



index to the world', Balwhidder assures us serenely, and no doubt Galt's urban readers allowed themselves a smile at his parish-pump priorities:

The Ann. Dom. 1763, was, in many a respect, a memorable year, both in public and in private. The king granted peace to the French, and Charlie Malcolm, that went to sea in the *Tobacco* trader, came home to see his mother.

Yet Galt has the eye of a social historian, and these amusing chronicles accumulate a host of minor but significant details in fashion, economics, manners and politics as the old ways of speaking and living gradually changed during the second half of the eighteenth century. Galt's intention was to chart the recent past just as Scott claimed to have done with *Waverley*, *Guy Mannering* and *The Antiquary*, and it can be argued that his diaristic approach allowed him to do a better job without (apparently) imposing his own voice on that of his characters. In this respect Galt, like Hogg, shows a clear interest in plural voices and limited and multiple narratives. The autobiographical style also suited Galt's strengths as a writer because it allowed him to use the distinctive rhythms of Lowland speech (in Scots or English) as his central narrative medium, with plenty of scope for broad Scots and proverbial expression. He uses a denser dialect than Scott allowed himself – amounting to a *tour de force* in the case of Lady Grippy in *The Entail* – and this oral flow, with its encapsulation of regional and national attitudes, lies at the ironic heart of Galt's understanding of how 'voice' reveals character, and how that 'local' voice can be used to make double-edged social comments on the wider world of his more sophisticated readers.

*The Entail* (1823) completes Galt's sequence of major Scottish books and it is closer to a conventional novel in that it abandons the autobiographical mask and follows the fortunes of a single family over three generations and a forty-year period. As a study of the ties of property, avarice and affection in the rise and fall of a self-made man, and in the legal disputes within the family after his death, *The Entail* has been seen as a forerunner in the line of Balzac, Dickens, Zola, Hardy and Galsworthy. It has a claim to be Galt's most powerful novel, if less fully realised than *Annals*; yet, while Scott, Byron, Coleridge and Jeffrey had all admired the Scottish series, there were also complaints about the latest book's 'sordidness' and its impenetrable dialect. It was not reprinted in the author's lifetime. Galt stepped up his output of fiction with four more novels using Scottish settings and three histori-

cal novels all within four years of 1822, but, not surprisingly, these works seem hastily written and were less successful than their precursors.

*Ringan Gilhaize* (1823), however, is notable as another imaginative autobiography, this time in a grim and tragic mode. It was written to vindicate the Covenanting spirit, 'hugely provoked', in Galt's words, by *Old Mortality* and by what he felt to be Scott's ridicule of the defenders of the Presbyterian Church and their sufferings over more than three generations. This time Galt immersed himself totally in the mind and voice of his narrator – full of long phrases, ringing with biblical rhythms and echoes, as he asserts, 'I have not taken up the avenging pen of history, and dipped it in the blood of martyrs, to record only my own particular woes and wrong.' There is no hint of comic or ironic distance in Ringan's savage experiences and in his ultimately successful quest to shoot Claverhouse down. Galt's achievement is to let that iron-hard, obsessive nature speak for itself, without apology and without entirely forfeiting the reader's sympathy. He was particularly proud of this technique of what he called imaginative 'transfusion', but it was not fully understood by readers and the novel got little credit for a serious attempt to come to terms with some of the most painful themes in the Scottish inheritance.

Galt's success was on the wane and his best books were behind him. Between 1825 and 1829 he worked in Ontario as superintendent for the Canada Company, but his health was poor and problems with the board of directors led to resignation, bankruptcy, and a spell in debtors' prison in London. He continued to write, but a series of strokes in his mid-fifties left him an invalid, and in 1834 he returned to Greenock, where he died five years later.

Perhaps the popularity of Galt's early Scottish novels obscured the subtleties of his approach to imaginative biography, and the importance of sympathy in the chain of ironic distances that he established between author, 'narrator' and reader. His successors settled for much broader effects, almost exclusively in the vein of domestic comedy. The first step in this direction was taken by David Macbeth Moir (1798–1851), a friend and biographer of Galt's and a doctor in Musselburgh near Edinburgh. Moir contributed regularly to *Blackwood's* with both prose and poetry under the *nom de plume* of 'Delta', or Δ. His best-known book, *The Life of Mansie Wauch, Tailor of Dalkeith* 'written by himself', began as a series for the magazine in 1824 and was published as a book four years later. These small-town 'memoirs' were dedicated to Galt, but they lack the older man's sense of perspective and social irony. The

Journal, the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, *Fraser's Magazine* and, of course, *Blackwood's*. This work was later collected as *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1829), *Songs* (1831), and *A Queer Book* (1832). He visited London for three months in 1832 and was a considerable social success while organising a collected edition to be called *Altrive Tales*, only one volume of which ever appeared. Two years later he produced essays on good manners and *The Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, which Lockhart found so very offensive because Hogg dared to recall his old friend's undignified end, and remarked on Scott's 'too strong leaning to the old aristocracy of the country' – namely those families descended from 'old Border Barbarians'. 'In Wilson's hands the Shepherd will always be delightful', wrote Lockhart, putting the Chaldee manuscript and his old collaborator firmly behind him, 'but of the fellow himself I can scarcely express my contemptuous pity'. Undaunted by the quarrel, Hogg continued to select and revise his prose, and a three-volume collection of previously unpublished stories appeared as *Tales of the Wars of Montrose* in the spring of 1835. That November he died of a liver disease at the age of sixty-five. *The Tales and Sketches of the Ettrick Shepherd* were published two years later, but Hogg had abridged the *Justified Sinner* to 'The Confessions of a Fanatic' and his greatest novel was not printed again until 1895, nor appreciated by literary critics until at least the 1920s. The French novelist André Gide set the book in a European perspective with an enthusiastic preface to the edition of 1947, and this started the modern reevaluation of Hogg's work which began to understand that the unstable tone and the mixed modes and the conflicting and erratic narratives of his work showed an original and challenging intelligence at work in the written medium, and a man with his roots in an oral tradition, rather than a naïve author who did not understand literary decorum and the 'proper' genres.

### John Galt (1779–1839)

Although it was *Blackwood's Magazine* that serialised his early novels, John Galt did not seek out or belong to the Edinburgh milieu of Scott, Hogg and Ferrier. He was born in Irvine on the coast of Ayrshire and brought up in Greenock, the seaport to the west of Glasgow where his father was a shipmaster to the West Indies. Galt left for London when he was twenty-five, but by 1809 his business plans in the capital had foundered and he took a two-year tour through the Mediterranean

and the Near East, befriending the young Lord Byron along the way (and eventually publishing a biography of him in 1830). Back in London he wrote about his travels and produced a biography of Cardinal Wolsey and a volume of five tragedies. He turned to writing full-time after his marriage in 1813, and offered Constable a book looking back to an old-fashioned Scotland to be called *Annals of the Parish*. The publisher turned it down as too local and too Scottish, but the success of *Waverley* was soon to change such assumptions. Galt drew on his voyages again for a book of poems and an equally unsuccessful novel called *The Major's Job* (1816), and he persevered with a variety of articles and projects, including textbooks, further biographies and two more novels. But these were dull, hard years and critical success eluded him until he entered his forties and *Blackwood's* began to serialise *The Ayrshire Legatees* in 1820. Galt may have taken his pattern from Lockhart's *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, or from Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*, for the work comprises a series of letters in which an Ayrshire family tells their friends at home all about their visit to London. The exchanges are full of topical details, and the Scots family – naïve and level-headed by turns – is used as an affectionately comic and ironic touchstone for the sophistication of London. The epistolary form also allows Galt to present the same incidents from several different points of view, recognising the relativity of all internal experience. This was to be a key element in his own understanding of human nature and in his technique as a writer. The *Legatees* series (which was presented anonymously) proved very popular. William Blackwood made it into a book in 1821 and asked Galt for more. The author sent him *Annals of the Parish* and this time it was published straight away.

Galt did not consider these books to be true novels, preferring to call them sketches, observations or 'theoretical histories' that outlined the manners and the changes in provincial society, often through the voice of a single character. The *Annals* purport to be the chronicles of the country parish of Dalmailing from 1760 to 1810, as recorded in the Revd Micah Balwhidder's journal. Its companion volume *The Provost* (1822) reminisces about small-town politics and public events over the same period, all recounted in the revealingly opportunistic and blithely unselfconscious tones of Provost James Pawkie. ('Pawkie' in Scots means artful, with suggestions of country cunning.) These ironic 'auto-biographies' owe their success to Galt's capacity for sympathy with his narrators, even while he uses their voices to cast indirect reflections on their own failings. 'What happened in my parish was but a type and

and their ministers, for in the early days they were harried by their lords and forced to worship on the open hillside. They survived, however, to form a General Assembly and a parallel organisation of their own, even down to schools and overseas missions. The Free Kirk was particularly successful in the Highlands, much to the dismay of the landowners, and its radical tendency immediately made itself felt in votes for the Liberal Party that unseated many established Tory members. In other respects, however, the Protestant ethic was entirely in tune with the pursuit of profit and the age's materialistic belief that every man should make his way by dint of personal initiative, 'respectability' and hard work. Thousands of Scots took this course by leaving home, and skilled, unskilled, Highland and Lowland alike, they spread throughout the British Empire to become a byword – both loved and hated for their ambition, hardiness and ingenuity.

By the 1880s Scotland was indisputably part of British Victorian industrial society, yet the Scots' own sense of their cultural differences from England had not died out. Thus, when the country's prosperity was most fully centred on heavy industry in the urban areas, there grew up a vogue for 'cabbage-patch' literature – backward-looking and sentimentally rustic tales extolling simple 'Scotch' folk, pawky humour and 'honest' feeling. When Queen Victoria built Balmoral in 1855, it confirmed an English vogue for tourism, tartan and turrets in the north, and 'Scottish baronial' architecture in the same style appeared throughout the country in a rash of railway stations and hotels. A monument to Wallace towered over the plain at Stirling; the new railway station at Edinburgh was called 'Waverley', and the Scott monument commanded Princes Street like a mislocated cathedral spire. Burns had his monument in Auld Reekie too, and Burns Associations were formed throughout the world to promulgate his works and to consume a ritual supper each year on the anniversary of his birth. The typical 'canny Scotsman' began to appear in the press with a famous Punch cartoon in 1860 along the lines of: 'I hadna been in London mair than half-an-hour, when bang! went saxpence!' This northern counterpart to John Bull – staid, bewhiskered and famously cautious with his money – has more in common with his petit bourgeois Victorian inventors than he has with an older, prouder and more volatile Scottish spirit.

Not all was tartan ribbons and bardolatry, however, and national feeling took a political dimension too, for the Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights was formed in 1853, and, of course, the Disruption of the Kirk had already served to remind folk of old Scottish

values. When those crofters on Skye resisted eviction by physical force, they were aware that similar action had made nationalism a potent political issue in Ireland, and so the Highland Land League was formed along Irish lines to press for reform. In the face of the 'Irish question' to the west and the so-called 'Crofters' War' to the north, the Liberal government was pleased to make concessions by passing the Crofters' Act. When the government fell after the failure of the Irish Home Rule Bill in 1886, Liberal and nationalist opinion in Scotland was further stimulated and an all-party Home Rule Association was formed to promote political independence. Their case did not have the urgency or the violence of the Irish movement, but it contained a separatist and a nationalist feeling which has played a part in Scottish politics ever since.

Although the century began in Scotland with Walter Scott's verse romances, there was no poet to match the achievement of Burns, nor was there any Scottish equivalent to the English Romantic poets, unless, of course, **George Gordon, the sixth Lord Byron** (1788–1824) is seen as a Scottish writer. This claim is not as eccentric as it may seem, for Byron's early childhood was spent in Scotland – he attended Aberdeen Grammar School and his mother was Elizabeth Gordon of Gight, an unstable member of an unstable family from Donside. He himself claimed to be 'half a Scot by birth and bred / A whole one' (*Don Juan*), and T. S. Eliot believed there was a particularly Calvinist element in his delight in posing as a damned creature. Gregory Smith identified Byron's mercurial temperament with the 'clean contrair' spirit of the Scottish sensibility, and it must be admitted that the poet's swift transitions from pathos to mockery, or from moral satire to self-deflating parody, scarcely correspond to an English conception of literary decorum. Not that his origins helped him when the pontifical *Edinburgh Review* reported on his collection of poems *Hours of Idleness* in 1808, to note a flatness in his verses 'as if they were so much stagnant water'. Within a year Byron had retaliated with his lengthy satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* in which he lambasted the editor Francis Jeffrey, his magazine and almost every other author in Britain – including Walter Scott whom he accuses of foisting his 'stale romance' on public taste. Byron's complex relationship with Scotland can be developed at greater length, but for present purposes his career must be left to the realm of English letters, where he came to prominence with *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 1812 to join Walter Scott, no less, as one of the most famous writers in Europe.

Notwithstanding Byron's fame and Scott's early success in verse, the medium of the age in Scotland was undoubtedly prose, and the spread

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## The nineteenth century: history, industry, sentiment

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IN Scottish cultural history the writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century contribute to a remarkable period of change and creative activity. Walter Scott made Scotland and its past famous throughout Europe, periodical literature flourished in the capital, and there was a massive expansion of cities and industry. The population of Edinburgh doubled, with a powerful middle class to confirm its supremacy in law, medicine, the Church, banking, brewing and publishing. Farming and fishing were equally well established, on the east coast, along with heavier industries in coal, textiles, paper and especially the manufacture of linen. Great streets and houses in London were built with Aberdeen granite, and the finest American clippers were matched by sailing-ships from yards in the north-east.

The north's most significant export was people, and the economic and cultural life of the area was dominated by emigration to Canada and America. Estate owners and clan chiefs had been enclosing the land from the 1770s, and the ancient runrig style of strip cultivation, with its emphasis on subsistence farming shared by the community, had finally begun to disappear. Sheep-farming made a profitable appearance in the south-west, where there was plenty of grazing and urban markets close to hand, but in the Highlands, where the poorer land could no longer support an expanding population, the arrival of sheep only added to their problems. Landowners in search of grazing encouraged tenants to leave their crofts by offering them new jobs or assisted passage and emigration. In the second decade of the century the vast Sutherland estate set about 'improvement' in this manner, planning to resettle families on the coast, where the herring industry was enjoying a boom. (Neil Gunn's novel *The Silver Darlings* is set in this period.) The Countess of Sutherland intended these develop-

ments for the best, but old customs and loyalties could not be uprooted without pain. The evictions carried out by her agents, and the particular cruelty of Patrick Sellar in the small glen of Strathnaver, made the Sutherland 'Clearances' and Sellar's name notorious. Many Gaelic poems were written about the pains of eviction, and the small crofters conceived a hatred of sheep and the English language alike:

Not sweet the sound that waked me from slumber,  
coming down to me from the mountain tops:  
the Lowland shepherd whose tongue displeases,  
Shouting there at his lazy dog.

(Iain MacLachlainn, 'Och, och mar tha mi' / 'Alas my State'  
trs. D. Thomson)

The use of Gaelic in Highland schools was officially permitted, but in practice the Education Act of 1872 set up a system of national control and inspection that inevitably favoured English. For the most part the Highlanders offered only passive resistance to changes forced upon them; but there were outbursts from time to time between evicted crofters and the police, the militia and even the army. Women often joined in these skirmishes, and their leading part in the famous 'Battle of Braes' in Skye in 1882 gained the support of public opinion and helped to bring about the Crofters' Act, which finally offered secure tenure and controlled rents. Not the least effective in this campaign were the songs and poems of Mary Macpherson of Skye, who spoke out fearlessly on behalf of the old culture and land reform.

For the first half of the century, however, the poorer parts of the north-west Highlands had no protection from the demands of capital and the burgeoning of market forces elsewhere. When wool prices declined, or when the demand for kelp<sup>1</sup> collapsed in the face of cheaper imports, workers lost their livelihood, many old families went bankrupt and landownership fell into new, perhaps less caring, hands. The pattern of clan obligations had not survived the aftermath of the 1745 rising, and many chieftains now regarded themselves as landowners in the capitalist mould, spending their time and their money elsewhere. When the potato crop failed in 1846 there was no government relief for famine in the north, and thousands of impoverished Highlanders

<sup>1</sup> Kelp seaweed was collected on the shore and burned to produce potash and soda, used to make glass and soap. Cheaper chemical imports from Germany eventually put an end to the home business, but it did well during the wars with France when trade was difficult. Gathering kelp on the tide line was hard, cold, raw work.



# The Literature of Scotland

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The Middle Ages to the  
Nineteenth Century

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