiple Italian biographies and editions of Furbo's complete works. Among other things, the gifted author Furbo is credited with understanding fourteen languages and writing fluently in nine – although the biographical sketch also describes him, tellingly, as "an apt and shrewd spirit, with a knavish relish of mischief" (137).

The ironies, inconsistencies, and word-play of the biographical sketch and the translator's preface and footnotes reveal that the whole

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volume 3 of *The Periodical Novelist* was originally intended to consist of "three exquisite Tales, elegantly translated from the Spanish of a modern Author." If this plan was altered on short notice to one Spanish tale plus *Andrew of Padua* in time for volume 3 to be published on 15 March, Galt must have produced *Andrew of Padua* very quickly indeed. The pasted-in advertisement appears only in some of the extant copies of *Glenfell*; in the copies held by the University of Edinburgh Library and the Senate House Library, it is pasted over with a bookplate. The copy acquired by the Harry Ransom Center of the University of Texas at Austin in 1983 is the only known copy in which the advertisement is legible.

thing is actually a hoax. *Andrew of Padua* participates in the fakery so often found in writings of the Romantic era, including gothic novels that purport to be based on found manuscripts and fictional editors who pretend to confer historical authenticity. *Andrew of Padua* is the first publication in which Galt hoaxed readers to such an extent, although he would soon join the contributors to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* who excelled at this practice; he would use similar devices in *The Ayrshire Legatees* (1820–21) and, at least glancingly, in *The Omen*.

But the specialized form of tale-spinning that Galt draws on in *Andrew of Padua* – the figure of the Italian *improvvisatore* – derives directly from his travels in the Mediterranean between 1809 and 1811. The germ of *Andrew of Padua, the Improvisatore* can be found in *Voyages and Travels*, the travel account that Galt published in 1812 after his return to Britain. A brief section entitled "An Improvisatore" recounts his meeting with an unnamed individual in Sicily who vaunts his own services as a tour guide, claiming to be "the best improvisatore in all Palermo." As in *Andrew of Padua*, the narrator invites the *improvvisatore* to visit him at his lodgings, only to have his landlord advise him to avoid this character at all costs: "'Oh my God!' cried he, 'that is one grand Furbo … When he come again, you tell him to go to hell.'"[12] The character of Andrew of Padua is an amalgam of the "grand Furbo" of an *improvvisatore* whom Galt himself encountered in Palermo, and a more sympathetic improvising performer who appears in another early publication of Galt's: the biography of American painter Benjamin West, a significant part of which is devoted to West's trip to Italy in 1759–60. While in a coffee-house in Rome, West encounters "the most celebrated Improvisatore in all Italy." This *improvvisatore* is described as "a venerable old man, with a guitar" who goes by the name of "Homer" (the same epithet claimed by Andrew of Padua) and extemporizes an impressive ode on the theme of "an American come to study the fine arts in Rome" – that is to say, on Benjamin West himself.[13] The episode of West's encounter with the Roman *improvvisatore* called Homer in 1760 makes it possible to take at face value the few chronological markers in *Andrew of Padua*: the translator's opening remark that "about sixty years ago" there was "a very

[12] *Voyages and Travels in the Years 1809, 1810, and 1811* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1812), p. 45.

[13] *The Life and Studies of Benjamin West, Esq.* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1816), pp. 114–15.

celebrated performer of that kind at Rome, known to all travellers by the name of Omero or Homer" (136), and Andrew's boast to Furbo at the beginning of chapter 10 that "every person who visited Rome about thirty years ago, considered me as one of the standing miracles of the Papal Court" (173). From the standpoint of 1820, when the story was published, this means that Andrew would have reached the height of his fame in Rome in 1760 ("sixty years ago") and his encounter with Furbo would have taken place in 1790 ("thirty years ago"), when Andrew had become an old man. Most of the remaining historical allusions in both the biographical sketch and Andrew's tale fall into place around those dates – with the exception of a mischievous footnote, in the midst of a chapter about the credibility of storytellers, where the translator claims that Furbo wrote this tale "before the establishment of the independence of the United States" (194). Since Galt was preparing the second volume of his biography of Benjamin West for the press simultaneously with *Andrew of Padua*, it is not surprising that traces of West's adventures made their way into Andrew of Padua's story.

In other ways, too, the most illuminating frame of reference for *Andrew of Padua* is Galt's own writing career. The story gradually reveals more and more elaborate correspondences with the many types of writing at which he had tried his hand: travel accounts, drama, opera librettos, biography, fiction. These allusions are sometimes quirky or satirical, other times so precise as to make *Andrew of Padua* look like an allegory of Galt's experiences in the publishing and theatrical world of London during the years 1812 to 1819. The motif of flute-playing, for instance, crops up repeatedly in Galt's early work. The hero of *The Majolo* plays the flute, as Galt did during his youth, and as does Andrew of Padua. Indeed, Andrew's temporary obsession with flute-playing is a bizarre episode that seems to function more as a coded authorial signature than an intrinsic part of the plot. Names and characters that appear in *Andrew of Padua* are also to be found in *The Earthquake* (1820), the long novel that Galt wrote while living in Scotland in 1818. It features two *improvvisatore* characters: Salpano, "the best poet in all Sicily," an extemporizer who is so talented that he could have made a killing on the London stage, and Andrea, an illiterate old man who "often deceived his auditors into a belief that his stories were actually his own adventures."[14] Andrew of Padua looks very much like

[14] *The Earthquake: A Tale*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood and London: Cadell, 1820), I, pp. 297–8 and II, p. 260.

a conflation of these two characters. Two other minor figures in *The Earthquake*, Furbo the highway robber and Father Francisco the priest, together provide the pseudonym "Abbate Francisco Furbo."

Andrew of Padua is as much a portrayal of Galt's experiences with publishers and theatre managers in London as it is of his Mediterranean travels. The story makes the Italian *improvvisatore* into an avatar of the British writer struggling to earn a living by grasping the opportunities offered by the late-Romantic marketplace. *Andrew of Padua*'s theme of the poet-performer who literally sings for his supper had ironic personal relevance for Galt as he wrote school textbooks, magazine articles, and fiction for Richard Phillips and other publishers as quickly as it could be printed. The counting-house into which Galt places Andrew in the early chapters, and the theatrical sphere in which Andrew later tries to make his way, are worlds whose frustrations Galt knew all too well. Having failed to interest the Theatres Royal of London in the tragedies and comedies he had written, Galt developed strong views on the shortcomings of the theatre industry that found expression in *The New British Theatre*, the volumes of rejected plays that he edited in 1814–15. In chapter 16 of *Andrew of Padua*, Andrew outlines a lyrical drama that is actually an opera libretto entitled *Orpheus*, written and published by Galt himself in volume 3 of *The New British Theatre*. Even when the allusion is less blatant than this, Galt's own experiences with the London theatres clearly provide background for the novel. Galt is nevertheless even-handed in his characterization of theatre managers: they range from the dignified manager of the opera house in Palermo in chapter 18 who is credited with "solid attainments, … great skill, and … exquisite taste" (207) to the agent of the London opera house in chapter 19, a former tradesman who can easily be hoodwinked by Andrew because he knows no Italian and "possesse[s] about as much taste in Italian music as his bidets" (209).

In the context of magazine publishing, too, Andrew the *improvvisatore* is an all too realistic representation of Galt the "bookseller's hack," as he sometimes called himself, wryly echoing a comment by John Cam Hobhouse.[15] The plot device whereby Andrew manages to cajole a glass of wine or something to eat from his listener Furbo at the end of almost every chapter might evoke Galt's relation to his publishers, from whom he was often obliged to ask for cash advances on his next piece of writing. There may be a more pointed satire in chapter 12 of *Andrew of Padua*, where Andrew contracts with an Italian printer

[15] *Autobiography*, I, p. 187.

named Masano to publish his improvisations. Masano is described as "a little fat man, with a face of singular rotundity and fulness" (182) who proves avaricious, impatient, and irascible – details that recall contemporary descriptions of Richard Phillips' appearance and personality.[16] The educational writing that Galt had been doing for Phillips also leaves its mark on *Andrew of Padua*. In individual episodes as well as in the plot of the story as a whole, Galt tries to inculcate habits of careful reading and observation by making fun of characters who allow themselves to be hoodwinked. In chapter 15, for instance, while sailing from Leghorn to Messina, Andrew takes part in a storytelling game where a multicultural group of passengers entertain one another with tall tales. Andrew learns an important lesson about how not to be taken in when a Frenchman poses as a learned member of the Academy of Sciences but turns out to be an ordinary barber. In *Andrew of Padua* as a whole, it is Francisco Furbo who eventually realizes that he has fallen for Andrew's elaborate story about his international fame; listeners, Andrew chides him, should learn to "exercise their own faculties a little more cleverly" (222) in order to avoid being cajoled out of their wine and dinners by clever performers. Finally, with a paratextual apparatus consisting of the "Biographical Sketch of the Abbate Furbo" and footnotes by the pseudo-translator, Galt performs the same exercise on his actual readers, teaching us to be more prudent when it comes to evaluating narrative authority.

Andrew of Padua is thus a lynchpin in Galt's career between his writing of school texts and his association with the hoaxing group of authors involved with *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, for which he began to write around this time. It is also an ironic literary memoir that traces Galt's trajectory from his Mediterranean travels to his breakthrough Scottish fiction by way of his biographical, pedagogical, and dramatic writings. Yet, like *Glenfell*, this key text completely disappeared from view following its publication. The only review to be found is a brief, predictably favourable notice in Phillips' *Monthly Magazine*. "The adventures of the Improvisatore, related by himself, are little inferior in nature and genuine humour to the exploits of Gil Blas, and the best itinerant heroes of Fielding," this reviewer opined; "Andrew is a true son of Fortune, but bears her vicissitudes in so good humoured a manner, and relates them with so much grace and nature, that (which is now seldom the case) we laid down the book with an

[16] See Cyrus Redding, *Fifty Years' Recollections, Literary and Personal*, 3 vols (London: Skeet, 1858), I, p. 65.

actual feeling of regret."[17] Although the title *Andrew of Padua* appears in the list of published works at the end of his *Literary Life* in 1834, even Galt claims at that point to have forgotten about it completely: "Andrew of Padua … has entirely, even to the name, escaped my memory," he admits in the last paragraph of his memoirs.[18]

It is hard to credit Galt's casual dismissal of the tale, however, given that he continued to rework it for several years under the title "The Improvisatore" and eventually republished it in a different form. On 18 May 1822, while sending William Blackwood portions of the book manuscript for *The Steam-Boat*, Galt also sent him a revised version of "the Improvisatore" to be published as part of a collection that he called "the Lazaretto."[19] In a letter of 28 May, he suggested that "the Quarrantine" [sic] would be a better title for the collection of tales.[20] Blackwood appears to have declined the stories, but they came in handy in October 1824 when Galt, on the point of leaving for Canada, desperately needed to fill space in a three-volume historical novel he was publishing with Oliver & Boyd. In "The Quarantine; or, Tales of the Lazaretto," which fills the second half of volume 3 of Galt's *Rothelan*, the text of *Andrew of Padua* appears in recycled form as "The Improvisatoré; or, The Italian's Tale." This time, the pseudo-narrator Francisco Furbo is replaced by a different frame story: "The Quarantine" takes place in Messina, Sicily, where an international group of travelers confined in the lazaretto because of the danger of plague decide to pass the time by telling stories to one another and assessing the credibility of each storyteller. The Italian "Improvisatoré" relates the second of the three tales. By embedding his autobiographical narrative within a scene of instruction about how to tell truth from fiction, this new context intensifies the pedagogical orientation of the original story.

Other differences between *Andrew of Padua* and "The Improvisatoré; or, The Italian's Tale" cast light on the evolution of Galt's writing habits and the intentions of the original 1820 version. "The Improvisatoré" is shorter, ending abruptly with the protagonist's departure from London in the company of Belletta and her lover (that is, halfway through chapter 20 of *Andrew of Padua*), after which Galt wraps up the story with a couple of hasty sentences. The style of "The Improvisatoré"

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[17] *Monthly Magazine*, 49 (1820), p. 357.

[18] *Literary Life*, I, p. 349.

[19] Galt to William Blackwood, 18 May 1822, MS 4008, National Library of Scotland (NLS).

[20] Galt to William Blackwood, 28 May 1822, MS 4008, NLS.

is in many places tighter and less wordy, and there are no divisions into chapters as in *Andrew of Padua*. A few episodes are omitted entirely; likely motivations for these cuts are to maintain a more moral tone (for instance, a nighttime assignation between a young woman and her lover disappears), to moderate the satire of monks and monasteries (chapters 13 and 14, on Andrew's brief period as a novice, are deleted), and to remove some of the autobiographical allusions to Galt and his works ("The Improvisatoré" contains neither the synopsis of Galt's opera "Orpheus" nor the overview of Sicily that echoes his *Voyages and Travels*). The revised version also omits brief character sketches of some minor figures, which raises the suspicion that Galt had intended these descriptions to refer to specific individuals when he first wrote *Andrew of Padua*; this would not be the only time that he was persuaded to omit *ad hominem* satires when he revised his original text. The word-for-word and episode-for-episode correspondence of most of these two narratives, however, leaves no doubt that Galt had *Andrew of Padua* in front of him while rewriting it as "The Improvisatoré." As his correspondence with Oliver & Boyd shows, although he was frantically busy wrapping up affairs in Britain before sailing for Canada, he concerned himself with details of the 1824 publication, among other things finding time to correct the proofs himself.[21]

More generally, Galt continued to portray improvisers and wily tricksters throughout his later fiction. A Sicilian *improvvisatore* or "provisatory" is still accosting Scottish travellers to Palermo over twenty years later in his last, comic rewriting of his Mediterranean voyage as "The Jaunt" in *Stories of the Study* (1833). Characteristics of Andrew the improviser are evident in the protagonists of the better-known fiction Galt wrote in the years following *Andrew of Padua*. The names of Andrew Wylie, Provost Pawkie, and Lawrie Todd all encode, in English or Scots, the wily character of their bearers, as does the name of the Italian Francisco Furbo. Indeed, Galt's choice of the typically Scottish name "Andrew" for his Italian *improvvisatore* is an indication that Italian and Scottish contexts are being superimposed in *Andrew of Padua*. Ironically, the fiction of the imaginary author Francisco Furbo proved so durable that *Andrew of Padua* is much more often listed under the pseudonym "Furbo" than under Galt's own name, both in the catalogues of nineteenth-century circulating libraries and in the few rare-book libraries that hold copies today. The present volume brings *Andrew of Padua, the Improvisatore* back into view as an

[21] Galt to Oliver & Boyd, [October 1824], Acc.5000/188, NLS.

entertaining "furbo" of a text, as well as an informative illustration of the development of Galt's fiction.

The Omen

The six years that separate *The Omen* from the two previous tales brought about significant changes in Galt's status and career. Thanks to the numerous novels and periodical contributions he published during the early 1820s, Galt was by mid-decade an established, popular fiction writer. He was also engaged in the major business enterprise of his career, the Canada Company that bought Crown land and sold it to settlers on behalf of the British government, and he made a first trip to North America to pursue this venture in 1825. Galt kept up his commercial and literary activities simultaneously, writing at a daunting pace while moving wherever business and family matters took him. Yet *The Omen* arose during a period of unusual anxiety and depression. The writing of the tale coincided with a national financial crisis that began in the latter months of 1825, involving a major stock market crash, widespread bank failures in England, and aftershocks that hit the British publishing industry with particular severity. Galt's own affairs were precarious as he anxiously awaited parliamentary decisions that would determine the fate of the Canada Company; "my mind was in no very comfortable state," he recalls in his *Autobiography*.[22] Added to his concerns over business was the failing health of his mother, who was being cared for by his sister in Scotland during the last months of her life. In a letter to his sister dated 13 January 1826, while he was finishing the manuscript of *The Omen*, Galt reveals his state of mind with unusual frankness, alluding to his need to borrow money to see his family through the financial crisis and his general depression about believing himself to be a disappointment to their mother:

> I feel that at no former period of my life was I so depressed – 'hope deferred' too long has made me sick at heart & I begin to suffer, for the first time, the gnawing of disappointed expectation. Yet the same sort of miracle, from light to darkness, is continued to be performed around me & I know not, nor have I ever heard of one who has had less reason to despair. I tremble in my gratitude to providence

[22] *Autobiography*, I, p. 339.

> when I think of the path that seems marked out for me along the edge of peril.[23]

Galt's characteristic optimism about the coming of better times is of a piece with the resilience that made it possible for him to continue writing through depression to produce *The Omen*. His friend and early biographer D. M. Moir, aware of the difficult circumstances in which the tale was written, refers to it as "one of the most beautiful, and perhaps the most elaborately finished of his productions."[24]

Galt himself commented that *The Omen* is "not … at all in the style for which I am best known."[25] As wide-ranging as his themes and genres had been up to this point, *The Omen* undertakes something different from almost all his previous writing. Its first-person narrator is a young English nobleman named Henry and it is set mainly in Oxford, parts of East Anglia, and the environs of London. The plot features a gothic motif of narrowly averted incest that was new to Galt's fiction, although he had paid considerable attention to similar themes in Byron's poetry. Recalling the origins of *The Omen* in his *Literary Life*, Galt claims that "it is founded on the story to which I alluded to Lord Byron on speaking one day of the 'Bride of Abydos.'"[26] The story in question is a four-volume novel entitled *The Three Brothers* by Joshua Pickersgill that was published in 1803. Galt was so struck by similarities between *The Bride of Abydos* and this convoluted gothic romance that he returned several times to the question of whether Byron had plagiarized *The Three Brothers* or perhaps even written it himself when very young.[27]

While Galt intimates that *The Omen* also derives from this source, any resemblance to *The Three Brothers* is very vague. Instead, there are stronger connections to themes in some of his own earlier fiction. Galt had long been interested in premonitions, extrasensory perception, and semi-mystical sympathies – as *The Omen*'s narrator puts it, in the belief that the mind may be "endowed with other faculties of perception than those of the corporeal senses" (237). In his *Autobiography*

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[23] Galt to Mrs. Macfie, 13 January 1826, MS A277054, H. B. Timothy Collection, University of Guelph Library.

[24] "Biographical Memoir of the Author," *The Annals of the Parish and The Ayrshire Legatees*, by John Galt (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1841), p. xxxviii.

[25] MS A277053, H. B. Timothy Collection, University of Guelph Library.

[26] *Literary Life*, I, pp. 269–70; see also II, p. 185.

[27] *Autobiography*, II, pp. 179–85 and 224; *Literary Life*, I, pp. 24 and 307–8.

Galt describes *The Omen* as "a continuation … of a former attempt to embody presentiments and feelings in situations not uncommon"[28] – that is, a continuation of his first published tale, *The Majolo*, whose title character is similarly susceptible to presentiments and intuitive sympathies. In both *The Majolo* and *The Omen*, Galt distances himself from a belief in omens by ascribing this belief to fictional characters and exploring its effect on their psyche. He does, however, identify personally with another one of the psychological phenomena illustrated by *The Omen*: a mental faculty that he calls "local memory" and that he believes himself to possess in a "remarkable" degree.[29] Galt glosses local memory as "the peculiarity of recalling objects of sight, and describing them as if they were present"; according to the examples he gives in the *Autobiography*, it is a capacity for intense visualization that can recall vivid details of past scenes in a way that "helps to make individuality and to mark identity."[30] In *The Omen*, Galt transfers the propensity for local memory to the protagonist Henry, whose sensorially vivid memories of scenes from his childhood might today be described as flashbacks to childhood trauma.

Occasional scenes and motifs in *The Omen* can be traced to other facets of Galt's experience. The shipboard scenes in Epoch III reflect his background as the son of a sea-captain who grew up in port towns; his musical inclinations and his ability to play the flute make their way into the episode of the mystical German flute teacher; and his portrayal of the lives of the aristocracy owes something to the titled acquaintances, including Lord Byron, whom he visited while residing in London. Datable allusions in *The Omen* suggest that the narrator Henry is born about the same time as Galt himself (1779), and the unusual term "Epochs" into which Henry's narrative is divided is the term that Galt would use seven years later in composing his own *Autobiography*. Although the biographical parallels end there, the historical background to Henry's narrative coincides with events that Galt himself lived through: threats of invasion by revolutionary and, later, Napoleonic France; the presence of new military garrisons near the English coast; restrictions on travel to the Continent during the early years of the nineteenth century. The political history of the Napoleonic era is repressed into the background of the narrative, yet the wartime atmosphere and the prominence of military figures

[28] *Autobiography*, I, p. 339.
[29] *Autobiography*, I, p. 340.
[30] *Autobiography*, I, pp. 342–3.

throughout *The Omen* are crucial aspects of the story. The personal crisis of the narrator Henry corresponds to a time of national crisis; his identification with Hamlet and his sense of victimization by an irresistible fate in an incomprehensible world gains intensity when placed in historical as well as psychological and theological contexts. The end of Henry's narrative approximately corresponds with the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, and the editor's statement in the postscript that about ten years have passed since Henry's letters were handed over for publication brings the timeline to 1825, the date of *The Omen*'s publication. Although the ironic postscript added by an unnamed editor contrasts with the meditative tone of Henry's story, it is possible that the date and location "Castle-Bromage, 10th Jan. 1826" with which the postscript end reflect Galt's whereabouts as he completed the last pages of the manuscript. Symbolically at least, the name Castle-Bromage or Castle-Bromwich, a staging place on the road between London and Scotland, seems to gesture toward Galt's unsettled, transitory state at the time.

Galt wrote *The Omen* in the last three months of 1825 while staying in London, having recently returned from his first voyage to North America. Correspondence between William Blackwood in Edinburgh and his nineteen-year-old son Alexander, who had been sent to London to learn the publishing trade, chronicles the tos and fros of the manuscript's production. *The Omen*, to be "elegantly printed in a pocket volume,"[31] was first announced in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* under "Works Preparing for Publication" in September, October, and November 1825. As Galt requested, it was advertised on the same page as the Scottish novel he was writing concurrently, *The Last of the Lairds* – but while *Lairds* was advertised as being "by the Author of Annals of the Parish, &c.," the separate listing of *The Omen* intentionally concealed the fact that it was by the same author.[32] Alexander Blackwood began receiving copy from Galt at the beginning of November, and it was set in type by the London printer Spottiswoode as soon as pages were received. Alexander relayed proofs back and forth between the printer and Galt, after which the proofs were sent to Edinburgh for William Blackwood's approval. Waiting impatiently for Galt to supply the rest of the manuscript to Alexander, Blackwood Sr. grumbled about Galt's visit to Brighton for a few days in mid-November, and worried that his trip home to Greenock at the end of that month due

[31] *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 18 (July–December 1825), p. 638.

[32] Galt to William Blackwood, 11 September 1825, MS 4014, NLS.

to his mother's serious illness would further delay the writing process. Although Galt assured the Blackwoods that he would keep sending copy throughout his travels, William remained concerned that delays would prevent the book from appearing in time for New Year's buying. As it turned out, by year's end the publishing industry in London and Edinburgh was in chaos due to the stock-market crash and book purchases had fallen off dramatically, so the Blackwoods were resigned to the delay in publication of *The Omen* while they awaited further developments.

On 3 January 1826, Galt wrote to William Blackwood that "the MS all but two chapters is finished";[33] he completed the text at the end of January. On 29 January, Alexander Blackwood wrote to his father that "Mr Galt talks of doing a funny thing for the preface";[34] during the following week, the "funny thing" turned from a preface into a postscript, which Galt sent to the printer on 7 February. *The Omen* (dated 1825) finally appeared in mid-February 1826 as a slim octavo volume without any authorial attribution, priced at four shillings and sixpence. The pages of the original edition leave ample white space at the end of each short chapter, giving the story an episodic feel and visually emphasizing the beginnings and ends of chapters, which often contain meditative passages on time and fate. On 16 February, Alexander Blackwood posted twenty-five copies to his father and had a further five hundred copies sent from London to Edinburgh by boat. All parties involved, the Blackwoods and Galt himself, were concerned that it was an inauspicious moment for book-buying. In their correspondence, they strategize about the timing and advertising of the publication, and consider whether concealing Galt's authorship entirely or letting out the secret will be likely to have a more positive impact.

Sales of *The Omen* were indeed slow in both England and Scotland and the critical response was mixed, although prominent authors to whom William Blackwood distributed the first copies returned very complimentary comments. "All clever people admire & praise it highly," William Blackwood wrote to his son, "but ordinary folks think it a painful story."[35] Galt was pleased about this "favourable opinion" as well as about the "complete mystification" as to the identity of the

[33] Galt to William Blackwood, 3 January 1826, MS 4017, NLS.

[34] Alexander Blackwood to William Blackwood, 29 January 1826, MS 4016, NLS.

[35] William Blackwood to Alexander Blackwood, 8 March 1826, MS 4016, NLS.

author.[36] Indeed, the first readers of *The Omen* seem to have taken it to be by any of the popular authors of the day *except* Galt. Caroline Bowles guessed it to be by Thomas De Quincey; James Hogg assumed the author was his friend R. P. Gillies;[37] other guesses were Walter Scott, John Wilson, John Gibson Lockhart, and William Godwin. D. M. Moir adds in his posthumous memoir of Galt that the tale was also attributed at the time to William Maginn, Thomas Hamilton, and Barry St Leger.[38] When *The Omen* was first published, even Galt's close friend Moir did not seem to be in on the secret. In February 1826, Moir sent a copy of the book to the writer Alexander Balfour with the comment, "The Omen you will find a beautifully written thing but a little unfortunate as to story. – I know not who is the author; but I believe he is resident in London."[39] A few months later, Moir wrote to Blackwood expressing surprise at learning (as he thought) that the unknown author was John Gibson Lockhart.[40] While editing Galt's manuscript *The Last of the Lairds*, Moir had come across a deliberately misleading attribution of *The Omen* to Lockhart that Galt planted in chapter 21 of *Lairds*. Although Moir believed the hint, he found the reference egregious and edited Lockhart's name out of *Lairds*. It was not an uncommon occurrence for Moir or Blackwood to remove overly strident *ad hominem* allusions from Galt's fiction manuscripts; apparently a shot against William Jerdan, the editor of the *Literary Gazette* toward whom both Blackwood and Galt harbored resentment, was also edited out of *Lairds* at this point.[41] Nevertheless, a cryptic allusion to *The Omen* remains in the published version of *The Last of the Lairds*: the narrator describes "universal nature" in "euphonious phrases, imitated from the style of that mysterious little work, 'the Omen'" and intimates that both the sentiment and the author of *The Omen* are Scottish.[42]

The first published review of *The Omen*, which appeared in the

[36] Galt to William Blackwood, 27 March 1826, MS 4017, NLS.

[37] Caroline Bowles to William Blackwood, 25 February 1826, MS 4018, and James Hogg to William Blackwood, 19 March 1826, MS 4017, NLS.

[38] "Biographical Memoir of the Author," p. xxi.

[39] D. M. Moir to Alexander Balfour, February 1826, Needler Papers, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

[40] D. M. Moir to William Blackwood, [June–August 1826], MS 4018, NLS.

[41] Galt to William Blackwood, 19 September 1826, MS 4017, NLS.

[42] *The Last of the Lairds: or, The Life and Opinions of Malachi Mailings, Esq. of Auldbiggings* (Edinburgh: Blackwood and London: Cadell, 1826), pp. 183–4.

Literary Gazette on 25 February 1826, began by noticing that the novel's postscript "puzzles" the reviewer as to "whether the writer means the reader to take it gravely or as a jest," a hoax of the kind to which Scottish writers in the *Blackwood's* circle were especially prone. The *Gazette* then quotes long passages of evocative scenery and psychological description so as to let readers "form their own opinions upon the merits or demerits of the *Omen*."[43] A brief review in the *New Times*, a daily paper edited by John Stoddart, followed two days later; it consisted of a few sentences prefacing some extracts from *The Omen*. While it describes *The Omen* as "a series of beautifully conceived, and beautifully executed scenes," the *New Times* deems this kind of episodic character description to show much less genius than a well-constructed plot.[44] Both these reviews are only mildly negative, yet Galt referred to them anxiously as "Jerdans strictures & Dr Stoddarts"[45] and continued to resent them bitterly, Jerdan's in particular. A much longer and more devastating review that appeared in the April issue of Constable's *Edinburgh Magazine* summarizes the entire story of *The Omen* and quotes long excerpts that obliterate any suspense. With a combination of sarcasm and condescension, this review critiques the subject as "unpleasant," the style as "inflated and hyperbolical," and the incidents as "highly improbable"; it questions the originality of the tale and ridicules the theme of premonitions entirely.[46] It ends by attributing the novel to an unnamed Irish author – likely William Maginn or Barry St Leger, although the reviewer's specific reference to "Belfast" might even point toward John Banim, who was in Belfast at the time. Another negative review came in the March issue of the *Monthly Review*. Summarizing the plot of the story briefly, this review criticizes its second half as being melodramatic and improbable, "in the very worst style of the German school," and speculates that the novel is the "'maiden' production" of a Scottish author.[47]

Notwithstanding this discouraging initial reception, Galt remained so engaged with the mystical theme of *The Omen* that a month after its publication he began to write a kind of sequel, immediately taking

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[43] *The Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, &c.*, 475 (25 February 1826), pp. 116–18.

[44] *The New Times*, 27 February 1826, p. 1.

[45] Galt to William Blackwood, 2 March 1826, MS 4017, NLS.

[46] *The Edinburgh Magazine, and Literary Miscellany*, n.s. 97 (January–June 1826), pp. 433–45; here, pp. 435 and 445.

[47] *The Monthly Review*, n.s. 1 (1826), pp. 335–6.

up a hint of Alexander Blackwood's that "a tale for the [*Blackwood's*] Magazine, by the author of the Omen would be of use." Galt conceived a story "full of mysticism & poetry" called "*666* or '<u>the number of the heart</u>'" that would "extend to nearly 100 pages of such print as the Omen" and be published across three issues of *Blackwood's*.[48] He began to send the manuscript on 7 April 1826; William Blackwood had it typeset and returned partial proofs to Galt on 21 April.[49] Despite this rapid and extensive progress, however, the story never seems to have achieved publication, and it has been lost.

Four months after *The Omen*'s publication, Walter Scott buoyed everyone's spirits by providing a long, thoughtful, positive review that was published in the July 1826 issue of *Blackwood's*. Scott praised "the beauty of its language, and the truth of the descriptions introduced." The "main interest of the piece," in his opinion, is the effective delineation of a troubled psyche and the resulting insights into the possible causes of apparitions and premonitions.[50] Galt remained proud of the attention the book had received from his illustrious contemporary (who was initially under the impression, however, that *The Omen* was by his own son-in-law Lockhart).[51] In his *Literary Life*, Galt recalls that he found Scott's review "greatly gratifying" – not only because of the "commendable degree of approbation" expressed in it, but also because Scott apparently took the story to be more true-to-life than it actually was; according to Galt, Scott's review included "facts stated corroborative of incidents that were pure metaphysical inventions."[52]

In a letter of 22 August 1826, William Blackwood raised with Galt the possibility of a new edition of *The Omen*, this time with the attribution "by the Author of the Ayrshire Legatees,"[53] to which Galt replied: "I agree with you that the device proposed for a second edition of the Omen should be tried. I would make a little change of a

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[48] Galt to William Blackwood, 27 March 1826, and a subsequent undated letter, MS 4017, NLS.

[49] William Blackwood to Galt, 21 April 1826, MS 30309, NLS.

[50] *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 20 (July–December 1826), pp. 52–9; here, p. 57.

[51] In his journal entry for 23 February 1826, Scott wrote: "Read a little volume called the OMEN very well written, deep and powerfull language. *Aut Erasmus aut Diabolus*—it is Lockhart or I am strangely deceived" (*The Journal of Sir Walter* Scott, ed. W. E. K. Anderson [Oxford: Clarendon, 1972], p. 97).

[52] *Literary Life*, I, p. 270.

[53] William Blackwood to Galt, 22 August 1826, MS 30309, NLS.

page or two in the last sheet, or rather restore what was injudiciously omitted."[54] There is no indication of what Galt would have changed, what was omitted and by whom, and whether he refers to the story itself or to the postscript. In any case, no further edition of *The Omen* in English materialized during Galt's lifetime, although a few translations appeared during the early 1830s. A Russian version entitled Предзнаменование (*Predznamenovanie*), translated by G. Pasynkov, was published in St. Petersburg in 1831 – albeit with the subtitle "A story by Walter Scott" (повесть Вальтер-Скотта, *Povest' Valter-Skotta*). A Danish translation entitled *Varselstegnet* by Hans Christian Wosemose appeared in six instalments in a Copenhagen periodical in June and July 1832; it was based on a German translation by Johann August Diezmann that has not been traced.

Unlike the other two short novels in the present volume, *The Omen* suited the taste of Victorian readers and was occasionally republished in the later nineteenth century. Within a few years of Galt's death in 1839, *The Omen* appeared twice in different collections of short prose. First, in 1842, it was included in volume 4 of the original series of Blackwood's Standard Novels, four volumes of which were devoted to Galt's work. This version, which was edited by Galt's literary executor D. M. Moir, completely omits *The Omen*'s postscript, thus reducing the complexity of the tale by removing the skeptical voice of the editor "B. A. M." The postscript did appear in an American republication of *The Omen* as part of a compendium of six short novels by British authors entitled *The Omnibus of Modern Romance*. Despite the inclusion of the ironic postscript, however, the tone of this reprint was significantly altered by the addition of a subtitle that reads: "The Omen: A Tale of Real Life. By John Galt." In place of Galt's original epigraph from Shakespeare, a couple of sentences from Scott's review serve as a headnote to the story in order to substantiate its supposed truth: "The real merits of the work consists [sic] in the beauty of its language and the truth of the descriptions introduced. Yet even these are kept in subordination to the main interest of the piece. This remarkable story we have every reason to believe accurate matter of fact, at least in its general bearings."[55] The Omen was republished once more (with the

[54] Galt to William Blackwood, 6 September 1826, MS 4017, NLS.

[55] *The Omnibus of Modern Romance* (New York: James Mowatt, 1844), vol. I, no. 2, p. 145. The *Omnibus* was to appear twice a month, providing cheap reprints of modern British and European romance novels; four issues are extant, all from 1844.

postscript) by Publication Studio Guelph in 2013, edited by David J. Knight, who includes Scott's review from *Blackwood's* and the anonymous *Edinburgh Magazine* review as appendices.

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From the domestic comedy of *Glenfell* to the complex irony of *Andrew of Padua* to the meditative tragedy of *The Omen*, the three stories collected in the present volume show Galt writing tales of a length to which he naturally inclined. Diverse as they are, there are some revealing continuities between them, such as Galt's continuing engagement with drama and theatre. He originally wrote *Glenfell* in the form of a play; *Andrew of Padua* centres on the protagonist's theatrical career; and a crucial recognition scene in *The Omen* takes place at a performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The comedy of *Glenfell* merges in *Andrew of Padua* with a kind of metafictional irony that persists even in the melancholy *Omen*, where Galt cannot resist adding a hoaxing postscript despite the serious tone of the story. While financial exigency may have been a major factor in Galt's writing of all three works, they are more innovative and complex than might be expected from simple hack-work. Instead, they demonstrate Galt's creativity, his willingness to experiment, and his determination to improvise a place for himself in the volatile literary market of the 1820s.