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New Lands; Old Ways
John Galt's North American Corpus



A Dissertation submitted to the University of Glasgow for the degree of MPhil by
John McGhee
September 2014

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Front Cover: Bust of John Galt in Market Square, Guelph, Ontario

Chapter 1 Introduction

John Galt (1779 – 1839) first went from Britain to North America in February 1825 and returned in June of that year. He made a much longer visit from October 1826 to May 1829 and that period can be considered as the fulcrum of his life. Up to that point, notwithstanding some setbacks, his career was on a generally upward trend. He was a successful and acclaimed author, a respected man of affairs and his business concerns seemed to be on the brink of earning him both material and reputational reward. By May 1829 the curve had definitely turned downward and although he would still publish good and successful literary work it was in the context of managing debt, debility and decline. The glad confident morning of 1826 had become by 1829 a chill dark night.

Galt's involvement with North America led to him producing two novels with settings in that continent and, for periodicals, at least twenty-six articles on North American themes. The novels, *Lawrie Todd*¹ and *Bogle Corbet*², have received some critical attention but far less than has been devoted to Galt's better known 'theoretical histories' set in the west of Scotland.³ In the past century there have been two book-length studies of Galt's literary life, by Jennie Aberdein⁴ and Ian Gordon⁵. Aberdein devotes just over a page to *Lawrie Todd* and less to *Bogle Corbet*. Gordon, apart from passing references in relation to other topics, does the same and shows considerable disdain for both novels. Elizabeth Waterston published a truncated edition of *Bogle Corbet*, with a critical introduction, leaving out the first two-thirds of the text to highlight the Canadian scenes.⁶ To mark Galt's bicentenary in 1979

¹ John Galt, *Lawrie Todd: or The Settlers in the Woods* (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1830).

² John Galt, *Bogle Corbet: or The Emigrants* (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831).

³ The term theoretical or conjectural history was first coined by Dugald Stewart in his *Account of Adam Smith* in *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith: III. Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, (Oxford: OUP, 1980) p293.

⁴ Jennie W Aberdein, *John Galt* (London: OUP, 1936).

⁵ Ian A Gordon, *John Galt The Life of a Writer* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1972).

⁶ John Galt, *Bogle Corbet: or The Emigrants*, Elizabeth Waterston (ed.) (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).

Christopher Whatley edited a collection of essays but none of them made any reference to these two novels.⁷

Waterston also produced a collection of essays on Galt⁸, arising from a conference at the University of Guelph. Given that location, it is not surprising that there is a heavy concentration on *Bogle Corbet* with contributions from Erik Frykman, Martin Bowman, Ian Campbell and Waterston herself. An essay by Gilbert Stelter focuses on Galt's contribution to the establishment of towns and how that led to Canadian towns differing from those in the United States.

Frykman gives both novels the faintest of praise and finds them deficient in relation to the Scottish texts. Like many critics, including Ian Gordon, he believes the early works to be the apogee of Galt's literary achievements. Waterston argues that the episodic structure of *Bogle Corbet* provides a template for subsequent Canadian literature from Galt's time to the stories of Alice Munro. She asserts that there is nothing 'in lieu of a romance plot'⁹ yet Bowman entitles his essay '*Bogle Corbet* and the Sentimental Romance'¹⁰ and contends that it is in this text, rather than the west of Scotland novels, that Galt solves 'the problems of characterisation and melodramatic plot which...he inherited from the practitioners of sentimental romance'.¹¹ Neither is wholly right. Galt has adopted the common tropes of romances but that is not his main purpose. He has sought to find a suitable package for his chief aim which is to educate his readers about community building in the wilderness.

Ian Campbell favourably compares the characterisation of Corbet with Provost Pawkie in *The Provost*¹² and the Reverend Balwhidder in *The Annals of the Parish*¹³ and notes that both the North American novels are 'about the frustrations and shortcomings of the

⁷ *John Galt 1779-1979*, Christopher A. Whatley (ed.) (Edinburgh: Ramsay Head Press, 1979).

⁸ *John Galt Reappraisals*, Elizabeth Waterson (ed.) (Guelph: Guelph UP, 1985).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p61.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p63.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p70.

¹² John Galt, *The Provost* (Oxford: OUP, 1982).

¹³ John Galt, *The Annals of the Parish* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1980).

colonisation experience fully as much as about the challenge and satisfaction'.¹⁴ In this one volume we can therefore see the range of opinion which *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet* provoke.

Paul Scott wrote a slim volume on Galt in which he comments briefly on both the North American novels and notes their international appeal and influence.¹⁵ In his doctoral thesis of 1992, Nicholas Whistler writes on *John Galt and the New World*.¹⁶ This is a work of considerable scholarship and is particularly strong on Galt's bibliography and correspondence. Whistler's aim is to trace the influences of the United States on Galt and how Galt then influenced American authors. He is also keen to rebut Ian Gordon's assertion that Galt kept his business and literary lives separate. There is therefore a good deal of biography among the criticism which means that he only gives a substantial analysis to *Lawrie Todd*. *Bogle Corbet* is somewhat cursorily mentioned. Whistler makes a number of references to Galt's contributions to periodical publications but since his principal concern is to tease out connections to the United States he does little in the way of detailed analysis of these texts, except for the short story 'The New Atlantis'.¹⁷

Most recently, there is a considered analysis of *Bogle Corbet* in relation to transatlantic trade by Kenneth McNeil in the essay collection edited by Regina Hewitt.¹⁸ Victoria Woolner's doctoral thesis gives extensive consideration to both novels from the perspective of their influence on subsequent Canadian literature.¹⁹ She also comments on some of Galt's related journalism. Jenni Calder, in a study of Scots pioneers in North America, summarises both novels without subjecting them to detailed analysis. She does

¹⁴ Ibid., p116.

¹⁵ Paul Scott, *John Galt* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985).

¹⁶ Nicholas Whistler, *John Galt and the New World*, Cambridge University PhD thesis, 1992.

¹⁷ Ibid., p245.

¹⁸ Kenneth McNeil, *Time, Emigration, and the Circum-Atlantic World: John Galt's Bogle Corbet* in *John Galt Observations and conjectures on Literature, History, and Society*, Regina Hewitt (ed.) (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2012).

¹⁹ Victoria Woolner, *Scottish Romanticism and its impact on early Canadian Literature*, PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2013.

however class Galt with people like Lord Selkirk and other colonisers as ‘men of unrealistic vision’.²⁰ These critical works are considered where appropriate in subsequent chapters dealing with specific texts.

There is, therefore, a rather small corpus of criticism in comparison to the time and thought which has been devoted to Galt’s more popular novels and there has been no systematic study of his journalism related to North America. Yet that period of Galt’s life was hugely important to him and the literary works which sprang from it reveal much about the man’s character and beliefs.

This dissertation attempts to fill that gap by examining both novels in some depth and, for the first time, analysing the journalism related to Galt’s North American experience both before and after his work in Canada. In order to place these literary works in context it will set out, in Chapter 2, how Galt became involved with North America, what he did there and how it came to an end. It shows that he tried to implement, to the eventual benefit of others rather than himself, his long-held beliefs about emigration and colonisation.

Chapter 3 examines the journalism he produced both before and after his sojourn in Canada and how it demonstrates his consistency of purpose, his urge to teach lessons to both Governments and prospective settlers and the effect of his exposure to Enlightenment thought. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet* respectively and Chapter 6 sums up how Galt’s consistency, didacticism and philosophy are woven throughout his North American-related literary corpus.

The research has involved not only study of the texts, and the comments of earlier critics, but also searches of the Canada Company archives in Ontario and his publisher’s archives in the National Library of Scotland.

²⁰ Jenni Calder, *Lost in the Backwoods* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2013) p121.

Chapter 2 Engagement with Canada: ‘What other men gather into barns’

John Galt was born in Irvine, Ayrshire in 1779, the son of a sea-captain. The family moved to Greenock in 1789 when his father became a ship-owner. Galt completed his formal education there although he continued to learn informally by extensive reading. He began his working life in Greenock and went to London in 1804, seeking to make his fortune in business. Commercial success eluded him and his first business venture ended in bankruptcy¹, an event which is drawn on for an episode in *Bogle Corbet*. After that chastening experience he travelled extensively around the Mediterranean and in Europe, primarily for his health but also seeking business opportunities. On his return, he published two accounts of his travels, *Voyages and Travels* (1812)² and *Letters from The Levant* (1813).³

He had now, however, built up a network of contacts in the London business and political worlds and in 1819 he was appointed as Parliamentary agent for the Union Canal Company which was trying to secure the passage of a Private Bill to allow the cutting of a canal from the existing Forth and Clyde canal at Falkirk into the centre of Edinburgh. Galt’s position was that of a lobbyist and facilitator, building support for the Bill and minimising opposition. He was successful and the Bill was passed in 1820.⁴

His reputation as a man who knew how Parliament and Government worked brought him to the attention of a group of Canadians who had suffered losses defending Canada during the War of 1812-14 between Britain and the United States. During the conflict US forces had invaded Upper Canada and caused damage to property there. These citizens, who had fought for Britain in the conflict, felt that they were entitled to compensation and wished

¹ John Galt, *The Autobiography* (London: Cochrane and M’Crone, 1833) p99.

² John Galt, *Voyages and Travels* (London: Caddell & Davies, 1812).

³ John Galt, *Letters from The Levant* (London: Caddell & Davies, 1813).

⁴ Gordon, *Life*, p22.

to petition Parliament to that end. They engaged Galt in December 1820⁵ to progress their claims and offered him commission of 3% on any monies recovered but explained that it would not be possible to advance any money for expenses.⁶ Galt was therefore committing himself to a great deal of work on a purely speculative basis.

It should be noted that at this period Canada was not a unified entity; it consisted of Lower Canada, now the modern province of Quebec, Maritime Provinces like Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and Upper Canada, now Ontario.⁷ There was a Governor-General over all the Canadian Provinces but each Province had a Lieutenant-Governor who had considerable autonomy. In the case of Upper Canada the Lieutenant-Governor at this time was Sir Peregrine Maitland (1777-1838) whose relations with Galt were to contribute to unhappiness for both men. Arthur Lower describes Maitland as ‘crammed with the pet prejudices of religion, flag and caste’.⁸

This was not Galt’s first encounter with Canada. He recalls in his autobiography that as a young boy he was visiting relatives in Kilmarnock who showed him a folio of pictures which included one of Niagara Falls. It made a deep impression on the boy and the adult Galt recalls that ‘it was the wildest sight I had ever seen, and my juvenile imagination was awfully excited’.⁹ He also had a cousin, William Gilkison (1777-1833), who was an early explorer in Canada and who visited Galt in London, providing enough information for Galt to produce a magazine article in 1807 (see Chapter 3).

The Colonial Office, where Galt’s main contact was the Parliamentary Under Secretary Wilmot Horton (1784-1841), was not unsympathetic to the compensation claims but the Treasury was extremely reluctant to countenance any financial commitments from the British Government to the colonists. Galt, casting around for a way out of the impasse, was

⁵ Galt, *Autobiography*, I, p278.

⁶ H B Timothy, *The Galts A Canadian Odyssey* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1977) p 50.

⁷ Arthur Lower, *A History of Canada* (Don Mills: Longmans, 1964) p127.

⁸ Lower, p 238.

⁹ Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p8.

visited in December 1823 at his then home in Musselburgh by Alexander Macdonell (1762-1840), the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Glengarry settlement in Upper Canada. Macdonell explained to Galt that, by a statute of 1791, one seventh of the land in every newly surveyed township was set aside for the use of the Crown and a further one seventh for the use of ‘a Protestant clergy’.¹⁰

The Protestant part was important since the Anglican establishment was afraid of the Catholic majority in Lower Canada and of the large number of dissenters, mainly Methodists and Presbyterians, in Upper Canada. Catholics, who were still felt to be less loyal to the Protestant Hanoverian succession, and dissenters, who were felt to be dangerously imbued with democratic ideas, were perceived as a threat to the established order. Indeed, the number of dissenters was such that ‘Protestant’ rather than Anglican was as far as they could go in the 1791 Act without exciting widespread popular opposition. As Lower puts it, ‘the Methodists and other “dissenters” were advocating the secularisation of the clergy reserves’ thus weakening Anglican and Tory power in the Province.¹¹ It was into this situation that Galt, a known Presbyterian and wrongly suspected to be a radical, was about to step.

Besides these reserved lands the Crown also held a vast acreage which had not yet been surveyed or assigned to townships. Galt therefore hit upon the idea that a company could be formed to buy undeveloped land in Canada from the Government. In effect the company would buy land wholesale, divide it into smaller parcels, carry out some development in the way of roads and other infrastructure and then retail individual lots to settlers and emigrants. The price paid by the company would be used by the Government to meet the claims of the 1812 war victims and to contribute to the expenses of the colonial administration.¹²

¹⁰ Lower, p128.

¹¹ Lower, p239.

¹² Gordon, *Life*, p74.

It is fair to note that Galt was not the only person who claimed to have conceived the idea of a company. John Robinson (1791-1863), who became Attorney-General of Upper Canada and was a pillar of the Anglican reactionary faction in the Province and thus very much opposed to Galt, maintained that it was he who first suggested the idea in a paper he submitted to Wilmot Horton at the Colonial Office. He is quoted by Robert Lee as saying that Galt, 'being a shrewd scheming man...immediately conceived the idea of getting up a company' but 'knew as little as Mr Horton did before I gave him my paper'.¹³ Whether or not this is true it was certainly Galt who developed the concept and drove it to fruition through a chartered company.

Galt's vision was that as infrastructure was provided and settlers began to prosper, land values would increase and the company would make considerable profits in the medium to long term. This is exactly what happened but unfortunately, largely because he failed to impress such a timeframe on the company, Galt's association with it did not survive long enough for him to share in the rewards his foresight had predicted. He had sown 'what other men gather into barns'.¹⁴

Nevertheless, in 1824 Galt had managed to put together sufficient investors to form the Canada Company and began negotiations with the Government to grant a charter to the company and to reach an agreed price for the sale of land to it. In June of that year the detailed plans for terms of sale were favourably received by the Government.¹⁵ At its launch the Company had £1,000,000 of invested capital and a Board of eighteen directors. The first meeting of the Court of Directors was held in July 1824 and was chaired by Charles

¹³ Robert C Lee, *The Canada Company and the Huron Tract* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2004) p19.

¹⁴ A McMillan, *The Other Side of John Galt*, in *Scottish Art and Letters*, May/July, 1902, p98.

¹⁵ Timothy, p56.

Bosanquet.¹⁶ The charter was granted in 1826 and Galt was appointed to ‘look after the company’s interests in Canada with salary and expenses of £1,000 a year’.¹⁷

When word of these developments reached Canada Sir Peregrine Maitland wrote in worried terms to the Colonial Office and was especially concerned about the retention of the clergy reserves for the maintenance of the Anglican establishment which ‘for various reasons, could never be safely, or properly, left dependent on the voluntary support of the people’.¹⁸ Maitland was opposed to democratic ideas, was personally pious and was concerned for the primacy of Anglicanism. These ideals, unbendingly implemented during his tenure in Government, have been ‘seen as laying foundations for the subsequent uprising of 1837’.¹⁹

The Colonial Office held back on final agreement of the plans until an evaluation of the lands had been made and appointed a commission for that purpose. Five commissioners were picked to undertake a fact-finding mission to the Province. Two were chosen by the Government, two by the Company, Simon McGillivray and Galt, and one, a commissioner of Crown Lands in Lower Canada, jointly. They landed at New York on 25 February 1825 and made their way overland to York (later Toronto) where they received their formal commission from Sir Peregrine.²⁰

The commissioners compiled a report and left York on 1 May 1825. The price they recommended that the Canada Company pay for the lands was felt by the Government to be too low and the Church of England Clergy Corporation opposed any sale of clergy reserves to the Company. The clergy reserves were a considerable bone of contention. The Anglican Church in Upper Canada was led by Archdeacon John Strachan who was as conservative as Maitland and who believed that only by making the Church of England the established church of the Province could democracy and anarchy be prevented.

¹⁶ Archives of Ontario, Canada Company Series A-4-1, Report of Directors, July 1824.

¹⁷ AO, Canada Company Series A-4-5, Report of the Directors, June 1827.

¹⁸ Timothy, p58.

¹⁹ John Benyon, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, Online ed. Accessed on 1/5/2014).

²⁰ Lee, p35.

Strachan (1778-1867) was a Scot from Aberdeen who had come to Canada as a teacher and who had, in 1802, applied for a position as a Presbyterian minister. Denied the post he had converted to Anglicanism and became a priest of that faith in 1804. He eventually became Bishop of Upper Canada and had a lasting influence on the Province as an educator, founding many schools and being one of the prime movers in establishing McGill University. He firmly believed in the superiority of inherited rank and wealth and in tying Canada as firmly as possible to Britain.²¹ It was one of Strachan's protégés, Robert Stanton, the King's Printer in Ontario in 1827, who said of Galt that: 'I shall be much mistaken if he does not turn out to be a very troublesome fellow'.²² The problem for Galt was that he turned out to be most troublesome to himself.

Given that Galt described the clergy reserves as 'Jesuits' property'²³ there was little likelihood of a meeting of minds. He saw the clergy reserves as inhibiting the logical development of townships by preventing the sale of contiguous blocks of land and therefore as a barrier on the road to the Province's prosperity. He did, however, negotiate with Strachan and the issue was eventually resolved with the clergy reserves withdrawn from the sale and the Company instead being allowed to purchase an additional 1,000,000 acres in the Huron Tract. They therefore became responsible for the settlement of 2,484,013 acres, purchased at 3s.6d. per acre.²⁴ One lasting consequence was, however, that Strachan strengthened his belief that Galt was a dangerous radical and thus was added a substantial, resourceful and suspicious enemy to Galt's work.

Galt believed that the money paid by the Company to the Government would be applied to settle the claims for the war losses but after the agreement had been reached he

²¹ G. M. Craig, "STRACHAN, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/strachan_john_9E.html, accessed June 2, 2014.

²² Lee, p64.

²³ Letter from Galt to Horton, 2nd March 1824, in *Letters of John Galt The Canadian Years*, J K Herreshoff, (ed) (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990) p 84.

²⁴ Lee, p39.

discovered that the proceeds were to be appropriated for the use of the Provincial Government. He protested to the Government but there was no change of mind.

Building an Empire

The Company was granted a charter on August 19 1826 and Galt set off for Canada in October, landing at New York on November 23. On the overland journey to York Galt, as instructed by the Directors, studied the operations of two of the most respected land companies in the Genessee country of northern New York State and wrote back that his ‘visits to the Pulteney and Holland land companies was most satisfactory’²⁵. Not only did the information he gained inform his views on land development and disposal but it provided the background and setting for the bulk of the novel *Lawrie Todd*.

He reached York on December 12 to discover that he was already viewed with suspicion on the part of the colonial establishment. On his previous visit the editor of the radical paper the *Colonial Advocate*, William Lyon Mackenzie (1795-1861), had sent him copies of the newspaper. Galt sent him a courtesy letter of thanks and asked, as a means of acquiring information about the Province, that he be sent further copies.²⁶

The *Colonial Advocate* made regular and biting criticism of the Provincial Government in general and Maitland in particular and in June 1826 a band of young men, including Maitland’s private secretary, broke into the paper’s premises and broke the press.²⁷ Mackenzie sued for damages and produced Galt’s letter in court. Galt wrote to Mackenzie asking for a published acknowledgement that his politics differed from Mackenzie’s and that he did not approve of the style and temper of the newspaper but received no satisfaction.²⁸ Instead, he added to the considerable distrust with which he was viewed by the establishment. Galt’s relations with Maitland and the Provincial Government were dogged by

²⁵ AO, MS 564, Reel 9, Vol 1, Letter from Galt to the Company, 16 December 1826.

²⁶ Galt, *Autobiography*, I, p319.

²⁷ Timothy, p73.

²⁸ Timothy, p74.

misunderstanding and by Galt's tendency to continue to justify his position when he would have been better served by accepting a reprimand, however unmerited, so that he could maintain effective working relationships and progress the objectives of the Company.

Humble pie was a dish that seldom appealed to Galt.

One example of this trait was that he applied to Maitland in 1827 to grant the Company two to three acres of land at Burlington to store produce that settlers had bartered for land. He accompanied the application with a private letter to Maitland's secretary containing a tirade of self-justification and complaint about bias against the company by influential persons in the Province.²⁹ He was asking for a large favour, and it was granted with provisos, but the letter added to his difficulties later in the year. As Herreshoff puts it: 'frequently the letters written by Galt during his Canadian years reveal a considerable degree of self-delusion and a continuing pattern of self-destructive behaviour'.³⁰ Whistler concurs, stating that Galt 'was insufficiently tactful when dealing with bureaucrats on a personal level'.³¹

In January 1827 he went to Quebec to register the Company's charter with Lord Dalhousie (1770-1838), the Governor-General, and spent an enjoyable month there, contributing a farce for amateur theatricals.³² He later reworked this piece into a short story, 'An Aunt in Virginia', published in *Blackwood's* (see Chapter 3).³³ He also began to think about the navigability of the St Lawrence River and what might be done to open up seaways from there to the Great Lakes. This served as the basis for an article which he later published and which is also discussed in Chapter 3.

²⁹ Galt, *Autobiography*, Vol II, pp66-68.

³⁰ Herreshoff, p14.

³¹ Whistler, p170.

³² Gordon, *Life*, p90.

³³ Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p111.

On his return to York Galt began his work in earnest and identified a block of 40,000 acres which might serve as the Company's first settlement.³⁴ This became the City of Guelph but in the meantime Galt had gone to New York to secure the cooperation of the British Consul there to direct emigrants landing in that city towards Upper Canada and appointed the Consul's son as the Company's New York agent.³⁵

On St George's Day, April 23 1827, amid some ceremony, land clearing for Guelph was begun. Galt describes the scenes in an article (see Chapter 3) and reported to the Company on May 31 that 50 acres had been cleared, 65 lots had been engaged, several houses had been erected and a start had been made on a mill.³⁶ Settlers had been engaged on clearing and road making with their labour being taken as payment for the land. Sites had been identified for Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian churches and Galt suggested to the Company that these should be gifted to each denomination.³⁷ In August he convened a dinner at Guelph at which an Agricultural Society was formed. Three years later the Provincial Government passed an act 'to encourage the establishment of Agricultural Societies in the several districts of the Province'.³⁸ Once again Galt showed that in practical matters of colonisation, if not diplomacy, he was a leader and innovator.

The programme of roads and public works, including a school, attracted more settlers than had been anticipated and Guelph grew at a rate beyond Galt's greatest expectations.³⁹ In August too Galt pushed on further west to the shores of Lake Huron and found a natural harbour which he named Goderich, after F J Robinson (1782-1859), recently raised to the peerage as Viscount Goderich and who had just been appointed Secretary of State for the

³⁴ Lee, p56.

³⁵ Timothy, p83.

³⁶ Timothy, p86.

³⁷ AO, MS 564, series A-4-5, *Minutes of the Court of Directors*, 6 July 1827.

³⁸ Timothy, p89.

³⁹ Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p90.

Colonies.⁴⁰ At Galt's suggestion the name of the river on which Goderich stands was changed from the Menesetung to the Maitland.⁴¹ The gesture did him little good: Maitland continued to regard him with suspicion. He then proceeded to have a road built to connect Goderich with Guelph and thus with York and other established settlements. Galt noted with pride that 'I caused a road to be opened through the forest of the Huron Tract, nearly a hundred miles in length, by which an overland communication was established, for the first time, between the two great lakes, Huron and Ontario'.⁴²

The business of town names also landed Galt in trouble with the Company. He had used the family name of the Hanoverian Kings for Guelph when the Company had wanted to name it Goderich. In a letter to him of 3 August 1827 the Directors state that: 'the Court has received with great satisfaction your interesting dispatch of the progress of the Town which you call Guelph and which the Court calls Goderich'.⁴³ Galt's original names prevailed but it was another episode which did little to endear him to the Company.

The downward slope

This high tide of fortune was now beginning to ebb. A colony of mainly Scots settlers in Colombia had failed and the British Government authorised their repatriation but the majority of the settlers were attracted to Canada. Passages were provided at Government expense and the settlers arrived at New York where the vice-consul and agent for the Canada Company sent them on to Niagara for transmission to Upper Canada, which they reached on 30 July 1827 and presented themselves to Galt.⁴⁴

The settlers carried letters showing that they were being sent at the expense of the British Government but neither that Government or its Provincial counterpart had made any

⁴⁰ Timothy, p96.

⁴¹ Timothy, p97.

⁴² Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p121.

⁴³ AO, Series A-4-4, MS 564, Reel 6, Letter from Directors to Galt, 3rd August 1827.

⁴⁴ This necessarily brief summary of the affair of the Colombian settlers is drawn mainly from the account in Timothy, pp109-115. It includes details of the correspondence between Galt, the Company and the Colonial Office.

arrangements for their reception. They were racked by disease and had 37 children among their number. Galt wrote to the Provincial Government asking for instructions but received no reply. He also wrote to Horton at the Colonial Office reporting what happened. He had to do something so he withheld £1000 from a £20,000 payment due to the Provincial Government from the Company and used it to provide both immediate relief and to establish a sound long term basis for settlement.⁴⁵

He granted each family 50 acres at 10s. per acre and arranged that they would pay the price over time and at 6% interest. The whole affair was, however, bedevilled by misunderstandings and garbled communications. As Lee has noted, in writing to London from Canada, 'return mail took at least eight weeks and more likely ten'.⁴⁶ The Treasury's main concern was to get the settlers out of Colombia and it was under the impression that the Colombian Agricultural Association, the original sponsors of the colony, would guarantee their expenses. The Colonial Office was fearful that Galt's actions might make them financially responsible and protested to the Foreign Office and the Canada Company.

The Company apologised to the Colonial Office and told it that Galt would do as he was told. It censured Galt for withholding the £1000 and told him to act in accordance with the wishes of the Provincial Government. Galt protested to the Colonial Office that they had acted in ignorance of the true state of affairs, that he had sought guidance from the Provincial Government and had had no response and pointed out that the fares of the emigrants from New York to Guelph was the total sum for which the British Government was responsible.

He went further. In December 1827 he demanded of Maitland that an enquiry be set up to look at the handling of the whole affair.⁴⁷ Maitland replied that he would not receive communications couched in so offensive a tone. He did, however, set up an enquiry which reported in January 1828 exonerating Maitland and the Provincial Government but blaming

⁴⁵ Timothy, p111.

⁴⁶ Lee, p9.

⁴⁷ Timothy, p113.

Galt for bypassing proper channels and withholding money due to the Government. Galt may have been in the right but publicly he was deemed to be in the wrong.

Rumours now began to circulate in London that Galt's activities were lowering the value of the Company's stock. The Directors took issue with him over the naming of new settlements and they were nervous about his relations with Maitland and the Provincial establishment. Most of all they were 'most anxious on the subject of unchecked expenditure'.⁴⁸ Galt felt that he was being found guilty without having the opportunity to mount a defence and offered his resignation. It was not accepted.

In the meantime he organised a grand Canada Company Ball in York on New Year's Eve 1827. He had to choose a hostess for the ball and protocol, not to mention common sense, made Lady Sarah Maitland, wife of the Lieutenant-Governor, the obvious choice. Instead Galt chose Lady Mary Willis, wife of a recently arrived judge and daughter of the Earl of Strathmore. The Maitlands saw this as an unforgiveable slight.⁴⁹

The path to dismissal

In the spring of 1828 the Directors informed Galt that they were sending Thomas Smith to work as cashier and accountant. In the records of a Directors' meeting they express concern that accounts from Canada have not yet been received 'and that the object of the recent appointment of a Cashier and Accountant to proceed to Upper Canada was to obtain accurate statements of those accounts and to establish a regular system for the future'.⁵⁰ Galt replied that he was pleased that he was to receive help of this kind. When Smith arrived in July Galt discovered that his salary was much higher than his duties seemed to warrant. In fact Smith had been sent to be not so much a cashier as an investigator for the Company since he reported direct to London instead of through Galt.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Letter from the Company Directors, quoted in Timothy, p115.

⁴⁹ Timothy, p118.

⁵⁰ AO, A-1, Vol 1 MS 564, Reel 9, Directors Report June 1828.

⁵¹ Lee p72.

In November 1828 Smith upbraided Galt for the lack of proper financial records and informed him that he was leaving for England. The Company then told Galt that no more general funds would be made available until he submitted specific estimates and requisitions for future expenditure. Galt responded that Smith had left the accounts in a worse state than before he arrived.⁵²

Nevertheless, in January 1829 the Directors resolved ‘that it is expedient to recall Mr Galt from the management of the Company’s concerns in Canada’⁵³ and Galt was informed that he should return to London as soon as his successor, Thomas Jones, arrived in Canada. Galt left Guelph in April 1829. On the morning of his departure he was presented with an address of gratitude by the settlers.⁵⁴

The aftermath

Once back in London his situation was not immediately clarified. The Company, he wrote to Blackwood, ‘appear friendly towards me...and it is not unlikely that I may be requested to resume my function’.⁵⁵ The fact of his return and rumours about his standing within the Company caused his creditors to begin to press him for payment. In particular, Dr Valpy, the headmaster of his sons’ school, had his lawyers serve a writ for £197 14s 8d for unpaid fees. Galt submitted to the Insolvency Act and was committed to the King’s Bench prison on 15 July 1829. He was discharged on 10 November.⁵⁶

For a time Galt believed that he could still play a role in building Canada and still promoted schemes for that purpose, even being appointed in 1832 as Secretary of a new company designed to do in Lower Canada what the Canada Company was doing in Upper Canada. He had to resign that appointment later in the year because of failing health and was never again active in business.

⁵² Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p127.

⁵³ AO, series A-6-2, Vol II, MS 564, Reel 2, Directors’ report 2nd January 1829.

⁵⁴ Gordon, *Life*, p86.

⁵⁵ Timothy, p130.

⁵⁶ Timothy Collection, University of Guelph, XR1 MS A277, Extract from King’s Bench records.

Galt's only option for the payment of his debts and to make a living for his family was to write and that is what he immediately set himself to do. *Lawrie Todd* was largely written during his confinement and *Bogle Corbet* in the following year. Articles were offered to any magazines which would pay. It is these literary productions which are the main concern of this dissertation and which provide the evidence about the consistency of Galt's philosophy in his writings and about the didacticism and Enlightenment thought which pervades it. It is a measure of Galt's productivity and an echo of Sir Walter Scott's similar predicament that Colburn and Bentley, his publishers, also issued another novel, *Southennan*,⁵⁷ in 1830, his *Life of Lord Byron*⁵⁸ in the same year, and a book of biographical sketches, *The Lives of the Players*⁵⁹, in 1831.

The legacy

Galt's ideas about colonisation were formed from his interest in communities in Scotland, as shown in his earlier novels, and his investigations in the Genessee country. The former had shown him how established communities operated and changed; the latter provided a model for community-building in the wilderness and he refined it to fit the British and Canadian circumstances. The soundness of his method is borne out by the fact that it remained unchanged after his departure and that the Canada Company made considerable profit from the 1830s until it was finally wound up in 1953.⁶⁰ The concept may have been a good one but Galt was undone by a combination of his own failings, the impatience of his Directors and shareholders, and the difficulties of communication over time and distance. He had warned the company that this was a medium to long term investment but did not do enough to secure the Company's commitment to that goal. He failed to see that it was still intent on short-term profits.

⁵⁷ John Galt, *Southennan* (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1830).

⁵⁸ John Galt, *Life of Lord Byron* (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1830).

⁵⁹ John Galt, *The Lives of the Players* (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831).

⁶⁰ Lee, p216.

More seriously, he did not pay sufficient attention to the details of his accounts. There is no suggestion that he misappropriated money but there is considerable evidence that he did not keep proper financial records. For a company worried about the drain on its finances before profits were made this was a serious matter.

Finally, Galt's own personality was a major contributor to his downfall. He tended to behave as though whatever he believed to be right should be equally evident to everyone else. Consequently, he seldom tried to prepare the ground adequately for his policy proposals and, when faced with opposition, resorted to affronted self-justification, as in the attack on Maitland's policies accompanying Galt's application for a grant of land at Burlington.⁶¹ Greater awareness of the consequences of his actions on other people, and a much more diplomatic approach to the Provincial Government would have buttressed Galt's position both locally and with the Company in London.

Had he lived long enough Galt would have seen that all of his three sons not only made their homes in Canada but built on his efforts to make a mark on the country. John became registrar of Huron County and Thomas was knighted as Chief Justice of Upper Canada.⁶² Alexander (1817-1893) was also knighted, having achieved both wealth as a businessman and acclaim as a statesman, being a principal architect of Canadian Confederation and one of the first Canadian High Commissioners to Britain.⁶³

⁶¹ Timothy, p88.

⁶² Timothy, p136.

⁶³ Jean-Pierre Kesteman, "GALT, Sir ALEXANDER TILLOCH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003 [www.biographi.ca/en/bio/galt_alexander_tilloch_12E.html] accessed 29/5/ 2014.

Chapter 3 Periodical Contributions: ‘A Very Troublesome Fellow’

Introduction

As well as the novels *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet*, Galt produced for magazines and periodicals a number of articles related to North America. They may be divided into three broad categories. The first concerns politics and economics and was intended to influence Government policy relating to emigration and colonial rule. The second category is social and reflects on differences between British and North American society. The third is fiction in the shape of short stories referring to North American issues or with that landscape as a background.

This chapter considers twenty six articles. The first was published in 1807 and the next three in 1826 between his first and second visits to North America. After his return in 1829 there were four in that year, nine in 1830, two in 1831, four in 1832, two in 1833 and one in 1835. They represent, as far as can be ascertained, the totality of Galt’s journalistic output on North American subjects. There may, however, be others still to be found: Galt often wrote anonymously and was desperate for money when he returned from Canada in 1829. He would contribute articles to anyone who would pay him so there may be pieces in publications more obscure than those noted here.

There are consistent themes running through all of the articles but the tone, especially of the political pieces, changes from the enthusiasm of the period when he is setting up the Canada Company to the somewhat chastened man who returns to Britain in 1829. His faith in Canada’s long term future prosperity never wavers nor do his prescriptions on the best way to realise that future. In his literary autobiography he declares that Canada is a nation

‘destined to greatness’.¹ In pursuit of his aims he not only lectures government but also provides, both in his journalism and the novels, a pronounced didactic element for prospective emigrants in both the fiction and the non-fiction.

Early Portents

Long before Galt became involved with Canada he contributed an article to *The Philosophical Magazine* in October 1807. It was entitled a ‘Statistical Account of Upper Canada’.² At that time Galt had never been out of Britain so his information had to be derived from secondary sources. The main source was Galt’s cousin, William Gilkison, who had explored Upper Canada and who named one of its rivers as the River Irvine.³ Gilkison had corresponded with Galt and had stayed with him in London where, Galt says in his autobiography, ‘I picked out of him all the information I could respecting Upper Canada’⁴ and explicitly acknowledges that his information was ‘obtained from Mr Gilkison, of Amherstburgh in Upper Canada’ (p3).

The term ‘Statistical Account’ had been used by Sir John Sinclair who had sent a questionnaire (of 160 questions) covering matters such as geography, climate, natural resources, population, and agricultural and industrial production to all the parish ministers in Scotland. The results were published in twenty one volumes between 1791 and 1799. Charles Withers describes it as ‘a work which reflected and directed the rational philosophical interests of its age’ or, in other words, applied Enlightenment.⁵

Such ‘statistics’ as there are in the article are obviously derived from Gilkison, as in ‘pease, in the course of six weeks after planting, are generally fit for table’ (p4), as are

¹ John Galt, *My Literary Life and Miscellanies* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1834) I, p358.

² John Galt, ‘A Statistical Account of Upper Canada’, in *The Philosophical Magazine* (London: Tilloch, October 1807) p3.

³ Timothy, p7.

⁴ Galt, *The Autobiography* (London: Cochrane and M’Crone, 1833) p97.

⁵ Charles W J Withers, *Scotland Accounted For: An Introduction To The 'Old' (1791-1799) And The New (1834-1845) Statistical Accounts Of Scotland* [edina.ac.uk/stat-acc-scot/reading/intro] accessed on 23/1/2015.

Gilkison's prejudices, which are presented as facts: 'The settlers from the United States are the refuse of their own country' and 'the French of Upper Canada are an indolent and thoughtless race' (p9). Galt was here relaying received opinion but he was an empiricist and this is an example of an area where Galt did change his views in the light of experience. His portrayal of both Americans and French Canadians, as will be seen in discussion of later articles, was markedly more sympathetic after he had met them. In *Bogle Corbet*, written over 24 years later, he goes so far as to describe French Canadians as 'the best-disposed and best-bred commonalty in the world'.⁶

What is noteworthy is the first appearance of two issues which twenty years later came to play a large part in Galt's dealings with both the Canada Company and the Government of Upper Canada. He praises the Earl of Selkirk's establishment of a community of Highlanders in Upper Canada, noting that the lands were granted to the Earl on the proviso that 'within a limited period they should be settled with inhabitants' (p8) and in order to effect this the Earl invested in infrastructure. The conflict between the Directors of the Company who wanted to sell their land as quickly as possible for short term profit and Galt, their employee who wanted to invest for the long term and to build communities, is also foreshadowed in Galt's statement that 'there are no historical facts more valuable than those which relate to the formation of communities and the origin of nations' (p7).

The second issue is a reference to the land reserved for the future maintenance of the clergy. Galt notes that the land has been allocated but not stocked or cultivated and comments that 'this innovation seems only calculated to perplex the future pastors as well as their flocks' (p10). As discussed in Chapter 2, disputes over the clergy reserves and the privileged position of the Anglican Church were to delay the granting of the Canada

⁶ Galt, *Bogle Corbet*, II, p270.

Company charter and bring Galt into conflict with that church and with the Lieutenant-Governor.

Publications and Pseudonyms

It is worth noting that the majority of Galt's North American journalism is published in *Blackwood's* and *Fraser's* magazines. Mark Parker describes magazines as 'the pre-eminent literary form of the 1820s and 1830s in Britain' and that *Blackwood's* and *Fraser's* are two of 'the four most prominent magazines of the time'.⁷ They were both published in Edinburgh but had considerable reach, not only into England but overseas. Grant Thorburn in New York is made aware that Galt has 'borrowed' his reminiscence of Tom Paine for a *Blackwood's* article (see below).

It is also worth noting that Galt uses a variety of signatures (and none) for these examples of his journalism. Two, in *Fraser's* in 1830, are signed by 'the author of *Sir Andrew Wylie* etc.', and one in *Blackwood's* of 1833 is by 'the author of *The Annals of the Parish* etc.' He uses his own name for seven articles, from the first in 1807 to two in 1830 and four from 1832 to 1835. One in 1830 and one in 1832 are anonymous, possibly because they are attacks on Government policy, and he uses the pseudonyms 'Bandana' (twice), and 'Cabot', 'Agricola', 'Nantucket' and 'Z' once each. His five 'Letters from New York' (see below), published in *The New Monthly Magazine* from July 1829 to January 1830, are all signed 'A'. Whistler calculates that Galt used at least twenty pseudonyms in his publications.⁸

There is some reason behind the pseudonyms. The 'Bandana' articles were written in 1826 when Galt was lobbying Government on behalf of The Canada Company and would not have wished the identity behind these partisan pieces to be widely known. The reasoning behind the choice of that particular *nom de plume* is not known. According to the OED the

⁷ Mark Parker, *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000) p1.

⁸ Whistler, p262.

word is derived from Hindi and was first seen in English in 1752. It is possible that it was a popular item of clothing in North America at that time. ‘Cabot’ writes in 1829 after his dismissal from the Company and the article concerns the politics and governance of Canada. John Cabot made the first English-sponsored voyage of discovery to the new world in 1497 and is reputed to have made landfall in Nova Scotia⁹ so it may have seemed to Galt to be a suitably ironic name.

‘Agricola’ is over an article about the tariffs to be applied to agricultural products, especially those from the colonies. Gnaeus Julius Agricola was the governor of Roman Britain for seven years¹⁰ so the conjunction of a colonial overlord whose name was cognate with farming produce may have been irresistible. ‘Nantucket’ is the author of a story about a ship sailing from New England where there is of course a port of that name. There is no discernible reason for the choice of ‘Z’ for another article about Canadian governance or ‘A’ for the letters from New York.

While Galt may have had reasons for obscuring his authorship it is also possible that the magazine publishers decided that a pseudonym would be appropriate in any particular case and may have determined what that pseudonym should be.

Political Articles

In 1825 Galt made a fact-finding visit to Upper Canada, landing in New York and making his way up country through the Genesee area of New York State, where he made a close study of land disposal and settlement. In 1826, and while still pressing the Government to grant a charter to the Canada Company, Galt had articles published in *Blackwood’s* in successive months. These are now informed by first-hand experience. Both

⁹ David B. Quinn, ‘Cabot, John (c.1451–1498)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, OUP, 2004; online edn, May 2010 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66135] accessed 7/3/ 2014.

¹⁰ Malcolm Todd, ‘Julius Agricola, Gnaeus (AD 40–93)’, *Oxford DNB*, OUP, 2004 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48290] accessed 7/3/ 2014.

carry the pseudonym 'Bandana' as author and both are aimed at influencing the Government to adopt policies which favour the way Galt intends that the Company will operate.

The first piece, published in August 1826 after Galt's return from his preliminary visit to America and Canada in June, is 'Bandana on Colonial Undertakings'¹¹ and is concerned mainly with how the Government should dispose of colonial land. He begins by admitting that Americans lack 'refinement in manners' and 'urbanity in the reciprocities of intercourse' (p304) compared to Europeans and that their 'lower classes' are 'harsher, rougher and more obtrusive than those of this country' (p304) but these defects he ascribes to the democracy and popular rights to which they are entitled in the United States. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, he came to have a more nuanced view of Canadian politics after he had had first hand, and painful, experience of colonial government. It gave him a greater sympathy for popular rights so that he came closer to Burns' view that emigrants in Canada would have a right, 'up among thae lakes and seas/ [to] make what rules and laws they please'.¹²

Having flattered European prejudices he then goes on to praise Americans for their long-term vision which makes their public undertakings have a 'prospective character' and are 'planned with a view to meet the exigencies of a vast hereafter prosperity' (p304). He then provides data to show how prodigiously the population of the USA has grown and how this growth has been driven by the provision of infrastructure such as roads and canals.

This leads into his main point which is that it is 'private persons' rather than 'the legislative liberality of the government' (p304) which has produced such striking economic and population growth. He provides a case study, the settlement of the Genesee country of New York State by the activities of the firm of Goran & Phelps, and sets out the system by which this company acquired, improved and sold the land to settlers. It all proves, at least to Galt's satisfaction, for he has it printed in block capitals, that 'THE BUSINESS OF

¹¹ Galt, 'Bandana on Colonial Undertakings', in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, August 1826, p304.

¹² Robert Burns, *Address of Beelzebub*, in *Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, James Barke (ed.) (Glasgow: Collins, 1955) p308.

SETTLING A NEW COUNTRY IS MUCH BETTER MANAGED BY PRIVATE ADVENTURERS THAN BY GOVERNMENTS' (p306).

At the end of the piece he offers some acute insights into attitudes to land on either side of the Atlantic. Europeans see everything related to land as having 'an impress of permanency, of dignity, of inherited virtue, and the assurance of an inheritance of honour to come' (p307). Americans, on the other hand, have no 'aristocratic and patriotic associations connected with land' (p307) but rather undertake improvements 'to make the land marketable' and 'to make the commodity in the soil more saleable' (p308). These comments and those on democracy quoted above suggest that Galt believed that European society, being older, had progressed farther along the stadial continuum than American society but, being Galt, it was not a black and white matter. He had conflicting opinions on aristocracy which he explores further in 'The British and Americans' (see below).

In the next month, September, there was 'Bandana on Emigration'.¹³ The August article was on land and this one is about the other half of Galt's colonial equation, the people. The ostensible prompt for his argument is the report by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom.¹⁴ The Committee did not make specific recommendations but it did suggest some general principles including that there be no 'gratuitous expenditure' in the encouragement of emigration and that any help offered to emigrants should be in the form of loans rather than grants¹⁵ but it did not espouse Galt's proposals for encouraging those with capital to emigrate or that land disposal and colonization be the responsibility of private persons and companies.

Galt recognises, as does the Committee, that there is widespread unemployment among the labouring classes and that the advent and progress of mechanisation will 'diminish the value of manual labour' (p470), but he rejects the idea that the solution is for the

¹³ Galt, 'Bandana on Emigration', in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, September 1826, p470.

¹⁴ *The Report of the Select Committee on Emigration in 1826* (London: John Murray, 1827).

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p4.

Government to encourage the ‘removal of paupers’ (p471) by emigration. Instead, he suggests that any encouragement should be directed to ‘those persons who, possessed of some capital and intelligence, would employ their money and their activity in establishing plantations in colonial lands’ (p472). These people would, of course, be successful and would then ‘draw from the mother country, as plantation servants, thousands of those who are at present subjected to the valetudinarian fortunes of artizans’ (p472). This is, in theory at least, an elegant solution to a number of problems.

For example, he laments the ‘present extraordinary natural embarrassment and distress’ and ‘the bubbles of foreign loans’ then contrasts these with ‘the companies which have reference to colonization’ which are ‘best adapted to the circumstances in which the country finds itself placed’ (p473). Privatisation is the watchword and the promotion of emigration ‘should be left to the enterprise of private or associated speculators’ (p474) and that ‘as an agent, or auxiliary to emigration, the Canada Company merits particular attention’ (p475). Jennifer Scott asserts there was a strong link between literary productions and emigrant encouragement and that ‘creating narratives that described Canada Company work and emigrant experiences became a crucial part of its economic work’.¹⁶

The specific situation of the Canada Company, still waiting for its charter at the time the article was written, then leads Galt to more potentially turbulent waters. He attacks the continuation of the clergy reserves in Upper Canada as a significant brake on development. These lands are reserved for the ‘established church, as it is called – but why so called in Canada requires an explanation’ since the Anglican Church there ‘bears but an insignificant proportion of the numbers of other Christians in the country’. The value of property is therefore ‘retarded by the leaders of an inconsiderable sect’ (p476).

¹⁶ Jennifer Scott, ‘Reciprocal Investments: John Galt, the Periodical Press, and the Business of North American Emigration’ in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol 46, No. 3 (2013) p369.

It should be noted that this is the same conclusion reached, in similar words, two years later by the 1828 Select Committee Report on the government of Canada. The Committee stated that the clergy reserves:

retard more than any other circumstance the improvement of the colony, lying as they do in detached portions in each township, and intervening between the occupations of actual settlers, who have no means of cutting roads through the woods and morasses which thus separate them from their neighbours. The allotment of those portions of reserved wilderness has, in fact, done much more to diminish the value of the six parts granted to these settlers, than the improvement of their allotment has done to increase the value of the reserve.¹⁷

Given that the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Peregrine Maitland, and the ruling elite of Upper Canada were staunchly pro-Anglican and high Anglican at that, Galt's inflammatory words were unlikely to make him welcome when he eventually began to work in the province. They may have been justified in terms of logic and strict adherence to numbers but they did not help to secure that cooperation from the authorities which would have made the Canada Company's operations go more smoothly. Galt then concludes the article by appending an advertisement for the Company, maintaining that it is a note 'received from a correspondent' (p477) detailing the views of the Canada Company and the terms on which it seeks to sell land to prospective settlers. He did not seem to feel the need to declare an interest.

These two articles show Galt in full lobbying mode. He has, of course, been in regular contact with the Colonial Office¹⁸ and has repeatedly pressed these ideas on both Ministers and officials, who would have taken little time in guessing the identity of the author. The journalism is part of the wider campaign, seeking to create a climate of opinion

¹⁷ Parliamentary Select Committee *The Civil Government of Canada*(HC, 1828) p6.

¹⁸ Galt's extensive correspondence with Wilmot Horton, Under-secretary at the Colonial Office, is reproduced in *Letters of John Galt: The Canadian Years*, J K Herreshoff (ed.) (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1990).

for the Company's aims and methods and reassuring the shareholders, some of whom were beginning to have doubts about the safety of their money, for shares were trading at a discount at this period. They did recover subsequently, much to Galt's satisfaction, for he notes in his autobiography that the share price 'with the premium is fifty five per cent; and there has been no change in the system established by me'.¹⁹ He also notes with grim justification that the proprietors of the Canada Company are 'gloating over their high priced stock, as they are now doing with chuckling'.²⁰

The tone of both articles is urgent and confident, trying to sweep doubters along with a speed which will prevent time to reflect on some of the logical leaps which they make. On mechanisation, for example, he says that it will 'diminish the value of manual labour' ('On Emigration', p470) but later that 'the price of labour in this country [Britain] is already so high that we are daily incurring the risk, in consequence, of not being able to compete in the produce of our industry with the manufacturers of other countries' ('On Emigration', p471). There is an acceptance of problems, analysis of their causes, and then the proposal of plausible solutions. They are examples of what we would now call the spin doctor's art, including the concealment of the author's interest in the subject.

No further articles are published until after Galt's return from Canada and dismissal from the Company. From 1829 to 1833 he publishes more than twenty articles (although one is long enough to be split into two consecutive editions). There are four in *Blackwood's*, nine in *Fraser's*, one in *The Lady's Magazine and Museum*, two in the Christmas annual *Friendship's Offering* and five 'Letters from New York' in *The New Monthly Magazine*. Three of the articles are comments on current affairs. The remainder include fiction, travel writing and reflections on society in both Britain and North America.

¹⁹ Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p119.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p165.

The first overtly political piece Galt publishes after his return appears in *Blackwood's* of September 1829, during his imprisonment for debt, and is signed 'Cabot'.²¹ It is, ostensibly, a comment on a House of Commons Committee report of 1828 into the condition of both Upper and Lower Canada.²² It is very different in tone to the previous articles. Gone is the eager enthusiasm to be replaced by a more measured, almost magisterial, commentary on events. His principles remain intact but they have been tempered by harsh experience. He maintains, for example, his long-standing policy on emigration, which continues to be ignored by the Government: 'Instead of holding out inducements to persons of capital to go into the country, paupers only have been encouraged' (p336). The tone changes from exhortation to resignation.

Along the way he has some trenchant things to say about the English character as it affects the colonies. He begins by describing Sir Peregrine Maitland, the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada with whom Galt clashed so badly during his time there, as 'a distinguished officer' (p332) but then, by implication, criticises him by saying that the Committee found a 'predilection for the Church of England was found to be stronger in one member of the government of the Upper Province than consisted with 'absolute wisdom' (p333). As a result of the Committee report Maitland was effectively demoted by being moved to Nova Scotia and Galt is being ironic when he says that Maitland has been 'raised to a situation esteemed the most desirable in all British North America' (p332). Many of Galt's readers would probably have taken that last quote at face value but those in the Colonial Office or who had any knowledge of Canada would have recognised the barb.

In relation to Lower Canada and the French Canadians he says that 'the English have yet borne towards them a contemptuous demeanour' (p332) and that 'British merchants and emigrants, who claim with more than our wonted national arrogance all the superiorities and

²¹ Galt, as Cabot, 'Colonial Discontent', in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, September 1829, p332.

²² Report of the Select Committee on the Civil Government of Canada, House of Commons, 22nd July 1828, accessed at http://www.archive.org/details/cihm_28501 on 8/1/2014.

mastership, which conquest confers and conquerors exact' (p332). The Englishman, 'even when he is conferring boons on the Canadians, uses the most ungracious language towards them, and, on all occasions, maintains that they ought to be thankful for the good things he is forcing them to swallow' (p333). The result is that the British 'are mingled with the Canadians as water is with oil, mixed but not incorporated' (p333). It is the distinction in chemistry between a mixture and a compound; the former retains the characteristics of its ingredients but the latter forms a new substance.

In relation to Upper Canada Galt demolishes the Committee's report and the evidence given to it by the Colonial Office. Claiming to know 'something of the different parties who gave evidence' (p334) he finds that the report is 'intrinsically bad' (p334) and the evidence of James Stephen, 'the loyal oracle of the Colonial Office', 'has no parallel for indiscretion' (p334) since it is 'in opposition to fact and history' (p334).

Without naming names he goes into some detail about charges against Maitland of having a system of espionage to report on those opposed to his rule and to his conduct towards John Willis, a judge appointed from England who caused great upset in the Province by questioning the legal and constitutional bases for Maitland's actions. Naturally, he comes down on the side of the opposition to Maitland but in order to link back to his main theme he argues that 'much that is thought imperfect and partial in the Government [of Upper Canada], is perhaps owing less to the ruling than to the materials ruled' (p336), or in other words, the predominance of pauper emigrants over those with capital.

'Agricola' is the signatory of a March 1830 article by Galt in *Blackwood's* arguing against the freeing of restrictions on trade between the USA and British possessions in the West Indies²³. It is noteworthy, not so much for the primary question, but for Galt's vision of the future development of both the USA and Canada. He says that 'sooner or later, the

²³ Galt, as Agricola, 'The Colonial Question', in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, march 1830, p455.

Americans will be independent of us, both as to manufactures and West Indian produce, [so] the matter at issue is really of minor importance' (p455).

The matter of major importance, according to Galt, is the creation of a navigable waterway along the St Lawrence river which would not only allow ocean-going ships from Britain and its colonies access from Lakes Erie and Ontario to the Atlantic but could also be opened to the Americans in return for British access to the Mississippi and thence to the Caribbean. He then details the topography of the land around the St Lawrence rapids and how that obstacle might be overcome, bolstering his argument by reprinting two surveyors' reports, but not giving the names of the surveyors.

The Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Emigration in 1826 says that the government 'is taking the most active measures to facilitate the passage down the St Lawrence'²⁴ but it certainly took its time. What Galt proposed did come to pass, partially in 1871 when smaller ships were enabled to make the transit from the Atlantic, and finally in 1959 when the St Lawrence Seaway, a joint venture between the Canadian and US governments, was opened and large vessels could then sail from the Atlantic to the western shore of Lake Superior.²⁵

Galt returns to the subject of free trade in an article of October 1832 in *Fraser's*.²⁶ The impetus for his piece is the dissemination of a pamphlet by one H S Chapman of Quebec arguing for the abolition of the Corn Laws and promoting 'Huskissonian atrocities' and 'Huskissonian balderdash' (p362). The reference is to William Huskisson (1770 – 1830) who, as President of the Board of Trade from 1823 to 1827, tried unsuccessfully to repeal the laws imposing a heavy duty on corn imported from Europe or the USA, with much lower duties on corn from the colonies. Huskisson is perhaps more famous for the manner of his

²⁴ Parliamentary Select Committee on Emigration (HC 1826), reprinted as a booklet with analysis (London: John Murray, 1827) p134.

²⁵ History of the St Lawrence Seaway, at www.greatlakes-seaway.com/en/seaway/history/index.html, accessed on 3/3/2014.

²⁶ Galt, 'The Canada Corn Trade', in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, October 1832, p362.

death than for his political career. In September 1830 he was the first man in Britain to die in a railway accident when he fell into the path of Stephenson's Rocket at the opening of the Liverpool to Manchester railway.²⁷

In the article Galt suggests that Mr Chapman, if not fictitious, is at best a mouthpiece for the Board of Trade. (p362). Galt's concern is that the existing limited imperial preference is necessary for Canada's economic growth since Canada could not, at that time, compete with growers in the United States or continental Europe. He mounts an effective counter-attack on the pamphlet's arguments but to do so has to put Canadian interests before others which he had formerly espoused.

The point of the Corn Laws was that they protected landed and agricultural interests in Britain and were opposed by the manufacturing and commercial classes. The import duties kept the price of corn, and therefore bread, high and so maximised the profit of landowners and forced manufacturers to pay higher wages to their industrial workforce so that they could eat.²⁸ Galt had for many years been a businessman but by this time he had farms in Canada so protecting the agricultural output of the colony now coincided with his own interest.²⁹

A more profound 'political' article on North American matters appears in *Fraser's* in May 1830.³⁰ It is headed 'Canadian Affairs' and is unsigned but it expands on themes he introduced in his earlier *Cabot* article, even down to the re-use of the 'mixed but not incorporated' metaphor. He acknowledges that there is discontent in both Upper and Lower Canada but makes a significant distinction between the two Provinces as to the causes. In Upper Canada he sees no problems 'which may not be subdued by a judicious and temperate consideration for public opinion' (p389) but is much more concerned with what he sees as

²⁷ A. C. Howe, 'Huskisson, William (1770–1830)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14264>] accessed 18/12/2013.

²⁸ For a concise summary of the Corn Laws and their effect see Martin Pugh, *Britain since 1789 A Concise History* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1999) pp 65-67.

²⁹ Gordon, *Life*, p89.

³⁰ Galt, 'Canadian Affairs', in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, May 1830, p389.

deep-rooted faults in the way Britain is treating Lower Canada (modern Quebec). To make his case he draws a parallel between Lower Canada and Great Britain:

Lower Canada is, in fact, a divided nation. It resembles in one respect the kingdom of Great Britain, which consists of two distinct nations, the English and the Scotch, with this difference, however, that the British and French dwell in a state of intermixture without incorporation, whilst the English and Scotch are domiciled apart (p389).

Despite the longer period of union, the 'laws and judicature of Scotland' have not been assimilated with those of England. 'It is impossible to deny the praise of wisdom to this; and it is certainly to be regretted that the example and spirit are not respected with more reverence by the British party in Lower Canada' (p389).

Essentially his argument is a plea for toleration and respect for traditions. He quotes extensively, in French and without translation, from a francophone review of the political and legislative history of the Province to show the specific grievances of what he calls 'la nation Canadienne' (p390). He deplores 'the sort of arbitrary authority for which the Anglo-politicians of Lower Canada are so importunate' (p389) since they seek to exercise such authority by right of conquest but, says Galt, the conquered people 'are as much entitled to the protection of their own laws, and the enjoyment of their own property, as any other class of the lieges of the same sovereign' (p389). This view of Quebec as analogous within Canada to Scotland within Britain is of a piece with Galt's attitudes to Scotland, England and Britain which are discussed more fully in the Chapter on *Lawrie Todd*.

The two articles of 1826 are straightforward pieces of promotion for his business and the first two after his return from Canada are, essentially, expanded versions of the kind of letters to the editor found in newspapers where a correspondent parades his specialised knowledge as a foundation for influencing government policy. But this article about Lower Canada draws from a deeper well. Based on his experience as a Scot within an English-

dominated polity Galt exemplifies Katie Trumpener's assertion that 'cultural nationalism (as long as it separates cultural expression from political sovereignty) can be contained within an imperial framework'.³¹ He also supports Trumpener's corollary that judicious accommodation allows their 'nationalist pride and their ambivalence towards English culture to be subsumed into a support for the imperial project'.³² It worked for Scotland, says Galt, so it should work for Lower Canada.

There is, however, a sorrowful tone in the article. Sensible as his prescriptions of tolerance are, Galt knows they are unlikely to be adopted: 'However desirable it may be to see the subjects of the same king under one uniform system of language and law, it is not an effect that can be produced by legislative enactment alone' (p390). He knows, from his Scottish background, that culture is long-lived and will persist in the face of repression. He is also cynical about English motivations and concludes by saying that 'the animosity with which the existence of the [Quebecois] laws is regarded by the Anglo-Canadians may have its foundations in motives less honourable than the pretence of superiority in the rules and principles of the English law, for which they so zealously claim its substitution' (p398).

There is another political piece in the February 1832 edition of *Fraser's* in the form of a review of a book by Colonel Bouchette, the Surveyor-general of Lower Canada, purporting to give a topographical and statistical account of all the British dominions in North America. It is entitled 'The British North American Provinces' and is signed Z.³³ The reason for using a pseudonym becomes clear when the author discusses Bouchette's treatment of Upper Canada and the Canada Company and laments that Bouchette 'says nothing respecting the origin of that company, nor of the individual whose views necessarily animated the spirit' with which it was founded (p82).

³¹ Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: the Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997) p xii.

³² Trumpener, p xii.

³³ Galt, as Z, 'The British North American Provinces', in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, February 1832, p77.

Galt also resents the suggestion by Bouchette that credit for the Welland canal, a ship canal connecting Lakes Ontario and Erie and opened in 1829, should go to Mr Hamilton Merritt. 'The present enlarged scheme originated with the founder of the Canada Company' and this was 'long before Mr Merritt was heard of in the province' (p83). Apart from these self-justifications, or as he would see it, putting the record straight, there is little in the article beyond a restatement of Galt's long-held views on emigration and empire.

The political articles are all variants on the same themes. Governments should sell land in bulk to private companies since they are the best developers of land and builders of communities. Any encouragement to emigration should go to those with some money since they will create viable businesses which will subsequently provide employment for artisans and labourers. He does give significant weight to cultural factors and draws on his Scottish experience to warn the mainly English Government and colonialists in Quebec of the dangers of according insufficient importance to French laws and traditions.

Traveller's Tales

On his return to Britain in June 1829 Galt wasted no time in submitting articles for publication and in July 1829 there appeared the first of five 'Letters from New York'.³⁴ All appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* which was edited by the poet Thomas Campbell but published by Henry Colburn who had recently merged his business with Richard Bentley and it was Colburn & Bentley which published *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet*. All are addressed to 'Dear D-' and are signed 'A'. They are a miscellany of the kind which one friend would send to another reporting on the sights seen in his travels and the thoughts which these sights provoke, especially the comparisons which can be drawn between America and Britain.

In the first letter Galt draws attention to the much greater influence of public opinion on the actions of the government of the United States than on that of Great Britain. He says

³⁴ Galt, as 'A', 'Letters from New York No. 1', in *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, July 1829, p.130.

that ‘with us, the Acts of the Executive, both as to peace and war, often precede any expression of popular feeling’ while in the United States ‘the frequency of elections in every department of the public service, renders the Executive in a much greater degree subject to the popular will’ (p131). This is presented neutrally with no indication about which system he prefers but Galt would have been careful not to antagonise the British Government for he still harboured hopes of playing a part in future colonisation.

He takes the opportunity to correct English usage by pointing out that the term ‘Yankee’, which ‘is said to be an Indian corruption, or transmutation of English’, should be applied only to New Englanders and not to inhabitants of the United States generally. He goes on to assert that the term ‘Uncle Sam’ is said to have originated with a drummer-boy who, when asked what the initials US on his drum meant, replied ‘I guess they be Uncle Sam’ (p133). In fact, the origin of the term Uncle Sam, though disputed, is usually associated with a businessman from Troy in New York State, Samuel Wilson, known affectionately as ‘Uncle Sam’ Wilson. The barrels of beef that he supplied to the army during the War of 1812 were stamped ‘U.S.’ to indicate government property. This identification is said to have led to the widespread use of the nickname Uncle Sam for the United States; and a resolution passed by Congress in 1961 recognized Wilson as the namesake of the national appellation.³⁵

The second letter³⁶, also published in the July 1829 edition, is an impression of New York City, especially the architecture. ‘The boast of the city’, Galt says, ‘is Broadway, a street that, for extent and beauty, the Trongate of Glasgow, which it somewhat resembles in general effect, alone excels’ (p280). He is also struck by ‘the dull complexion and expressionless physiognomy of the common people...so strikingly different from the fresh and ruddy animation of the English’. All is not gloom, however, for ‘unquestionably both the figure and countenance of the Americans improve as you proceed into the interior’ (p282).

³⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online Academic Edition*. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2014, [<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/614065/Uncle-Sam>] accessed 20/3/2014.

³⁶ Galt, ‘Letter from New York No. II’, July 1829, p280.

Galt must have had these pieces written while he was in Canada or on the boat coming home because there is a third letter in the July edition.³⁷ This one recounts a visit to the US Navy dockyard in New York and a description of the hotels in the city. He emphasises that for Americans: ‘every thing they require is of necessity new; and they judiciously, in consequence, avail themselves of the most recent improvements’, so that they are sometimes in advance of the supposedly more refined Europeans. Thus the Europeans should not ‘withhold from the Americans the commendations to which they are justly entitled’ (p451). This is all very fair-minded but the praise for America is issued in the clear understanding that Europe, and especially Britain, really is superior and will remain so for a long time. The stadial process is being accelerated in America but it cannot overtake the older societies of Europe.

The fourth and fifth letters are both published in the January 1830 edition. The former³⁸ recounts a meeting with the son of General Hamilton, a hero of the War of Independence, who had relations in Ayrshire. He visits the Judicature and the Legislature, which are then in session in Albany and does not miss the opportunity to take a passing swipe at the legal profession: ‘somehow the Bar, in no country, is distinguished for handsome members; as for the Bench, it generally exhibits as ugly incumbents as toupeed old women, whom, in other respects, it is supposed they often resemble’ (p49). The House of Representatives does not escape either. He tells us that ‘the appearance of the members was quite as respectable as those of the House of Commons – which, however, is not saying a great deal for them, the curmudgeon air being conspicuous in both’ (p50).

There is considerable description of the scenery of upper New York State, including comparisons with places in Scotland and in particular the Falls of Clyde, although he says that ‘my days for waterfall hunting are, however, pretty well over’ (p52). There is an account

³⁷ Galt, ‘Letter from New York No. III’, July 1829, p449.

³⁸ Galt, ‘Letter from New York No. IV’, January 1830, p48.

of how his driver manages to get the coach across a broken bridge (p54) and the scene is reproduced in *Bogle Corbet*, shortly after his arrival in Canada.³⁹

The final letter⁴⁰ is concerned mainly with a description of the virgin forest which seems to have had a profound effect on Galt for much of his best descriptive writing in both *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet* concerns the majesty, power and intimidating aspect of the woodland. The letter also contains rather less felicitous examples of his poetry for he includes three undistinguished sonnets on the theme of nature. He goes into some detail about the salt works at Salina which has ‘a considerable influence on its prosperity’ and again it may be the model for the salt spring which brings so much wealth to Lawrie Todd.⁴¹ These scenes which reappear in the novels are not the only parts of the letters which turn up again in Galt’s writing. The comparisons between society in Britain and the USA which run through all the letters are distilled into the February 1833 article which appears in *The Lady’s Magazine and Museum* and which is discussed below.

Hindsight lends an aura of sadness to an otherwise cheerful article published in *Fraser’s* in November 1830 and describing the foundation of Guelph.⁴² The introduction to the article, written presumably by the editors, states that it is a private letter written to one of his friends by Galt in June 1827, ‘accidentally obtained’ by the magazine ‘with leave to make use of it’ (p456). It goes on to say that the letter ‘must be interesting to the whole civilised world, and to Mr Wilmot Horton’ (p456). It is the only article which is illustrated, with two full page engravings of the new settlement.

Horton was the long-serving Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office and a sparring partner of Galt’s for many years, through the saga of compensation for the war of 1812, the formation of the Canada Company and the disputes between Galt and Lieutenant-Governor

³⁹ Galt, *Bogle Corbet*, II, p304.

⁴⁰ Galt, ‘Letter from New York No. V’, January 1830, p239.

⁴¹ Galt, *Lawrie Todd*, III, p144.

⁴² Galt, ‘Guelph in Upper Canada’, in *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*, November 1830, p456.

Maitland. He was not unsympathetic to Galt's ideas but he had to deal in *realpolitik* and could not support Galt in the face of opposition from the colonial government, the Board of the Company and Galt's own intemperate letters.⁴³

The letter is very light hearted in tone. Galt writes that he named the town Guelph, which is the family name of the Hanoverian Georges, because he had arrived there on 'the King's name-day' and because 'the smaller fry of office having monopolized every other I could think of' (p456). He is optimistic because 'the place thrives wonderfully – almost like a village in the Genesee country where steeples grow like Jack's bean-stalk' (p456). The Genesee country is in northern New York State. Galt had visited it in 1826 and had been impressed by the system of land disposal and settlement there. It is the model for the settlements described in *Lawrie Todd*, just as the founding festivities reappear in that novel.

There are auguries here too. Galt tells his correspondent that 'I am attempting to carry my colonial system into effect...but I fear the gentry in St Helen's Place [Canada Company head office in London] are too impatient for returns. They have their own business to attend to, and they have not time to learn mine' (p456). He goes on in prophetic vein that 'the shares in the Canada Company – if we make difficulties from our own fears and ignorance – will soon be low enough' (p457). That is precisely what happened and contributed largely to Galt's recall and release by the Company.

Galt's methods were proved right and his prescriptions were eventually followed by others so that the Canada Company became a very profitable enterprise and a prime factor in the development of the country but that does not absolve him from being a major contributor to his own downfall. Had he shown greater tact and diplomacy to the colonial Government and had he paid more attention to preparing the Company for a medium to long term commitment then the outcome might well have been very different. Instead, he seemed to

⁴³ Herreshoff, *passim*.

feel that the rightness of his actions and strategy was self-evident and that the arts of persuasion were not needed.

Identity and Society

The social articles are sometimes wholly fictional but sometimes based, often loosely, on historical fact. In November 1829 Galt published ‘Tom Paine: Extracts from the notes of an Observer’.⁴⁴ It is signed ‘G.T.’. Galt never met Tom Paine but the ‘G.T.’ refers to Grant Thorburn, whom he did meet in New York. David Hawke records that Thorburn, then ‘a staid young man’,⁴⁵ did often visit the dying Paine in 1809 and tried vainly to convert him to Presbyterianism. The article recounts the legend that Paine was saved from execution in France by a jailer’s mistake and that another prisoner was executed in his stead. It goes on to say that Paine arranged for the executed prisoner’s widow and family to emigrate to the United States and that he supported them in New York. Paine did support a French widow and children but they were not the dependants of an executed prisoner but of Nicholas Bonneville, his French translator and publisher who was not able to get out of France.⁴⁶

Thorburn was an emigrant Scotsman who had made good by the time Galt met him in New York in 1826 and purchased the manuscript of his autobiography. It was published in 1834⁴⁷, under Galt’s auspices, but before that Galt had mined it for the character of the eponymous hero of *Lawrie Todd*. Galt wrote an introduction to Thorburn’s autobiography and is quite explicit about using Thorburn as a model. He calls Thorburn ‘the *vrai* original of “Lawrie Todd”’⁴⁸ and describes his role in the publication as ‘his *avatar* in London to publish his autobiography’⁴⁹ but this article, published in 1829, when he was in debtors prison, is lifted almost verbatim from Thorburn’s account and shows that Galt was looking for any

⁴⁴ Galt, ‘Tom Paine: Extracts from the notes of an Observer’, in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, Edinburgh, Blackwood, November 1826, p816.

⁴⁵ David Freeman Hawke, *Paine* (New York: W W Norton & Co, 1974) p384.

⁴⁶ Hawke, p349.

⁴⁷ Grant Thorburn, *Forty Years Residence in America* (London: James Fraser, 1834).

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p v.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p vi.

subject which would generate an income. Indeed, Thorburn writes in his autobiography that ‘about 1830 there appeared in the *Commercial Advertiser* [an American periodical] a piece taken from Blackwood’s magazine of November last, an anecdote of Thomas Paine: how it found its way there into Blackwood’s I know not; but the incidents are true to a letter’.⁵⁰ They are certainly the same as those described in Thorburn’s autobiography.⁵¹

Fiction

For *Fraser’s Magazine*, in February and April of 1830, Galt contributed two ‘Canadian Sketches’ which appear to be based on French Canadian sources. The first article is ‘The Hurons. – A Canadian Tale’⁵² and is the story of the wife and child of a French officer who are captured by Huron Indians and of the fight which ensued when the officer led an attempt to rescue his family. The battle takes place at the mouth of the River Niagara and the French officer is named as ‘Chevalier La Porte’ (p90). Galt is even-handed in his description of the antagonists. The Hurons had ‘a military eye of no common perspicacity’ (p90), showed ‘unsurpassed heroism’ (p93), ‘heroic resolution’ (p91), ‘curious sagacity’ (p92) and ‘the constancy of their fearless nature’ (p92). The French showed ‘pride and spirit’ (p93), were ‘gallant’ (p91) and displayed ‘the animation peculiar to their character’ (p91) while La Porte was ‘of aspiring bravery’ (p90).

The tale is a tragedy of Hamlet proportions. All the Indians are killed and the wigwams ‘in which the squaws and papooses of the Indians were lodged’ (p91) were set on fire so that ‘the shrieks and screams of the burning victims pierced the hearts even of the infuriated Frenchmen’ (p91). La Porte and his infant son are also killed, although Madame La Porte survives.

There may have been a model for the story. There was a French officer called Louis De La Porte de Louvigny who distinguished himself in the Indian wars between 1683 and

⁵⁰ Ibid, p210.

⁵¹ Thorburn, *Residence*, p210.

⁵² Galt, ‘The Hurons. – A Canadian Tale’, in *Fraser’s Magazine*, Edinburgh, February 1830, p90.

1724. He did not die in battle but married Marie Nolan in Quebec in 1684. She bore him three daughters and a son as well as six other children who died in infancy but none as a result of Indian action.⁵³ The description of such a bloody action and the atrocity against the Indian non-combatants was arguably added to show that colonisation was not painless for either the colonisers or the indigenous peoples.

The second story, published in April 1830 and entitled ‘The Bell of St Regis’⁵⁴, is set in the same period. It tells of a French priest, Father Nicholas, who has converted an Indian tribe and who sends to France for a bell with which to complete the church which has been built in the Indian village, ‘now called St Regis on the banks of the St Lawrence’ (p268). Unfortunately he does this ‘during one of these wars which the French and English are naturally in the habit of waging against one another’ (p268). The bell is captured by a New England ship and ends up in the English settlement of Deerfield, New Hampshire. The French mount an expedition of soldiers and Indian allies, recapture the bell and bring it back to St Regis.

There is a village of St Regis in Quebec, close to the St Lawrence River and to the US border which is in turn close to Deerfield, New Hampshire. The story is based on a real incident. The Marquis de Vaudreuil, Governor of New France from 1703 to 1725, did send an expedition against the British colonies of New Hampshire and Massachusetts, raiding Deerfield in 1704, killing 54 inhabitants and taking more than 100 prisoners to Quebec. Abenaki and Iroquois Indians were used in the raid. The leader of the French troops was, as

⁵³ Yves F. Zolwany, “LA PORTE DE LOUVIGNY, LOUIS DE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003

[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/la_porte_de_louvigny_louis_de_2E.html] accessed 18/11/2013, . .

⁵⁴ Galt, ‘The Bell of St Regis’, in *Fraser’s Magazine*, Edinburgh, April 1830, p268.

Galt writes, Major Hertel de Rouville (1668 – 1722).⁵⁵ The historical record confirms the raid but makes no mention of any bell.

The tone of this story is different from *The Hurons*. The Indians are portrayed as stoical, with ‘the perseverance peculiar to their character’ (p269) and they fought with ‘characteristic fortitude’ (p270) but they are not given the ingenuity or animation of the Hurons. Instead the sound of the bell ‘was to the simple ears of the Indians as the voice of an oracle; they trembled, and were filled with wonder and awe’ (p270). Father Nicholas is cast as parent to ‘his simple flock’ (p268) who believe unquestioningly whatever he preaches. The Indians are still at an early stage in the stadial journey and need the European to guide them.

Galt does not name the particular tribe of Indians in this story but there appears to be no inherent reason why they should be simpler and less intellectually adept than the Hurons who captured La Porte’s wife and child. He is not so much making a comment on the relative merits of different tribes as fashioning them to fit the requirements of his stories. It was necessary for the Hurons to be acutely intelligent as well as brave in order to be worthy opponents of the French but it was equally necessary for the Indians of St Regis to be simple and stoical in order for them to be sufficiently persuaded by Father Nicholas and awed by the bell to undertake its recapture. In his attitude to native peoples Galt may be said to be anticipating Stevenson in the South Seas but the comparison is not straightforward. Galt’s feelings about Indians, and about any group which might be classed as ‘other’, such as black slaves or Highlanders, are problematic and not easily summarised. This issue is discussed in more detail in the chapter on *Bogle Corbet*.

In March 1830, between the two ‘Canadian Sketches’ published by *Fraser’s*, Galt, signing himself ‘Nantucket’, contributed ‘The Spectre Ship of Salem’ to *Blackwood’s*.⁵⁶ This

⁵⁵ Raymond Douville, “HERTEL DE ROUVILLE, JEAN-BAPTISTE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003 [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/hertel_de_rouville_jean_baptiste_2E.html]. accessed 18,11/2013,

is a short story in the guise of an extract from the Rev Dr Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*⁵⁷ and is a ghost story about a ship which sails from Salem, founders but returns to the harbour as a spirit ship. Mather (1663 – 1728) was a celebrated New England divine who wrote his book as an account of the ecclesiastical history of New England from 1620 to 1698. He was a defender of the Salem witch trials and published a book about them.⁵⁸

It is not inconceivable that Mather would have given credence to an account of a ghost ship but there is no reference to this incident in his works. Galt writes that he is presenting 'a version of [Mather's] story' containing several particulars which the Doctor has not noticed but which, we are persuaded, are not less true than those he has related' (p463). There is, however, an ironical tone to these introductory remarks. Galt believes that if someone had told Mather the story he would have accepted it but that belief has more to do with Galt's perception of Mather's gullibility about witches and demons than with Galt's own beliefs. The product of the Enlightenment has his tongue firmly in his cheek in justifying the use of Mather's name and authority to add verisimilitude to a fiction.

In October 1830 *Fraser's* published 'American Traditions', by John Galt Esq.⁵⁹ It begins with a preamble admitting that while all the nations of Europe 'have a species of legendary poetry which relates to the wars and exploits of their ancestors and founders', the Americans 'have nothing of this kind' (p321). He does not seem to wonder whether the native Americans might possibly have an oral tradition containing similar tales. Nevertheless, he goes on to say that the stories of the first settlers are 'equal to those of the boldest enterprises celebrated in the border minstrelsy of the European kingdoms' so that 'the

⁵⁶ Galt, as Nantucket, 'The Spectre Ship of Salem', in *Blackwood's Magazine*, Edinburgh, March 1830, p462.

⁵⁷ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Kenneth B. Murdock and Elizabeth W. Miller (eds.) (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1977).

⁵⁸ Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World: being an account of the tryals of several witches lately executed in New England* (London: John Russel Smith, 1862).

⁵⁹ Galt, 'American Traditions', in *Fraser's Magazine*, Edinburgh, October 1830, p 32.

rough and bold pamphlets of the United States' (p321) do have a value and that there can be an American literature, but it will take time just as their civilisation will take time to mature.

This prologue is an introduction to, and justification for, a short story entitled 'Cherokee, - A Tradition of the Back-woods'.⁶⁰ In the story Cherokee is a person rather than a tribe and is one of the three main protagonists. The others are two white men, Noah Howard and Amidab Heckels. Howard was captured by Cherokee's tribe as a boy and brought up by them until he kills Cherokee's brother and escapes. Cherokee swears to be revenged and eventually leads a war party against the Howard and Heckels settlement. The Indians are repulsed and Cherokee is severely wounded but is nursed back to health in the settlement and as a consequence of this humane act, forswears his vow of vengeance. After some years the settlement is besieged by a French raiding party abetted by Indian allies but after a series of close shaves, they compel the French to surrender. Their victory is brought about by the assistance of Cherokee's tribe, which had warned them of the approach of the French and which participated in the decisive engagement.

The geography of the story is uncertain. It begins by stating that the 'fierce tribe of Indians' lived 'along the shores of Lake Champlain' (p322) and that Howard is 'Virginian by birth' (p323) but the scene of the action 'rose to be the town of Lexington' (p328). Lexington is in Kentucky, which has a border with West Virginia, but it lies more than 800 miles from Lake Champlain. Usually, Galt is exact in his locations and it is difficult to believe that his geography is abnormally vague in this particular instance. He may be showing the nomadic nature of these particular Indians or, perhaps more likely, that there was a restlessness among some Americans that compelled them to push their country's frontiers ever further west.

The elements of the story, heroism, betrayal, forgiveness and triumph over greater forces, are similar to those found in the Scottish border ballads and other folk tales. The

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p 322.

difference here, for a British readership, is that Galt does not portray the Indians as a degenerate race, as so many of his compatriots believed. He says that the Indians have ‘a just hatred to the invaders of their country’ (p322). With his usual clear-eyed gaze Galt, while keen on colonisation and European supremacy, recognises that it does not take place in a vacuum and that the Indians should not simply be swept aside for the convenience of the Europeans.

‘American Traditions No. II’ was published by *Fraser’s* in August 1831 and bore the sub-title ‘The Early Missionaries; or, The Discovery of Niagara Falls’.⁶¹ It purports to be an account of how two young British missionaries, Joseph Price and Henry Wilmington, walked from Boston to the Great Lakes and thus became the first Europeans to see Niagara Falls. There is nothing in the article to indicate that it is anything other than fact but no dates are given and there is no trace in the literature of either Price or Wilmington. Galt appears to have invented the story and furnished it with plausible details. For example, he says that an Indian Chief, Maiook, ‘gave the name of Niagara, or the thundering waters’ (p100). In fact it appears to be generally accepted that the name comes from the Indian word ‘Onguiahra’ meaning the strait.⁶²

There is some difference among the authorities about who was the first European to see the Falls but Champlain’s journals of his travels in Canada in 1604 show that ‘he made an amazing reconstruction of the network of the Great Lakes (including Niagara Falls)’.⁶³ The consensus, however, is that the first authenticated eye-witness account is by the Belgian

⁶¹ Galt, ‘American Traditions No. II The Early Missionaries; or, The Discovery of Niagara Falls’, in *Fraser’s Magazine*, Edinburgh, August, 1831, p96.

⁶² William C. Sturtevant, *Handbook of North American Indians*, (Smithsonian Institution, 1978, volume 13, part 1), page 411.

⁶³ Marcel Trudel, “CHAMPLAIN, SAMUEL DE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1, University of Toronto/Université Laval, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/champlain_samuel_de_1E.html 2003] accessed 25/11/2013.

missionary, Father Louis Hennepin, in 1677.⁶⁴ It is certainly true that by the middle of the nineteenth century the main industry of the area was tourism. In 1861 Anthony Trollope visited the Falls and commented that ‘at such a place as Niagara tasteless buildings, run up in wrong places with a view to money making, are perhaps necessary evils’.⁶⁵ This is not so different from Galt’s 1831 description of the Falls in *Bogle Corbet*.⁶⁶

There is a third in the series ‘American Traditions’ which is subtitled ‘The Indian and the Hunter; or The Siege of Micford’ and was published in *Fraser’s* in April 1832 under Galt’s own name.⁶⁷ It is not dissimilar to the first in the series, ‘Cherokee’, since it describes a fight between early settlers in New England and Native Americans. It has the same instances of courage and resourcefulness on both sides and an outcome eventually favourable to the settlers.

In a Christmas album of 1832, *Friendship’s Offering*, Galt recycles this material yet again in a short story, ‘The First Settlers on the Ohio’.⁶⁸ He constructs a framing device of an account of contemporary settlers contending only with nature and distance and then sets within it the tribulations of the first settlers who had to fight the Indians to make their farms secure. This inner story, building up to a climactic battle, is similar to his previous articles in the genre including ‘Cherokee’, ‘The Hurons’ and ‘The Siege of Micford’, containing brave and ferocious Indian fighters and settlers who overcame them ‘with courage and fortitude’ (p243).

The new elements in this story are detailed instructions about how to build a ‘shanty’ or temporary shelter in the forest (p246) and a vivid description of a tornado (p253). Both of

⁶⁴ Jean-Roch Rioux, “HENNEPIN, LOUIS,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003 [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/hennepin_louis_2E.html] accessed 25/11/2013.

⁶⁵ Anthony Trollope, *Niagara*, in *Travel in America*, George Bradshaw (ed.) (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Co., 1948) p8.

⁶⁶ Galt, *Bogle Corbet* (London: Colborn & Bentley, 1831) pp223-246.

⁶⁷ Galt, ‘The Indian and the Hunter; or The Siege of Micford’, in *Fraser’s Magazine*, April, 1832, p275.

⁶⁸ Galt, ‘The First Settlers on the Ohio’, in *Friendship’s Offering for 1832*, (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1832) p243.

these passages demonstrate Galt's first-hand knowledge of the American wilderness and convey information of use to prospective emigrants. They are written with a certain brio but they are contained within well-worn covers. He may drop in certain particular differences like references to the Ohio and Wabash rivers or the Shawnee Taw Indians but the essence of the story is one which he has told before. He will also re-use the shanty and tornado descriptions in *Lawrie Todd*.

In *Friendship's Offering for 1831* Galt contributes a short story, 'The New Atlantis, An American Legend'.⁶⁹ The title is taken from Francis Bacon and is a prose reworking of Galt's play *The Apostate*.⁷⁰ At first glance it is an account of an Indian myth of their development, akin to those told by the Israelites in the Book of Genesis. It can be read simply as an Indian variant on the Genesis themes but it can also be read as a critique of stadial theory and of contemporary religion. In the case of the former, and Galt's recognition that progress was not an unalloyed good, it is a return to an issue which he explored in his earlier West of Scotland novels, especially *The Annals of the Parish*⁷¹, *The Provost*⁷² and, in particular, *The Last of the Lairds*.⁷³ The overt questioning of religion is new, at least in his fiction, although he had previously had some harsh things to say about denominationalism in the context of the clergy reserves in Upper Canada.

At the beginning of the story the Indians are living in a Rousseau-like blissful state of nature. They acted in all things 'with heedless innocence and frankness of the heart' (p218). Following a great storm and earthquake they come upon a wrecked ship from which has emerged one survivor, a man named Atlanthus. The implication of the man's name and, to the Indians, the advanced technology of the ship suggests that the voyage began in Europe.

⁶⁹ Galt, 'The New Atlantis, An American Legend', in *Friendship's Offering for 1831*, p217.

⁷⁰ Whistler, p245.

⁷¹ Galt, *The Annals of the Parish* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1980).

⁷² Galt, *The Provost* (Oxford: OUP, 1982).

⁷³ Galt, *The Last of the Lairds* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976).

He certainly brings European ideas. Oroon, the young king of the Indians, becomes an enthusiastic adopter of Atlanthus' teachings:

When he understood the Indian language, he taught Oroon knowledge, and science, and art; he instructed him to divide his people into classes, to build cities, to separate those who laboured in the towns from those who tilled the earth; he revealed to them the existence of a visible manifestation of the Great Spirit; and taught them all those things which were esteemed great and glorious in the regions from which he had come. (p219)

There is a minority of Indians who refuse to accept the new ways and who remove into the wilderness to live by the traditional methods and customs under the leadership of Icab, one of the elders. After a time Oroon summons Icab back because he needs his help to resolve a personal crisis. This provides Galt with an opportunity to discuss the differences between the 'natural' approach to life of the Indians and the 'civilised' approach of the Europeans.

Icab says that in the old days 'we had happiness and purity, and confidence in one another' and that 'we dreaded no danger from dishonesty in man, for we had nothing then that could be stolen' (p222). Oroon, however, praises the 'social arts and the pleasures industry makes ours' (p223). When Icab inquires about the purpose of two huge buildings which he sees being erected he is told that one is a temple and one is 'a prison; appointed lodge for such as wrongfully injure each other' (p225). Icab then points out that 'your new found arts require inventions...to prepare men that shall become, by these arts, more savage than the beasts of the woods' (p225). The problem for which Oroon needs Icab's help is that Arutha, his intended bride, has become cold to him because she has been unfaithful with Atlanthus. The story ends with Arutha's execution, Atlanthus' suicide, the destruction of all

the new trappings of civilisation and a return to the life of simplicity and harmony with nature.

In tandem with this warning about the disadvantages of progress the story is notable for what it says about conventional religion. Atlanthus not only brings industry but a new religion to the Indians which brings ‘the hope of a second life, and that a glorious morning will brighten in the rear of death’ (p222). When Oroon explains that the new temple is ‘hallowed to religious rites’ (p223) Icab is horrified: ‘Is, then, the God whom Atlanthus has revealed a local and limited being?’ and goes on, ‘wherefore have you built him a house, when the universe is full of Him?’ (p222). This comes very close to Deism which saw God as present in all natural things but who did not intervene in human affairs.⁷⁴ Oroon says that the temple is ‘a place wherein we may holily remember that He exists and should be adored’ (p224). This puzzles Icab who asks ‘does your civilisation, your science, your orders, and your ranks, tend to make you forget Him?’, because for their forefathers, ‘He was everywhere with them and they with Him’ (p225).

By the beginning of the nineteenth century Deism, ‘even in England was a passing thing, though in America it was still strong among many of the nation’s founders’.⁷⁵ Galt may have encountered some of its proponents on his American travels. He certainly encountered it in Thorburn’s autobiography since Thorburn is much opposed to such beliefs. He tells Paine that ‘even respectable deists cross the street to avoid you’⁷⁶ and also gives an account of an argument with a man who had converted to Deism when he emigrated to America from England in 1795.⁷⁷ Galt’s main aim here, however, is not so much to promote Deism as to show that progress and civilisation have a corrupting effect on religion just as

⁷⁴ *HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion*, J Z Smith (ed.) (London: Harper Collins, 1996) p310.

⁷⁵ *Philosophy for Understanding Religion*, D Allen & E O Springsted (eds.) (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007) p148.

⁷⁶ Thorburn, *Residence*, p134.

⁷⁷ Thorburn, *Residence*, p189.

much as on other aspects of society. This is another instance of Galt noting that while stadialism is generally beneficial it is not an unalloyed good.

Of all the articles relating to North America which Galt wrote it is perhaps significant that the best was nearly the last, although it was at the start of what Ian Gordon called 'his Indian summer'⁷⁸ of short story writing. It is 'Scotch and Yankees, A Caricature'⁷⁹ and is signed as by 'the author of the *Annals of the Parish*'. It is not so much an article as a novella so that it had to be split for publication in two consecutive editions. It is told by a third-person narrator and brings Galt back to the familiar ground of the Scots language and the comic misunderstandings of Scots making their first visit to London but with the addition of American characters and their particular mode of speech.

This is yet another example of Galt recycling his old material. He tells us in his *Autobiography* that it began life as a 'farce at Quebec... a little dramatic piece called *The Aunt in Virginia*, which I have since converted into a tale that has been published in Blackwood'.⁸⁰ The story is slight enough and the plotting is less than robust but, as in the best of Galt fiction, the characterisation is rich. It is the tale of a disputed Highland inheritance with three related claimants. These are Mrs Clatterpenny, an Edinburgh doctor's widow, Mr Peabody, a Vermont farmer, and Mr Tompkins, a young gentleman from Virginia.

Peabody is accompanied by his beautiful daughter Octavia, who is wooed by Tompkins, by Johnny Clatterpenny, the widow's son who is studying medicine in London, and by Archibald Shortridge, the son of a Glasgow Lord Provost who has met Mrs Clatterpenny on the voyage to London from Leith. Mrs Clatterpenny is accompanied by an Edinburgh lawyer, Mr Threeper, with whom she has contracted to give half of the estate but on a 'no win – no fee' basis.

⁷⁸ Gordon, *Life*, p125.

⁷⁹ Galt, 'Scotch and Yankees, A Caricature', in *Blackwood's Magazine*, Edinburgh, Part 1, January 1833, p91, Part 2, February 1833, p188.

⁸⁰ Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p111.

The plot relies heavily on outrageously unbelievable coincidences. Galt recognises the defect but carries it off with effrontery. About one of the coincidences he writes that ‘had a novelist or a dramatic writer been guilty of so improbable an incident, he would have been scouted in the most nefarious manner’ (Pt 1, p98). The characters do, however, allow Galt to have some good-natured fun at the expense of pretension and greed and to aim some not so good-natured barbs at an old enemy, the legal profession.

Mr Threpper’s name is the same as that of the advocate in *The Entail*.⁸¹ It also means, in Scots, a dispute or quarrel.⁸² He is accused of impudence by Mrs Clatterpenny who then recalls that ‘it’s all the stock in trade that many lawyers are possessed of’ (Pt1, p98). He is shown to be not only pennypinching but dishonest by breakfasting with Mrs Clatterpenny so that he would ‘save the price of breakfast at [his] hotel, which he intended to charge in his accounts’ (Pt1, p99). He will not, of course, have accounts since he has taken the case on the basis of a share of the estate if it is won or nothing if it is lost but that does not stop Galt from delivering the insult. When he advises Mrs Clatterpenny that the case will without doubt be lost she asks him ‘how could you ever pass yourself off to me as a man of law and learning, and no to be able to make a doubt’ (Pt 2, p191). Mrs Clatterpenny is herself the daughter of ‘a respectable writer to the signet in Edinburgh; we say respectable, notwithstanding his profession’ (Pt1, p91).

Mrs Clatterpenny is the undoubted star of the story. She is ‘well stricken in years and distinguished for the nimbleness of her tongue, and the address with which she covered cunning and discernment with a veil of folly’ (Pt 1, p91). Like the Leddy o’ Grippy in *The Entail* she is both acquisitive and careful with money. ‘She sees both sides of a shilling before she parts with it’ (Pt 2, p196). She also resembles Mrs Soorocks in *The Last of the Lairds* with her penchant for elaborate stratagems to achieve her ends, as in disguising herself

⁸¹ Galt, *The Entail* (London: OUP, 1913) p209.

⁸² *The Concise Scots Dictionary*, Mairi Robinson (ed.) (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1985) p 718.

as Mr Threeper to find out the strength of the opposition's claim (Pt 2, p191). Like both of her fictional forebears she fancies herself as having a knowledge of the law, thus leading her to make nonsensical pronouncements such as 'we of the Scotch bar never demur till we are fee'd, the same being according to the books of sederunt and session, founded on the statute of limitations' (Pt 2, p191).

Unlike the Leddy or Mrs Soorocks, she is the butt of jokes. Her claim is fatally undermined by the revelation that the deceased had a previously unknown aunt in Virginia. The news is passed to her by Mr Threeper who confirms not only that she lived but that 'she may have had children, too'. Mrs Clatterpenny misunderstands and hears 'an auntie in Virginy with two children' (Pt 1, p104) and these 'two children' become a running joke throughout the story.

Most of the characters, including the young Americans, the Scots lawyer and the two young Scotsmen speak in 'Standard' English. There are three exceptions. One is the negro servant, Pompey, who speaks in a kind of stage Creole as in 'Ah! Missy, de strong waters dam strong' (Pt 2, p190). The second is the Vermont farmer Peabody whose speech is rendered in Galt's interpretation of a New England accent which relies heavily on the dropping of letters at both the beginnings and middles of words as in 'that 'ere ship what brought you to this 'ere place' (Pt 1, p95) or 'I an't myself so 'dacious' (Pt1, p95). The rendering of Peabody's speech is exactly the same as that for Mr Zerobabel L Hoskins who plays such a prominent role in *Lawrie Todd* and is described as 'a most respectable farmer, from Vermont'⁸³ who uses words such as 'ben't', 'ha'n't' and 'ain't'.⁸⁴

The third is of course Mrs Clatterpenny who speaks a middle class Scots. As always, Galt's ear is finely attuned so that she is less broad than his Ayrshire speakers. She uses some dialect words like 'misleared' and 'mim as a May puddock' (Pt1, p94) but it is more

⁸³ Galt, *Lawrie Todd*, II, p88.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* II, p90.

accent and locutions which mark her as Scottish. So she talks of 'her ain cousin' (Pt 1, p96) and 'chambering and wantoning' (Pt1, p96). Galt is careful to modify her speech according to her interlocutor. She is broader when speaking to her fellow-Scot, Mr Threeper, than to the other characters. Thus she speaks to him of 'the kirk', 'arm in arm cleeket' (Pt 1, p96) and 'the jookries of the law' and how Miss Octavia is 'weel-fairt' (Pt 1, p99) but when impersonating Threeper and conversing with Tompkins she speaks in 'Standard' English.

Peabody is the only American with any revelation of character. Galt suggests he is shrewd, businesslike and possessed of a dry wit but uncultured. In other words, Peabody conforms to the typical American character outlined by Galt in 'Bandana on Colonial Undertakings'. When Threeper tells him that Chaucer mentions the inn where they meet, Peabody responds 'Chaucer! Did he keep tavern here?' (Pt 1, p96). He is described physically as an 'odd figure...dishevelled...with his shoes down at the heel' (Pt 1, p95) but when Octavia wonders what brought Mrs Clatterpenny to London Peabody replies 'I guess it might be the ship' (Pt 1, p101). When he is considering marriage to Mrs Clatterpenny he considers that 'though she ben't so young as an angel, she ain't quite so everlasting' (Pt 2, p188). He is also sharp enough to deduce Threeper's motives, telling him 'I s'pose you are on shares with the old ladye' (Pt 1, p103).

One other noteworthy feature of the story is the attitude to race. Mrs Clatterpenny compares the negro servant, who has not returned from an errand, to the raven Noah sent from the ark: 'Vagabond bird, It was black too' (Pt 1, p94). Peabody tells his daughter that he won't 'make a nigger slave of her affections' (Pt 1, p97). Tompkins displays 'Virginian brevity towards negroes' (Pt 2, p189). Mrs Clatterpenny wonders how, if all the world was drowned except 'those that were with Noah, I could not divine how the nigger kind came to be saved'. She goes on to say that 'I could wager a plack to a bawbee that some of the seed of Cain creepit into the Ark with the unclean beasts' (Pt 2, p191). On the one hand Galt is

reflecting the attitudes towards black people common to his time and class in that negroes are other, ignorant and generally inferior to whites. On the other hand Galt says that Pompey is ‘droll’ (Pt 2, p190) and, notwithstanding his hackneyed speech, no less capable of thought and deduction than the white characters. In this, as in other matters such as increasing industrialisation, Galt shows a disposition to report empirical evidence rather than received wisdom.

The final short story, *The Metropolitan Emigrant*,⁸⁵ appears in *Fraser’s* in September 1835. It is a farcical tale of a haberdasher, Stephen Needles, who determines to seek his fortune by emigrating with his wife from England to Canada. On the face of it he is exactly the type of emigrant that Galt has been pressing the Government to encourage since he has a little capital and can set up a business when he arrives. The lesson which Galt is teaching here, within a comic format, is that while capital is a necessary it is not a sufficient condition for success.

Both Needles and his wife are represented as extremely gullible characters because he believes the stories he is told about the opportunities to get rich quick in Canada but omits to do even basic research before taking irrevocable decisions. Their credulity is exemplified when their ship comes in sight of Quebec and Mrs Needles says ‘we’ll grow rich in no time, for the houses are all covered with silver’ (p292). They begin to imagine what they will do when they become rich, including that Stephen ‘was to be made lord mayor, and a great many other fine things’ (p292) until they discover that they were ‘bewitched by glittering tin’ (p293).

There then follows a catalogue of farcical disasters including the now familiar travails of transportation, the presence of snakes and bears, and the trials of a Quebec winter which buries Mrs Needles under snow which falls off their roof (p297). The haberdasher shop

⁸⁵ Galt, *The Metropolitan Emigrant*, in *Fraser’s Magazine*, Vol 12, No. 69, September 1835, p291.

which Needles opens fails because he cannot offer credit to the other settlers. He and his wife agree that 'we were evidently not succeeding in the store-keeping line'. He proposes that 'we should dispose of all our goods and betake ourselves to farming' (p295). To her credit, Mrs Needles voices strong reservations about this course of action and is proved right. At the end of the story she says that 'I think you would have done better if you had followed my advice, and never had anything to do with a farm, as I do not pretend to know anything about it; and the result proves you are no wiser than myself' (p299).

The incidents which lead to their eventual return to England are all illustrative of the perils of ignorance. Needles buys 200 acres and sets out to clear them of trees. He has noted that the men cutting trees 'never wore coats' only to find out 'I was afterwards told that they were at the time in pledge for whisky' (p295). He severely underestimates the hard physical labour required and is bedridden for a week (p295) and concludes that 'my constitution was more adapted to cut and measure cords of lacings than cords of wood' (p296). More seriously, he discovers that his woods are 'magnificent pines and similar unprofitable trees' since they make poor firewood and cannot, unlike maples, be tapped for sugar. 'My inexperience', he says, had induced him 'to take my present land in preference to that covered with far better trees' (p297). The land, when cleared, turns out to be poor soil and so he has 'a miserable crop, although my neighbours had very good ones' (p298). This is typical of so many settlers who, as Jenni Calder notes, 'were ill-equipped for pioneering'.⁸⁶

The story does have a happy ending. After eighteen months in Quebec they sell up all their goods, although they cannot find a purchaser for the land, and return to England where they establish 'another shop, into which I was right glad to enter, having experienced in Canada the folly of emigration' (p299).

⁸⁶ Calder, p125.

Structurally, the story is in Galt's favourite autobiographical form and the reader is invited to laugh at Needles' capacity for self-delusion. Tellingly, although Mrs Needles is shown at first to be just as gullible as her husband, she perceives their true situation before he does and makes the more practical suggestions. Most of Galt's emigrant women are more practical and clear-sighted than their men.

Galt must have seen many settlers of this type and just as *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet* are expressly designed to provide advice and information for the would-be emigrant so this comic tale is also designed to provide both amusement and instruction with the prime lesson being that a very careful look is required before any leaping is done. Galt could not stop himself from offering instruction and the lessons contained in this story repeat those of earlier articles and of the two novels.

Society

In February 1833 *The Lady's Magazine and Museum* began a series of articles on national characteristics. The first in the series was 'The British and Americans'⁸⁷ by John Galt Esq. In it he attempts to explain each nation to the other and to promote a greater mutual understanding and respect.

It is doubtful if he achieved his aim. He attempts to be even-handed but the tone of the article is patronising to the Americans while pointing out faults on the part of the British. Both nations would be likely to take umbrage at his remarks. The Americans, he writes, 'are not distinguished among those who have improved the human race' and 'have produced no work of art that can be called of the first class' (p49). This is curious since one of Galt's first published works was a biography of Benjamin West.⁸⁸ West was born in Pennsylvania in

⁸⁷ Galt, 'The British and Americans', in *The Lady's Magazine and Museum*, London, Edward Bull, February 1833, p47.

⁸⁸ Galt, *The Life and Studies of Benjamin West* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1816).

1738, achieved an international reputation, was a co-founder of the Royal Academy and became its President in 1792.⁸⁹

Galt is disparaging about a lack of aristocracy in America. ‘They have no “quality”...no rank that either in circumstances, taste or personal habits can compare with our aristocracy’ (p51). ‘American society does not rise beyond our merchants and manufacturers and, even of those, only the secondary class’ (p51). He admits Americans can make money but, for a man who spent so much of his life, as Galt did, seeking to make his fortune from business, is dismissive of such talents ‘as if birth, pedigree, and historic deeds were things which wealth could bring with it’ (p50). On the rare occasions that British aristocrats cross the Atlantic ‘they can meet with no company in the United States more accustomed to seek only for amusement than that of their own opulent tradesmen’. Moreover, ‘the endeavours at elegance in the hospitality of American opulence will, therefore, seem always to these scions of pride a sort of high life below stairs’ (p51).

This was of course intended for a mainly British readership and it may be that Galt was flattering his audience but it was published in 1833 following his failure with the Canada Company, his imprisonment for debt and the stroke he suffered in 1832. It is therefore quite possible that he had realised he would never be the business success he had so long dreamed of becoming and had developed a new perspective on life with greater value put on breeding than on money-making. In the 1833 *Autobiography* he says that ‘I have ever regarded pecuniary matters as subordinate’.⁹⁰ This seems disingenuous for a man who put so much effort into becoming a successful businessman but if, as is plausible, the effort was towards public approbation and admiration then money does become a secondary effect.

He does, however, attempt explanation and exculpation for the Americans. He ascribes the lack of “quality” in American society to ‘the newness of the society, and the

⁸⁹ Dorinda Evans, ‘West, Benjamin (1738–1820)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29076>] accessed 16/12/2013.

⁹⁰ Galt, *Autobiography*, I, p153.

necessity induced by that circumstance not to be over-scrupulous of the profession by which money is to be made' (p51). Americans have not the same fear of failure which exists in Britain because 'poverty seems to them to be estimated more correctly, and as a casualty incident to human life, arising from the accidents of commercial enterprise' (p52). There speaks the voice of hard won experience not just in business but as an observer of societal progress.

The difference is that 'gentility is a mighty important flatus in British society' even if it sometimes leads to 'ludicrous pretensions' (p52). On the whole respect to rank is justified because Peers and Members of Parliament 'belong to the aristocracy, inherit its advantages, and, with few exceptions, are selected for their connexions from a class which the whole nation has for ages regarded with peculiar respect' (p52).

Notwithstanding this summary, the British do not wholly escape Galt's strictures. He generally uses the term 'British' in the article but there are points where he draws a distinction. 'The British, particularly the English, are a people of strong sympathies and antipathies...cordial haters and fervent friends'. They 'possess a rich fund of worth, more than sufficient to compensate for all the arrogance of their front and aspect' (p47). Those who 'form an idea of our national manners by the cold and reserved deportment of individuals, only view the surface of the national character' (p48). The faults are therefore more apparent than real.

It is no surprise that Galt, a writer known for accurate sounding dialogue, should also comment on speech. He points out that the term Yankees should only apply to people from New England and that not all Americans speak 'with a nasal twang' (p52). He goes on to write that 'in the south, beyond New York, the inflexion disappears' (p53). Britons should not disparage American accent and locutions because 'I suspect that both Yorkshire and Westmorland are, in language, as little scientific as Massachusetts' (p53).

Galt concludes by attempting an even-handed summary 'where we see flaws and fissures in their character and manners, they can be at no difficulty to discover many equally objectionable faults in ours' (p53). This may be true but it does not repair the likely damage caused by describing the Americans as low class and uncultivated and the Britons as cold, reserved and pretentious.

The article demonstrates a characteristic which served Galt well as a novelist but which caused him so much difficulty in his business life, especially in his dealings with Canada. Much of his best fiction, like *The Annals of the Parish* and *The Provost*, is based on the accuracy of his observation but it is one thing to serve up such clarity in fiction and quite another to deliver it to those who have decision making powers. In Canada the policies and measures Galt advocated were largely adopted but only after he had long departed the scene. As H B Timothy, summing up Galt's efforts in Canada observes, 'time, indeed, has proved to be John Galt's advocate'.⁹¹ But at the time he was actually in Canada he alienated the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, The Board of the Canada Company and the Colonial Office because he could not or would not accept that that which was self-evident to him would need to be presented to those in power with tact and guile.

With the exception of the 1807 article, when he knew nothing about Canada except what his cousin told him, Galt's journalism shows an admirable consistency of purpose. The political pieces exhort the Government to follow a particular system of colonisation in which privatisation of development and encouragement to middle class rather than impoverished emigrants are the keystones. Even after Galt is removed as an actor he continues to preach the same gospel. The fiction and travel articles reinforce these messages and point up both the beneficial and detrimental effects of stadialism.

⁹¹ Timothy, p154.

The fictional articles reinforce the message by demonstrating the qualities of stoicism, resourcefulness and preparedness which Galt believed were needed to thrive in the wilderness. They also show a respect for the indigenous peoples, for the French-Canadians and for the enterprising spirit of Americans. They are considerably more sceptical about the efficacy of Provincial Government and about the claims to primacy of the Anglican Church. Like his famous characters Micah Balwhidder and James Pawkie, Galt had a *guid conceit* of himself and Byron's comment that Galt 'had too little of reverence in him'⁹² was not only amply borne out by his attitudes to power but might serve as his business epitaph.

⁹² Gordon, *Life*, p125.

Chapter 4 *Lawrie Todd*: ‘The architect of my own elevation’

Introduction

*Lawrie Todd*¹ was the first of two full length novels which drew on Galt’s North American experiences. Ian Gordon makes an uncharacteristic error when he says that it is the story of ‘an emigrant Scot who sets up a general store in the Canadian bush’.² *Lawrie Todd* never sets foot in Canada. Galt may have drawn on his experiences in Canada to write it but the novel is concerned only with the United States and makes no mention of its northern neighbour. It has its comic moments but the overall tone is sombre, perhaps because, as Galt himself comments, he was ‘completing in as satisfactory a state of misanthropy as I could well work myself into, the novel of *Lawrie Todd*’.³

It is not surprising that the novel was written in low spirits. Galt had just had his Canadian dream shattered and was about to be committed to King’s Bench prison for debt. On 23rd June 1829, three weeks before his incarceration, he concluded an agreement with Colburn and Bentley to deliver a three volume novel, *The Settlers*, for publication in November. The profits were to be ‘mutually divided’ unless there was a subsequent agreement for Colburn to purchase the copyright. Colburn was to be allowed 5% of sales receipts ‘for the risk of bad debt’ and Galt was to be paid an advance of £300 via a bill at 12 months. The novel was to be delivered to the publisher by 15 November.⁴ On 21 January 1830, as the novel was published, there was a subsequent agreement whereby Galt sold the copyright to Colburn & Bentley for £500 payable by £300 for the first edition, £100 for the second edition and £100 for the third edition⁵. These sums were all payable by bills at 6 months so Galt, desperate for ready money, probably sold them at a discount.

¹ John Galt, *Lawrie Todd* (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1830).

² Gordon, *Life*, p93.

³ Galt, *Autobiography*, I, p174.

⁴ National Library of Scotland, Archives of Colburn & Bentley, Letter Books, Vol 52, p19.

⁵ NLS, Colburn & Bentley Letter Books, Vol 52, p84.

There is a pathetic postscript to the correspondence with Colburn and Bentley relating to *Lawrie Todd*. In a letter of October 6 1832 Galt notes that there are some ‘verbal errors’ in the current editions and asks that they be corrected in any new edition. He goes on to conclude an agreement to provide a new introduction to the novel for £25. The letter is not in Galt’s hand but has been dictated to his son. By this time Galt had had a series of strokes and he apologises for not calling in person ‘but the motion over the stones I find affects me very much’.⁶

Galt knew that *Lawrie Todd* should not be a three volume novel and that he would have to pad it out with extraneous material to fulfil the terms of the publisher’s contract. The padding is obvious in the long digressions from the main narrative. The account of Todd’s son Robin going astray in New York City and fleeing to Scotland, the long backstory given to Mr Herbert and the protracted courtship of Mrs Cockspur by Mr Herbert would all arguably have benefited from a much more concise treatment.

Most obviously of all there are three substantial appendices concerned with the outbreak of yellow fever in New York (III, pp 299, 303 and 308). The disease and Todd’s actions have already been described in Chapter X of the novel (I, p71) but, with no introduction or explanation, the three appendices appear in the form of letters, although no information is given about to whom they were addressed or who is sending them. As discussed below Galt took Grant Thorburn as a model for *Lawrie Todd* and has summarised Thorburn’s account of the fever outbreak for Chapter X but Thorburn devotes thirty pages to the subject⁷ and it seems that Galt, reaching the end of his narrative but still short of the full three volumes demanded by his publishers, has decided to include material which he had previously discarded.

⁶ NLS, Colburn & Bentley letter books, Vol 122, p94.

⁷ Grant Thorburn, *Forty Years Residence in America* (London: James Fraser, 1834).

Grant Thorburn

Galt states that ‘the story is not altogether fictitious, at least in the earlier parts’⁸ because he met in New York Grant Thorburn, an émigré Scot who had done very well in the USA. Thorburn had written his own autobiography and Galt purchased the manuscript for, he tells us, ‘an author’s, not a publisher’s price’.⁹ Galt made no secret of his model and was quoted to that effect when extracts from Thorburn’s autobiography were published in Fraser’s Magazine in June 1833.¹⁰ Thorburn sought to capitalise on his association with Lawrie and when he published the complete book in his own name, Galt not only willingly gave up his rights but also contributed a preface to the work.¹¹ Galt declared himself pleased to see Thorburn’s autobiography published because ‘it has been supposed that I owed much more to him than I did.’¹² He wanted readers and critics to value his own powers of invention rather than to think that he was merely a copyist. He added that ‘Lawrie Todd, however, belongs I hope to a superior class of mental personages, though the lineaments are certainly derived from Mr Thorburn’.¹³

There is a didactic purpose to *Lawrie Todd* in that Galt sets out to show what an emigrant can achieve in the new world by industry, entrepreneurship and sober living. It is also a demonstration of the worth of the policies on emigration which Galt had long been urging the Colonial Office to adopt. The eponymous hero starts out with considerable disadvantages. He has been a sickly child and as an adult his height ‘scarcely exceeds four feet and a half, and at no period have I weighed more than ninety eight pounds three ounces and a half’ (I, p6), although Thorburn says that he is ‘only four feet ten inches’.¹⁴ He is a

⁸ Thorburn, *Residence*, p174.

⁹ Galt, *Literary Life and Miscellanies* (London: T Cadell, 1834) Vol I, p296.

¹⁰ ‘Mr Thorburn’s MS – The Original “Lawrie Todd”’, in *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*, June 1833, p668.

¹¹ Thorburn, *Residence*, p1.

¹² Galt, *Literary Life*, p296.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p295.

¹⁴ Thorburn, *Residence*, p12.

nailmaker and an activist in the Friends of the People¹⁵ which causes him to be arrested, arraigned in Edinburgh on treason charges, but bailed, rather humiliatingly because he and his comrades 'were objects of pity more than scorn' (I, p25). In Thorburn's account an Edinburgh woman, seeing him being marched to trial, exclaims, 'if the King is afraid of sic a little fellow as that (pointing to me) I dinna ken what will become of him!'¹⁶

Assisted by their father Lawrie skips bail and with his brother sails to New York. He takes up his trade as a nail-maker, marries, makes enough money to buy a store, diversifies into being a florist and seedsman, buys an unprofitable farm in New Jersey and goes bankrupt. 'I then went back to New York to begin the world penniless, really worse by a sixpence than when I landed nineteen years before' (I, p154).

Thorburn and Todd

Up to this point the novel has closely followed Thorburn's autobiography and has reproduced some passages word for word, although Galt makes the occasional emendation of Thorburn's matter of fact style. For example Galt, as Lawrie, writes of his first wife that 'we were married in the house of a friend, with quiet and sobriety befitting our circumstances' (I, p67). Thorburn, however, says of his first marriage that 'I stuck to my hammer till the usual hour of seven o'clock, joined the company at eight, drank tea, was married, and got home before ten o'clock'.¹⁷

It is only the first two parts of the novel, of nine in all, which are closely modelled on Thorburn's autobiography. From the beginning of Part III onwards Galt takes the narrative into, literally, new territory and away from Thorburn's life but he retains Thorburn's character in Todd the overtly religious but sharp businessman who ascribes his success, in a rather self-satisfied way, to the workings of Providence and the favour of God.

¹⁵ The Society of the Friends of the People was a radical organisation dedicated to Parliamentary reform (see Michael Lynch, *Scotland A New History* (London: Pimlico, 2010) p389).

¹⁶ Thorburn, *Residence*, p17.

¹⁷ Thorburn, *Residence*, p55.

A further indication of Thorburn's character can be gleaned from his preface when he says that 'I have thought for many years that it was a debt I owed to society to publish my life'¹⁸ and he guards against that being prevented by adding that 'I have thought that even though I might leave this manuscript with a request for my children to publish it after my death, yet ... a false delicacy, or the advice of some most *profoundly wise friend* [Thorburn's italics] might prevent it'.¹⁹ As an author who had made his name with novels of ironic self-revelation Galt must have seized on this manuscript with relish and picks up on these traits.

He has Todd say that 'I was never slack of giving good advice when a fitting opportunity came in the way, always considering it a duty incumbent to benefit the rest of the world with the fruits of my experience' (I, p135). Even when the advice is not well received he consoles himself with the thought that 'it was for his good; and a sarcasm was an ill return for a kind intent' (II, p301).

When he does have a setback he comments that 'it was, therefore, needful I should receive a chastisement, but I never thought I had deserved it until it was inflicted' (I, p139). When he meets a real tragedy, as with the death of his young daughter, he says that it was 'strange, that in such a time I should experience, instead of an augmentation of grief and care, a holy tranquillity diffused within my bosom, and a resignation to the will of Heaven, that could have come from no resolution of mine.' (I, p151).

There are, however, occasional slips. Early in the book, Lawrie boasts that he holds the record for nail-making, which at that time did not involve machinery, in that 'between six in the morning and nine at night' he made 'three thousand two hundred and twenty nails' (I, p41) but when he is clearing trees in his new home in upper New York state he says that 'my

¹⁸ Thorburn, *Residence*, p5.

¹⁹ Thorburn, *Residence*, p6.

arms, which were never strong, became almost powerless' (I, p228). It is difficult to believe that a champion nail-maker did not have strong arms.²⁰

Hints for settlers

Galt says in his *Literary Life* that in *Lawrie Todd* 'the disposition to be didactic was more indulged than I previously thought could be rendered consistent with a regular story'.²¹ Part of the didactic purpose of the novel is to let Britons know of the nature of the wilderness; thus there are descriptions of forest fires (I, p216), snakes (I, p189), encounters with bears (I, p248), and with wolves (I, p226). Galt seeks to avoid the obvious in his didacticism; each of these episodes has the dual purpose of providing a dramatic moment in the plot as well as an opportunity to instruct readers about what may be encountered in this new wild land. He also shows what must be done to make the wilderness habitable. Without labouring the point he demonstrates the method of building shanties, or temporary dwellings, (I, p188) and then houses (I, p212), taking care to note that unseasoned timber will shrink in warm weather (I, p213), and the best way to clear the ground of trees (I, p212).

He warns prospective settlers about the weather conditions which will be encountered by describing a flood (I, p196) and by unobtrusively pointing out that work is impossible 'during the wet weather, in which no man could work' (I, p229). Such conditions also make travelling very difficult so that after a short journey by wagon 'my hips and knees were both black and blue, and I could scarcely lift a limb' (I, p253). It was possibly surprising for

²⁰ It might be thought that making Todd a nailmaker is a direct reference to Adam Smith's use of nailmaking as a case study (see Smith, Adam *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Cambridge: Penguin Classics, 2011) p113) but Thorburn had actually been a nailmaker, as he makes clear in his autobiography. Smith points out that an experienced nailmaker could make 'upwards of two thousand three hundred nails in a day' so a champion might make three thousand two hundred and twenty.

²¹ Galt, *Literary Life*, I, p298.

British readers but he makes it clear that during the winter the best means of travel is by sleigh (I, p259).

All in all, Todd says that ‘the discomforts of the first few years of a new settlement are unspeakable’ (II, p103). Apart from being true, these descriptions serve to warn the would-be settler that he should read the agents’ advertisements with a healthy degree of scepticism.

Immediate practical advice is offered in the cautionary episode of James Pirns, a Paisley weaver emigrating with his family and who Todd meets on a steamboat going up the Hudson River. He itemises all the furniture and household goods which the Pirns have brought, the problems they have transporting such baggage and the loss they meet when they have to sell ‘such trumpery’ (I, p180). The clear implication is that settlers should acquaint themselves with what is actually required in the wilderness and limit themselves to the necessities.

By contrast, when the Cockspur family arrive in the wilderness after emigrating from England Todd describes them as ‘of a genteeler class than migrants commonly consist of ...and were, for settlers the best prepared of all I have ever met with’ (II, p116). It becomes clear that they have capital because they buy from Todd ‘four thousand acres’ and ‘they paid me cash down’ (II, p120). This is the type of emigrant that Galt continually implored the Colonial Office to encourage and was a recurrent theme in the articles he wrote about Government emigration policy. Andrea Cozza says that the Cockspurs ‘are his ideal settlers’.²²

Yet even here Galt sounds a note of necessary caution. Todd tells one of the young Cockspurs that:

²² Andrea Cozza, *John Galt: A study of his lesser-known works*, MLitt dissertation, University of Glasgow, 1973, p108.

You will be much mistaken if you expect to find America like England, and still more so if you think it may be made so. I have seen many self-conceited emigrants, who imagined it might: not being able at home to make England like America, they come here, and their first work is to make America like England. It is wonderful how much this is the case with the reforming gentry (I, p239).

This is the Galt who has observed the behaviour of emigrants and travellers not only in North America but in Europe and the near East. His first published book, in 1812, was an account of his travels round the Mediterranean.²³ It is also noteworthy that he uses England rather than Britain for this warning. His Scottish characters seem to be more inclined to take things as they find them and, while reminiscing fondly about the old country, adapt more readily to their new circumstances. Todd is himself the prime example of this trait.

Irony and revelation

The novel is purportedly an autobiography and the totality of it indicates Todd's character but the introduction of John Waft to the novel, as well as adding considerably to the comedy, is a device to allow Galt, in his usual ironic way, to expose facets of Todd's character, especially his capacity for self-deception. The interaction with Waft is especially pointed in that respect. Waft is referred to in the settlement as the Bailie, the Scots term for a burgh officer, next in rank to the Provost²⁴, and is meant ironically since such men were often deemed to be plausible speakers possessing a good conceit of themselves.

Waft is introduced almost at the end of the first volume and is described, by Todd, as 'a queer, odd-looking, west-country Scotchman, past the middle of life' and that 'it could not be said that he was a very sensible man' (I, p265). Yet the ensuing dialogue demonstrates clearly that Waft is easily able to get the better of Todd and is a much more subtle debater than Todd who, not a whit the wiser, laments that Waft was 'was all the time making a fool

²³ Galt, *Voyages and Travels* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1812).

²⁴ *Concise Scots Dictionary*, Mairi Robinson (ed.) (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1985) p27.

of me, and I never to suspect, which shows the danger of talking with persons who have not common sense' (I, p270). Waft carries strong echoes of Provost Pawkie, whose maxim was 'to rule without being felt, which is the great mystery of policy'.²⁵

When Todd and his uncle and business partner, Mr Hoskins, decide to establish a new town Waft asks whether they will name it Hoskinsville or Todopolis. Todd replies that 'you were never farther astray in your whole life, Mr Waft' and adds that they are not 'such fools as to call cities after our own names – no, no, we're of sober imaginings' (II, p43). The new settlement is eventually called Judiville, after Todd's second wife and Hoskins' niece but when Todd speaks later of his success in the venture he mentions in Judiville the 'main streets, both to the right and the left of the premises of Hoskins and Todd – that is, Hoskin's street and Todd's-street' (II, p125).

When Todd decides to remove from Babelmandel to Judiville Waft begins to make enquiries about buying Todd's store at the former place. Todd, in a self-congratulatory way, thinks to beat Waft at his own game but finds, at the end of the process, that Waft has comprehensively outsmarted him yet again. 'Catch me again at such costly daffin' he concludes (II, p143). Yet Waft does catch him again by making a success of the store and then quitting it by selling back to Todd the useless stock left on his hands (II, p285).

Amusing as these and some subsequent passages in similar vein are, the necessity for Galt to extend the story to three volume length means that he overuses Bailie Waft so that by the end of the novel the descriptions of his continuing mastery of Todd become repetitious and tedious. It also begins to stretch credulity that Todd, a man who is waxing richer by the day from his store and his land speculations, acquired by shrewd deal-making, could be so

²⁵ Galt, *The Provost*, p8.

consistently trumped by John Waft. It rather makes a nonsense of the name Galt has given to his hero since *tod* in Scots means not only a fox but a sly, cunning person.²⁶

Todd's description of the ceremony of the founding of Judiville is an elaboration of what Galt and his associate, Dr William 'Tiger' Dunlop, did at the founding of Guelph for the Canada Company. In Guelph Galt tells us that he was first to have 'the honour and glory of laying the axe to the root' of a 'superb maple-tree' and that it fell with 'the noise of an avalanche'.²⁷ In the novel the climax of considerable celebrations was that Mr Hoskins 'took an axe and struck the first stroke...I struck the second, and so it went round, until the tree fell with a sound like thunder, banishing the loneliness and silence of the woods for ever' (II, p60).

The felling was preceded by a procession from the existing settlement of Babelmandel, with 'tin horns and trumpets sending forth a great shout' and the firing of a home-made cannon and is completed with eating and drinking (II, p60). The beginning of a new community was not just another working day and deserved some mark but this scene, with music, cannon and feasting driving out the 'loneliness and silence' suggests that the forest was an alien and potentially malevolent spirit which had to be exorcised before 'civilisation' could take root.

Galt was a product of the Enlightenment and this shows even in the layout of Guelph. Bob Harris and Charles McKean state that urban settings in eighteenth century Europe and 'its expanding global empires' was driven by 'a remarkably uniform set of ambitions and values and a common urban code'. They go on to cite 'geometrical patterns', and 'classical public buildings framing terminating vistas or framing central public spaces'.²⁸ In his article about the founding of Guelph Galt talks of 'the market house – a rude copy of a Greek

²⁶ *Concise Scottish Dictionary*, p726.

²⁷ Galt, 'Guelph in Upper Canada', in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, November 1830, p456.

²⁸ Bob Harris and Charles McKean, *The Scottish Town in the Age of the Enlightenment 1740-1820* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2014) p80.

temple' and of an avenue 'as large as the Long Walk in Windsor Park'. The engravings illustrating the article also show geometrical patterns and framing vistas.²⁹ He was also an empiricist who believed in the progress of civilisation, even it did incur casualties, but this passage, with its echoes of driving out spirits, hints at a deep-rooted need to respect and appease older gods.

Identity

The cautionary words to the Cockspurs, quoted above, distinguished between England and Scotland and Scottishness is a recurrent theme of the novel. In a sense it is unavoidable because Galt has chosen to use Grant Thorburn as his model and Thorburn makes a great deal of his national identity. Of the principal characters in the novel, the Cockspurs and Mr Herbert are English and Mr Zerobabel L Hoskins is American; all the others are Scots. The Cockspurs and Mr Herbert are conspicuously the most 'genteel' middle class characters in the book. Despite his attachment to Scotland and robust defence of its institutions Todd chooses English people to exemplify refinement of education and character. He reinforces the point by saying that 'no gentlewoman can ever be properly genteel that speaks with the Scottish accent' (III, p175).

Galt had shown no cultural cringe in his previous, and best-selling, novels and made few concessions in terms of Scottish speech. Here, however, he is not only reflecting via Todd a common attitude among Scots in relation to language but he is writing for prospective emigrants and he is keen to make sure that they get the best possible start in their new land. It is also, of course, a way to flatter his target market, the majority of whom would be English.

Mr Hoskins is Galt's typical American. Virtually the same character occurs as Mr Peabody in his short story 'An Aunt in Virginia' and he meets all the specifications of the

²⁹ Galt, 'Guelph in Upper Canada', in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, November 1830, p456.

American character described by Galt in 'The British and Americans' (both discussed in Chapter 3). He is plain speaking and entrepreneurial and 'was one of those who thought Laws and Governments often inconvenient and always troublesome' (III, p197).

Galt has time for some good-natured fun at the expense of his home area. One of his characters, Mr Semple, a mill-wright who has emigrated from 'the Brig-o'-Johnstone, in Renfrewshire' is 'a little addicted to the Reforming of Parliament; - for the folks about the Brig-o'-Johnstone, Kilbarchan and Lochanogh [Lochwinnoch] are great Reformers' (II, p249). These were weaving communities and weavers were acknowledged to be in the vanguard of political radicalism. As a former Friend of the People himself, Todd would have recognised the signs.

Mr Semple then describes a new church at Greenock, 'one of the finest buildings in Christendom: at least so said Mr Semple, and he but repeated the opinion of all the inhabitants of Greenock, the most enlightened community in the West of Scotland, scarcely excepting even that of Port Glasgow' (II, p251). This might appear to be self-indulgent in that the vast majority of Galt's readers would know nothing of the West of Scotland and might be puzzled by these aspersions on the vanity of the people of Renfrewshire. But in every locality the metropolitan citizens are amused by the pretensions of the smaller communities of their hinterlands. Such an instance of apparent localism is emblematic of the universality of human nature. Galt's keen observation of how people actually think and speak about their communities has a much wider application than only to Renfrewshire. Readers in other places would recognise the syndrome.

More generally, Galt voices considered views on the conflicting patriotic emotions of the emigrant. When Todd is considering whether to stand for public office in America he reflects on the contrary demands of his position. On the one hand he says that 'my conscience could not away with the thought of renouncing the right to claim paternity with

Sir William Wallace and the brave old bald-headed worthies of the Covenant' (III, p198). America, on the other hand 'had been to me a land of refuge [and] of many blessings. It contained all that was nearest and dearest to me in friends, and kin, and substance' (III, p199).

He goes on to ask 'what was there in the far-off valleys of Scotland to fetter me from serving, by head or hand, the country of my adoption' (III, p199). Yet he does decline the invitation to run for office in case there should be a conflict between his old country and his new. This was not an outlandish notion. Less than twenty years had passed since the end of the war of 1812 and there remained points of dispute. The Monroe Doctrine was a unilateral declaration by the US in 1823 expressing hostility to further European expansion in the western hemisphere and there were repeated trade disputes throughout the 1820s.³⁰ In 1837, during the Canadian rebellion, a British party destroyed the US ship 'Caroline' in US waters which 'threatened to lead to war' between the two countries.³¹

He concludes his ruminations by saying that, 'truly it is an awful thing for a man to forswear his native land' (III, p200). Apart from the possible difficulty of having to take sides in a dispute, Todd is reflecting the common emigrant feeling of holding on to his roots. The conscious, rational part of his mind knows that America is his home and his future but there is a deeper, barely acknowledged, emotional part that clings to the land where he was born and bred.

By this point, however, he has recognised that his native land can no longer be his home. He assesses his return to Scotland as 'of all the passages of my life, this visit to Scotland was the most unsatisfactory' (III, p117). He recognises that he has been away too long and that the country and people he remembers are changed, just as he is changed by his years in America. He has, like many travellers, retained in his imagination a picture of the

³⁰ Reginald C Stewart, *United States Expansionism and British North America, 1775-1871* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) p110.

³¹ Francis Paul Prucha, *The Sword of the Republic* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1969) p313.

place he left and while his conscious mind accepts the inevitability of change, his subconscious is disappointed that things are not as he left them.

Galt was by no means a political nationalist and, as *Ringan Gilhaize* shows, would have had no truck with Jacobitism. The Hanoverian succession and the British state were perfectly acceptable to him but he could be described as a cultural nationalist for the way he deployed Scottish speech in this, and even more so in his West of Scotland novels, and for the way he defended Presbyterianism as Scotland's established religion and a beneficent inheritance for its people.

Like Sir Walter Scott, Galt was a unionist who was fascinated by Scotland's independent past but the two men viewed that history through very different lenses. Scott romanticised Highlanders and Jacobites, as in *Waverley*³² and *Rob Roy*³³ : Galt had little time for Highlanders, as will be seen in the chapter on *Bogle Corbet*, and spoke, as quoted above, about the 'old bald-headed worthies of the Covenant'. He was even moved to write *Ringan Gilhaize* as a riposte to Scott's treatment of the Covenanters in *Old Mortality*.³⁴

Linda Colley suggests that Great Britain is 'an invented nation superimposed, if only for a while, on to much older alignments and loyalties'.³⁵ The common identity of the British 'did not come into being because of an integration and homogenisation of disparate cultures'.³⁶ Tom Devine puts it slightly differently by saying that Scots had developed 'a dual allegiance, a political loyalty to Britain [while] maintaining a continuing sense of identity with their native land'.³⁷ It suited Galt, as it suited many other Scots, to declare themselves as British and to be enthusiastic proponents of Empire but to be equally committed to the language, culture and history of Scotland. Colin Kidd perhaps summarises

³² Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

³³ Scott, *Rob Roy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

³⁴ Scott, *Old Mortality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).

³⁵ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation* (London: Pimlico, 2003) p5.

³⁶ Colley, p6.

³⁷ Tom Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000* (London: Penguin, 1999) p30.

the issue more neatly by stating that ethnic identities ‘are not timeless...with an elasticity permitting a degree of invention and reinvention’.³⁸

Galt’s ‘elasticity’ is shown by the way in which he sees Scotland as distinct while regarding the Union as an uncontestedly worthwhile development. He makes no mention of Union in his autobiography and shows no inclination to question it in his works. He does, however, value those provisions of the Union which safeguarded Scotland’s distinctive laws and religion, contrasting them favourably with the drive for full incorporation in Lower Canada. In the article ‘Canadian Affairs’³⁹, discussed in Chapter 3, he states that Great Britain ‘consists of two distinct nations, the English and the Scotch’ but he is content that they should have one King and one Parliament. Galt feels that the Union gives him the best of both worlds.

If that was the case for Scots who lived in Britain then it was likely to be strengthened in those who had emigrated to places, such as the United States, where the political centre was not London. Where there was no need to be British and where, thousands of miles from home, nostalgia could be given free rein, then the comforts of the Scottish identity could be enjoyed with less restraint as can be seen in Todd’s repeated references to Scotland and his recourse to Scottish speech when, at other times, he can speak in ‘Standard’ English.

Language

Galt thus has Todd, Waft and other characters employing Scots words and locutions and has parts of the novel set in Scotland. To help his readers, he attaches a glossary at the end of the book to explain Scots and American words and expressions. This is a departure from his previous practice. In the earlier novels, with much more and broader Scots in them, readers are trusted to deduce the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context. This proved no great barrier to sales, even in England. There are two possible and plausible explanations

³⁸ Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999) p4.

³⁹ Galt, ‘Canadian Affairs’, in *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*, May 1830, p389.

for the inclusion of the glossary. The first is the simple practical point that Galt needed the extra pages to fulfil his agreement to provide Colburn and Bentley with a full three volumes. The second, and more fundamental reason, is that this is a novel of instruction and Galt would have been keen to ensure that his readers were as fully prepared as possible for emigration. He would not have wanted any misunderstanding about what the Scots settlers or American natives were saying and he would have wanted the would-be emigrants to be aware that they would encounter unfamiliar words and forms of speech. Unlike his novels set in Scotland these North American texts had a specific didactic purpose and Galt was seeking a wider, and possibly less well-educated readership.

The Americanisms he glosses include ‘boozer’ and ‘boss’ which are defined as ‘a drunkard’ and ‘an overseer of mechanics’ respectively (III, p317). A ‘cocktail’ is a dram of bitters (III, p318) and a ‘snack’ is ‘a hasty refreshment’ (III, p322). The OED confirms that ‘boss’ in this sense is American and cites Galt as one of the first users.⁴⁰ For ‘cocktail’, however, the first use is shown as 1856 and refers to a person who is ‘cocktailed’ or the worse for drink. It is not used to mean a mixed drink until 1936, while ‘snack’ is quoted as originating in England.⁴¹ The words were obviously sufficiently unfamiliar to Galt to warrant explanation to his readers.

The Scots words also represent a departure from his previous practice. There are no glossaries in the West of Scotland novels with which he made his name but here he is concerned to be fully understood by all his readers. That does not prevent him from sometimes adopting a Johnsonian approach to his lexicography. ‘Gausy’ is defined as ‘comfortably fat. See many landladies, aldermen and church dignitaries’ (III, p319) and ‘spider’, the implement which causes Todd so much trouble with Bailie Waft, as ‘an iron utensil for some kitchen purpose, the exact use not known to me’ (III, p322). Language

⁴⁰*OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2014 [www.oed.com] accessed 7/4/2014.

⁴¹ *Ibid*.

always matters to Galt and he takes great care with it. It is important to him that this novel should be fully intelligible to all readers, whether English or Scots.

Gender

Todd is married three times in the course of the novel but each of the wives, while given due praise for her work and character, tends to be in the background and we are given few clues about their own personalities. The two most vivid female characters are both, in different ways, outlandish. One is Miss Beeny Needles who tries to entrap Todd into marriage when he makes a return visit to Scotland and the other is the unfortunate Mrs Bell who has sinned in her youth, become a drunkard, and who perishes by drowning.

The first wife, Rebecca, whom Todd marries as a young man in New York, is described as beautiful, 'tall, slender and erect' (I, p63) and the gift of her love 'is the greatest I have ever received' (I, p81). At an early stage he perceives that she is devoutly religious, although their courtship is perhaps unconventional since 'she was entirely ignorant on the ruin of man by the Fall' (I, p58) and Todd pursues his suit by making good that lack. She has chosen Todd over a much richer suitor because of their religious affinity but after she has given birth she dies even if her 'couch of disease was sweetened with a holiness passing all that was precious in the myrrh and frankincense of this world' (I, p83) and she departs saying that she is 'entering the brighter precincts of a brighter sun' (I, p84). Apart from the religiosity we are not given any further information about her character or about any interior life she may have had.

Judith, the second wife, is a marriage of convenience, although it turns out to be a contented one. Todd marries her within a year of Rebecca's death and he says, 'I did not choose my second wife from the instincts of fondness, nor for her parentage, nor for her fortune; neither was I deluded by fair looks' (I, p88). He goes further: 'I think a small fortune one of the greatest faults a young woman can have' (I, p88). Nevertheless, she had a share in

one of her uncle's trade ventures and it pays out 'to the blithesome tune of four hundred and thirty three dollars' on their wedding day (I, p93). He records, too, that it is 'by the help of [Judith's] fortune I enlarged the borders of my dealings' (I, p100). For Todd, practice does not always follow precept.

Some critics have suggested that Galt is heartless in the rather brutal way he records Todd's second marriage. Erik Frykman has pointed out that Todd's matter-of-factness is 'at times devastating' and that the motto of the immediately succeeding chapter is 'Now let's to business'⁴² but, as that quote from Thorburn about the brevity and lack of ceremony in his first marriage shows, Galt is being true to the unsentimental nature of his model. If, as Todd says, 'one scruple of prudence is worth a pound of passion' (I, p87) and he had 'my first-born needing tendance' (I, p88) then his actions were supremely rational, if unromantic.

The third volume of the novel is about Todd's return to Scotland where he is almost ensnared into marriage by a woman caricatured as a desperate spinster. He evades her clutches but does marry a much younger widow who returns with him to America where he resumes his business career with the establishment of a salt works and begins to be involved in American politics.

The Scottish sojourn takes place, after a visit to Todd's home village, in 'the royal borough of Chucky Stanes' (III, p23). Paul Scott tells us that the town is Peebles, according to a note made by Galt,⁴³ and has 'the romantic scenery of the Tweed' (III, p24). Todd rents a house from Miss Beeny Needles and describes her as having 'passed to the most experienced side of fifty', 'at least twenty years behind the fashion appropriate to her real age', and as 'a tall atomy [whose] acquaintance, on account of her meagre length and being still unmarried, called her the Spare-rib' (III, p25).

⁴² Erik Frykman, *John Galt's New World Novels*, in *John Galt Reappraisals*, Elizabeth Waterson (ed.), (Guelph: Guelph UP, 1985) p13.

⁴³ Paul Scott, *John Galt* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985) p96.

The description goes on almost beyond caricature with its account of her ‘gnarled elbows’, a neck like ‘a bundle of wangee bamboos tied together with a string of red coral beads’, ‘a complexion of the same dingy yellow, save that the point of her beaky nose was tipped, as it were, with a ruby stone, that in frosty weather, when the wind was easterly, deepened into purple’ (III, p26). Galt seems to be trying to outdo Burns who portrayed as fantastically ugly the wife of Willie Wastle, who also ‘dwalt on Tweed’.⁴⁴ In addition to the physical imperfections, Miss Needles is extremely economical since ‘her banquets were tea and turn out’ and she is mocked for her unwarranted ‘pretensions to superior accomplishments’ (III, p26). None of the male characters, except Todd himself, attract the same level of physical scrutiny or criticism.

There is a clear similarity between Miss Needles and the Misses Minigaff in *The Last of the Lairds*⁴⁵ but Miss Needles is nowhere afforded the same sympathy or the same depth of character. Her function is purely to be the provider of absurd and comedic episodes and the climactic incident where Todd pins her wig to the sofa (III, p64) and thus precipitates an inquiry and potential suit for breach of promise is farcical but it is also cruel enough to border on the distasteful. Jennie Aberdein’s verdict on the novel is that ‘the characterisation is good as always, and the humour pleasing, except perhaps for two lapses into daring jocularity’.⁴⁶ She does not specify what the two lapses are but it is a fair guess that Miss Needles features in both.

Mrs Bell, the minister’s wife in Judiville, is the other female character who provides a memorable incident in the story. Her husband arrives in America under a cloud since, in Scotland, he ‘had met with a misfortune along with his landlady’s dochter’. They marry but produce a child ‘in less than three months’ (II, p78). At various points thereafter we are

⁴⁴ Robert Burns, *Willie Wastle*, in *Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, James Barke (ed.) (Glasgow: Collins, 1955) p 550.

⁴⁵ Galt, *The Last of the Lairds*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976).

⁴⁶ Aberdein, p168.

reminded of the awful burden that this has placed on Mr Bell and of how he might rightly regret his youthful mistake but there is no suggestion that Mrs Bell might equally have regrets or that her life, as much as his, has as a result been a disappointment. Instead, we are told that Mr Bell is unhappy because his wife ‘has an uncouth slovenliness’ (II, p300) and is habitually ‘in a state of vehement intoxication’ (II, p302). All the sympathy is with the man, ‘for where was he to find comfort, while he had yon obstreperous randy at his side?’ (II, p305). She finally drowns, rather horribly, in what might be interpreted as a drink-induced suicide which is a release for Mr Bell since ‘no sincere human being could deny that it was a gentle, nay a desirable dispensation’ (II, p334).⁴⁷

There is ample evidence that Mr Bell would have been a difficult man to live with but there is no compassion or understanding shown to Mrs Bell. The attitude towards women is summed up in Todd’s courtship of his third wife, the young widow Mrs Greenknowe, when he tells her that ‘the first duty of a wedded wife consists in smoothing the pillow of her husband’ (III, p102). Fortunately, Mrs Greenknowe shares this view since she declares that ‘if she was ordained to become my wife, or that of any other man, it would be for the benefit of her own happiness to draw her pleasures from the same well’ (III, p103). She cements her position after her marriage by refusing to give her opinion on a matter because ‘it is a male business, and does not become a woman to meddle in it’ (III, p198). Having thus established that Mrs Greenknowe is of a proper feminine submissiveness we are given no further insights into her character. She is, however, given one instance of apparent self-determination. Todd rather archly tells us that ‘she took into her head to grow thick in the waist, with the promise of an addition to our family’ (III, p222).

⁴⁷ It may not be coincidental that Galt named the minister Mr Bell. There was an actual case of a Reverend Bell who, unable to get a call in Scotland, overrides his wife’s strong objections and forces his family to emigrate with him in 1817 to Upper Canada where he secures a parish. (See Tanja Buelman, Andrew Hinson and Graeme Morton, *The Scottish Diaspora* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2013) pp 69, 70).

Galt's attitude chimes with Silvia Sebastiani's analysis of women and stadialism when she says that 'the commercial stages allowed women to assume the role which "nature" had foreseen: they became companions to men, responsible mothers of their families, and prepared teachers for their children'.⁴⁸ Mrs Greenknowe is the model; Mrs Bell and Miss Needles are the awful warnings.

Religion

When a church is to be built in Judiville, Todd plans a 'proper kirk Session and every thing becoming the dignity of our national – I mean – the Scottish establishment' (II, p272). Galt may here be simply reflecting the views of Thorburn, who was all his life a convinced Presbyterian, although not always for wholly theological reasons. Thorburn asserts that 'the uniform and first means of the Scotchmen's rise in the world, lays in the habit they had contracted in their own country of going to church on the Sabbath', because 'there he can't spend his money'.⁴⁹

It seems equally likely that Galt is asserting his own views. He not only defended the Covenanters in *Ringan Gilhaize*,⁵⁰ although he did say that 'the sentiments which it breathes are not mine',⁵¹ but in his writings related to Canada he persistently described the Church of England as a sect, and a minority sect at that. Galt's defence of Presbyterianism seems to stem from its Scottishness rather than its theology. As Callum Brown points out 'the Established Church was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a central institution of Scottish Civil Society'.⁵² He is certainly not a sectarian. In Canada he was careful to give equal rights to all the branches of Christianity with whom he had dealings and had a mutually beneficial friendship with the Catholic Bishop McDonnell. His objections to Anglicanism

⁴⁸ Silvia Sebastiani, 'Race', *Women and Progress in the Scottish Enlightenment in Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (eds.) (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005) p79.

⁴⁹ Thorburn, *Residence*, p232.

⁵⁰ Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1984).

⁵¹ Galt, *Literary Life*, I, p251.

⁵² Callum Brown, *The People in the Pews religion and Society in Scotland 1780*, (Glasgow: Economic and Social History Society of Scotland, 1993) p14.

were not based on dogma but on what he perceived as the arrogance of that church's attempts to become all-powerful politically when they were a numerical minority.

Galt tended to be as contemptuous of denominational zeal as he was of political partisanship. In laying out Guelph he was careful to allocate 'a beautiful central hill' for the Catholic Church, 'the centre of a rising ground, destined to be hereafter a square' for the Episcopal Church 'and another rising ground was reserved for the Presbyterians'.⁵³ He carries this attitude into the novel. Todd describes himself as 'a firm and true Presbyterian' (III, p196) but does not seek to proselytise, nor does he allow his faith to interfere with business. When the Minister, Mr Bell, solicits his help to establish pre-eminence over the Methodists he refuses, calling such an idea 'an old-country conceit and priestly pretension' (III, p196). When Mr Bell does leave the Kirk to become a Methodist, Todd thinks that 'though it savoured of some apostacy (sic), I yet did not greatly condemn, for it was a blessing to the flock of that barren pasture' (III, p226). The use of 'apostacy' indicates that Todd does not like to see the Minister turning away from the traditional Scottish faith but it does not call for condemnation partly because it provides a clergyman for a related branch of the Christian community and partly because it absolves Todd of any guilt he might feel for precipitating the move by refusing to provide an exclusive kirk for the Presbyterians.

Todd 'had long been anxious to obtain a properly educated clergyman to settle amongst us' (II, p69) because of the good that would do to 'a backsliding people' (II, p84). He has observed that the children of the Backwoodsmen 'in the course of the third generation, are scarcely equal to the savage Indians in knowledge, and far below them in morality' (I, p231). This is consistent with Galt's depiction of Indians in his short stories (see Chapter 3) and far removed from dismissing them as the barbaric heathens that many of his contemporaries did.

⁵³ Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p 61.

In his *Autobiography* Galt gives an account of how the Huron Indians became British subjects and explains that the Indians unwittingly compromised their independence by accepting what the British saw as a gift of land and what the Indians saw as an exchange, so that they ‘came to be regarded (never on their part) as British subjects’ and that they were treated ‘in total oblivion of their origin and connexion’ so that the British Government fell into the error ‘of arrogating to itself a supremacy over the Six Nations, to which it had neither claim nor right’.⁵⁴ Moral improvement is undoubtedly a motivating factor in trying to attract a minister but it is combined with business because Todd notes that ‘it would be much for his profit to be able to advertise ... that an effectual preacher and schoolmaster was provided’ in a new settlement (II, p85).

By selling shares in the building the community raises funds to erect a church (II, p250). Todd is appointed Treasurer of the fund and consults with Mr Semple, who was a reformer in Renfrewshire but who now owns a sawmill and who is one of the prime movers of the church proposal, that the wood will be brought from his mill while the glass and hardware will come from Messrs Hoskins and Todd. ‘It was a profitable, but not a fortune making job to both of us’ says Todd in a very complacent fashion (II, p252).

When the church is finally completed Todd again puts profit before faith. He admits that ‘I had often spoken to Mr Bell as if the church was exclusively designed for him’ (II, p271) and admits too that before completion he had ‘ascertained that the Methodists would far outbid the Presbyterians and Episcopalians united; and that they were not at all disposed to be in any way conjoined with them’ (II, p272).

As a student of Scottish society Galt was no stranger to intra-church disputes and reflects them in *The Ayrshire Legatees* and *The Annals* with references to the Secession and Relief Kirks breaking away from the established religion but whereas in Scotland the driver

⁵⁴ Galt, *Autobiography*, I, pp284-5.

was doctrinal, in America there was a greater need for co-religionists to stand together against other sects and there were also, of course, as Todd recognises, business opportunities in religion. Slavish adherence to one type of Christianity inhibited potential profits. Thus a respect for the cloth has limits especially if it conflicts with commerce. When Mr Bell upbraids him for going back on his promise to provide the new church for the Presbyterians Todd says that he has ‘all proper reverence for God’s corbies; but for the carnality that is in the priesthood, I have as little respect as for the insolence of other men’ (II, p274).

At first glance Todd seems to be a perfect example of the Protestant-Capitalist nexus. He has worked hard, lived soberly, feared God and made a lot of money. Galt puts this in perspective. Todd has had to leave his own country, has had success in New York and then goes bankrupt in New Jersey. He has to move and start again in the Genessee country, which he can do only by the grace of a loan from the not notably religious Mr Hoskins. He has also had to cope with the death of two wives and of his daughter.

In religion as in other topics Galt pursues his didactic purpose and uses the novel to expound his own thoughts about the policies to be adopted in colonisation and community building. Religion is necessary and should be encouraged but it should not be confined to one particular denomination or creed. Todd is consistent in ranking his priorities, with religion slightly below business and that would seem to reflect Galt’s own views. Galt’s attitude to religion seems to have been the same as his attitude to politics. He said that he had never been able to discern ‘that there was aught in political persuasion, different from my own, to justify enmity’.⁵⁵ In religion as in politics Galt was content to let people pursue their own path to salvation.

⁵⁵ Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p229.

Professions

Just as Todd is not intimidated by ministers and is always keen to cast aspersions on lawyers he is equally underwhelmed by the pretensions of bankers. When he and Mr Hoskins are contemplating the establishment of a bank in Judiville he is at first wary, stating that ‘the mysteries of banking were deeper than I could ever well fathom’ (II, p191). After the bank is established and is thriving he observes that ‘bankers were a class of the commercial community more remarkable than any others for the narrowness of their knowledge, and the straitened circumstance of their intellectuals’ (III, p173). When considering a successor to Mr Herbert in the new bank he decides to appoint his brother because he had ‘quite as much information and capacity as the generality of bankers commonly possess or stand in need of’ (III, p177).

When writing about bankers, lawyers and other professions Galt seems to have agreed with Shaw that ‘all professions are conspiracies against the laity’.⁵⁶ More pertinently perhaps he had read Adam Smith’s opinion that ‘people of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices.’⁵⁷ Someone who is as acute an observer as Galt is bound to discern the restrictive practices of the professions.

Reception

The novel sold very well despite being in a competitive market. Andrea Cozza lists ten books on Upper Canada published prior to 1831 and containing guidance for emigrants.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Ian Gordon says that it was ‘a considerable success, going into a second edition

⁵⁶ George Bernard Shaw, *The Doctor’s Dilemma* (London: Constable, 1930) p107.

⁵⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Kathryn Sutherland (ed.) (Oxford: OUP, 1993) p129.

⁵⁸ Cozza, p109.

in the year of publication'⁵⁹ and Paul Scott notes that in the nineteenth century there were at least four British editions and sixteen in the United States.⁶⁰

The reviews were generally but not wholly favourable. There is a long unsigned piece in *Fraser's Magazine* of March 1830 which is very complimentary.⁶¹ It makes no mention of Grant Thorburn as the originator of the work but does discount the early part of the novel based on Thorburn's autobiography. When the location moves to the Genesee country the review says that 'now properly begins the real interest of the work'.⁶² The anonymous reviewer recognises the didacticism and calls it 'an instructive as well as a delightful book' and goes on to state that 'it has all the pleasing qualities which the public so well recognised in the *Annals of the Parish*, spread over a much larger surface, and applied to objects of far higher general interest'⁶³. *The Annals* is a superior work to *Lawrie Todd* but at that time descriptions of potential destinations for emigrants seemed to carry much more interest than accounts of a small Scottish parish.

There is a similar encomium in *The Literary Gazette* which says that the novel has 'mingled pathos and humour, keen observation and simplicity'.⁶⁴ All of these qualities are present but the simplicity is more apparent than real. It takes considerable sophistication on the part of an author to render simple characters engaging to the reader and despite the padding of appendices and digressions there is effective economy and skill involved in sketching the progress of a town like Judiville from inauguration to a place of 7,000 souls.

This review is also noteworthy for the way it has picked up on the didactic elements of the book. It tells its readers that: 'as a mere question of utility, [we] advise the perusal of

⁵⁹ Gordon, p93.

⁶⁰ Paul Scott, p99.

⁶¹ 'Lawrie Todd', in *Fraser's Magazine*, Edinburgh, James Fraser, March 1830, p236.

⁶² *Fraser's*, March 1830, p237.

⁶³ *Fraser's*, March 1830, p241.

⁶⁴ *Literary Gazette* (London: Henry Colburn, January 1830), p67.

these pages than a whole library of books on emigration'.⁶⁵ In the United States itself, the *North American Review* called it an 'entertaining little work' and 'a lively and correct description of the details of the process by which the woods are bowed beneath the sturdy stroke of the adventurous emigrant'.⁶⁶ Not all readers absorbed the advice. Galt lamented that 'the lessons taught by the instances of the book are altogether disregarded, and it is only valued for the amusement it gives', but he resignedly admits that 'the reader has the privilege of considering what is before him as he chooses'.⁶⁷

Set against these recommendations, the *Monthly Review* in March 1830, in a short unsigned article, offers the verdict that 'we have not recently seen anything so utterly and totally stupid, as *Laurie* (sic) *Todd*'.⁶⁸ It states that: 'the apparent object of the tale is to attract settlers to Canada', but doubts of its success: 'the effect of the narrative, if it were much read, of which there is little chance, would be to deter emigrants from directing their prows towards a quarter of the globe, where they might be likely to meet with such a horrible bore as Laurie Todd'.

There is a suspicion that the animus of the reviewer is directed not so much to the novel as to Scots in general and to Galt as one of their representatives. By way of introduction to the review it mentions the 'gin and beer smelling criticisms of old Blackwood's Magazine' and that Blackwood's contains 'childish reviews and drowsy tales', while Galt's language 'can only be understood amongst the wildest Covenanters of Scotland'. The novel was published by Colburn & Bentley and *Blackwood's* had nothing to do with it but *Blackwood's* was a competitor in the monthly magazine market and Galt and Blackwood were known to have been closely linked, with Blackwood publishing Galt's earlier successful novels.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p69.

⁶⁶ *The North American Review*, New York, Vol I, Issue 69, October 1830, p396.

⁶⁷ Galt, *Literary Life*, Vol I, p298.

⁶⁸ *The Monthly Review*, London: Hurst Robinson & Co, March 1830, p466.

Conclusion

Lawrie Todd follows a path which Galt had previously trodden well. It is a purported autobiography allowing scope for the hero to reveal his true character through unguarded revelations. It is also another of Galt's 'theoretical histories' wherein he attempts to chart the development of a community, rather as he did in *The Annals* and *The Provost*. The difference here is that whereas Dalmailing and Gudetown were long established places, the towns of the Genesee country were new and Judiville in particular we see built from scratch.

Nevertheless, Galt is pointing out that the settlers were not "tabulae rasae". They came from somewhere, mainly Scotland in this novel, and thus brought with them attitudes, concerns and beliefs which had to be adapted to a new land and to intercourse with people who had different backgrounds and beliefs. To take one apparently trivial example, Todd, who has much to be thankful for to Mr Hoskins, is continually annoyed with his American propensity for plain speaking and disdain for masking hard truths in polite discourse.

Religion too had to be adapted. Settlers from Britain came from a country where there was an overwhelmingly dominant version of Christianity, with Anglicanism and Presbyterianism the state-sanctioned religions of England and Scotland respectively. In America these "sects", as Galt describes them, had to compete with Methodists and others in a religious version of the market. These and many other lessons are contained in the novel, if the reader has the wit to see them.

Galt may have written the novel in a misanthropic state but Katie Trumpener calls it 'optimistic'⁶⁹ and she has good grounds for that view. Cheerfulness and good fortune do keep breaking out. Galt believed that if his precepts, as outlined in the text, of good preparation, hard work and sober living were followed then emigration represented an opportunity for both individual and collective progress. These are the lessons which he

⁶⁹ Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1997) p278.

wishes to teach and fiction is the medium in which he chooses to do it. The didacticism is equally marked in *Bogle Corbet* and is given further consideration in the concluding Chapter.

Galt was of a different class to Lawrie Todd and starting from a different point but in Todd's business successes and acquisition of fortune there may have been a projection of the trajectory Galt had foreseen for himself when he first went to Canada with such high hopes. At the time of writing he had not given up on those hopes and illness had not yet put an end to them so optimism is not a surprise. It is also, since it is set in America, a demonstration of the settlement policies which Galt favours. While there are a number of very well written episodes the need to fulfil the contract for a three volume novel requires the inclusion of too much that is extraneous.

Chapter 5 Bogle Corbet: ‘Teaching in Parables’

Introduction

The second of Galt’s North American novels, *Bogle Corbet or The Emigrants*, was published in 1831.¹ Elizabeth Waterston published a heavily truncated edition of the text in 1979 focussing only on the Canadian scenes.² To do so she had to dispense with the first two thirds of the book. To describe it therefore as “North American” is slightly misleading since that part of the book which is set in Canada occupies less than the final third. Before Corbet reaches Canada he has spent the bulk of the novel in Jamaica, Scotland and London. It is for this reason that Kenneth McNeil, in a perceptive essay, calls the book a circum-atlantic rather than a transatlantic, novel.³ This dissertation, however, is primarily concerned with Galt’s North American literature and does not therefore seek to address all the arguments raised in McNeil’s essay. It is sufficient to note that Corbet’s, and indeed Galt’s, world was wider than simply Britain and Canada.

Like *Lawrie Todd*, the book has a didactic purpose but where the character Todd pursues a trajectory which takes him from working-class and almost seditious beginnings to wealth and prosperity in America, Corbet begins and remains a bourgeois and the text is intended to illustrate Galt’s precepts on the type of person whom the Government should be encouraging to emigrate. It is in effect an expansion into the form of a novel of the ‘Bandana’ articles he had submitted to *Blackwood’s* (see Chapter 3). It is also an exploration of Enlightenment ideas, their practical application and the limitations thus revealed.

¹ Galt, *Bogle Corbet or The Emigrants* (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831).

² Galt, *Bogle Corbet*, Elizabeth Waterston (ed), (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1977).

³ Kenneth McNeil, *Time, Emigration, and the Circum-Atlantic World: John Galt’s ‘Bogle Corbet’*, in *John Galt Observations and conjectures on Literature, History, and Society*, Regina Hewitt (ed.) (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2012).

Galt is quite specific about his aims. In a preface to the novel, dated 20th April 1831, he states that the object of the work is to ‘show what a person of ordinarily genteel habits has really to expect in emigrating to Canada’ (I, piii). He also gives his qualifications for the job because the ‘author’s opportunities to acquire knowledge of the kind which he has here prepared, have been, at least, not common, and it was studiously gathered to be useful to others’. While he had originally proposed to present this information in ‘a regularly didactic form...a theoretic biography seemed better calculated to ensure the effect desired’ (I, pp iii, iv).⁴

He adds that in *Bogle Corbet* ‘I was desirous to exhibit the causes which now in this country induce a genteeler class of persons to emigrate than those who did so formerly’.⁵ He is therefore attempting to describe the reasons for middle class emigration and the benefits which such migration brings. Jennie Aberdein asserts that the novel is one ‘whose end forgets its beginning’ but gives no explanation for this gnomic verdict.⁶ She may have felt that the shifts from Jamaica to Scotland, London, back to Jamaica and then finally Canada caused the reader some confusion. In fact, both Corbet’s physical movements back and forth across the Atlantic and his progression from businessman to settler are grounded in believable circumstances and have a compelling logic.

To construct the novel and make sense of his hero’s mental and physical journeys Galt returns to ironic self-revelation, his favourite narrative mode of presenting truth through the speech, thought and actions of the main character, a method which served him well in his extremely successful early books set in Ayrshire. Kenneth Simpson describes the technique as ‘a feature of Scottish literature’ and says that ‘*The Annals of the Parish* and *The Provost*

⁴ The term ‘theoretic biography’ is a refinement of Dugald Stewart’s ‘theoretical or conjectural history’. The origins and purpose of the latter phrase are discussed in the ‘Enlightenment’ section of Chapter 6.

⁵ Galt, *Literary Life*, I, p312.

⁶ Aberdein, p172.

are masterpieces of self-revelation'.⁷ It worked for *Lawrie Todd* which was selling well but is perhaps less successful in this instance. Corbet is more melancholy than the Rev Balwhidder or Provost Pawkie. It may also be because the direct speech in this book is written for the most part in what Paul Scott calls a 'flat and fushionless English'.⁸ More pertinently, Corbet displays a greater self-awareness than these earlier models. He readily confesses his own shortcomings and thus has less scope for the kind of ironic contrasts which are the hallmarks of the earlier texts.

At this time Galt has to write what he can sell rather than choose his subjects or how he would like to present them. He had been released from debtors' prison but he was still chronically short of money and had debts to pay. He tells us in the preface that it was his original intention to write a non-fiction guidebook or instructions for intending emigrants, utilising the data he had gathered while in Canada (I, p iii). He noted, in his *Literary Life*, that in *Bogle Corbet* he 'was teaching in parables'.⁹ Ian Gordon suggests that the projected text took the form of a novel because Colburn and Bentley wanted a companion to the successful *Lawrie Todd*. He also states that 'much of the novel is constructed from barely disguised material he had already published in *Fraser's Magazine* and elsewhere'.¹⁰ Gordon quotes Galt as admitting that he completed the work 'with a sense of drudgery'.¹¹

Gordon's verdict is overly harsh. It is certainly true that Galt recycled some of his journalism (and these are noted during the discussion of particular passages) but the narrative is a coherent, if padded, unity rather than a disconnected series of sketches. Galt's parables required stories to deliver their messages and his policy proposals needed to be embedded in the behaviour of characters in order to demonstrate their utility. Paul Scott also has some justification for his criticism of the language. It does not sparkle in the way that the Rev

⁷ Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot* (Aberdeen: AUP, 1988) p31.

⁸ P Scott, p100.

⁹ Galt, *Literary Life*, I, p210.

¹⁰ Gordon, *Life*, p100.

¹¹ Gordon, *Life*, p 101.

Balwhidder's or Provost Pawkie's do, especially when they use Scots, but then Corbet is himself a 'flat and fushionless' kind of person.

Galt chose to tell his story in the faux-autobiography form, with which he was very comfortable, and which allowed him to animadvert on a number of issues such as business, education, religion and marriage, as he had done in many of his previous novels. Corbet's age and class are key factors in driving home Galt's long-held views about the type of emigrant the British Government should be encouraging and this is reinforced by the relationship between Corbet and the largely working class emigrants with whom he has to contend when he starts to make a town in Canada.¹²

Apart from the practical considerations of meeting publishers' wishes the story form was appropriate. Edward Said states that 'stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history'.¹³ For the vast majority of potential readers Jamaica and Canada were 'strange regions' and although Scots would not have acknowledged that they were 'colonized peoples' they did seek to validate their identity and their history.

Pre-Publication

On 8th March 1830 Galt concluded a memorandum of Agreement with Colburn & Bentley for 'Alek Pirn, or The Emigrant, a companion to Lawrie Todd'. The Memorandum specifies that the novel is 'to consist of at least three volumes' with each volume 'to consist of at least three hundred and twenty pages'.¹⁴ No deadline is specified. The number of pages is a new stipulation, possibly inserted because *Lawrie Todd* only reached the required length by the addition of appendices. Galt did deliver what was asked but only by inserting a

¹² See Chapter 3 and the discussion of Galt's political articles.

¹³ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993) pxiii.

¹⁴ NLS, C & B Letter Books, Vol 52, p184.

fourteen page short story towards the end of Volume II (II, pp 276 – 292) and by ending the third volume with a factual statistical account of eight districts of Ontario (III, pp 303-322).

The Memorandum specifies payment for the manuscript as £500, payable in instalments and including a bill for £100 payable at 6 months from the date of publication. This clause has been amended by Galt to acknowledge receipt of a £100 bill at 12 months at the time of signing ‘instead of waiting till the time of publication’. No doubt that bill was immediately sold at a discount.

It is contracts like these which gave rise to Galt’s grumble that *Bogle Corbet*, ‘although a tolerable book, is another proof, if one were wanting, that booksellers step from their line when they give orders, like to an upholsterer for piece of furniture’.¹⁵ By November 1830 the book is now being titled ‘Alek Pirie’.¹⁶ In neither of his autobiographies does he explain the change of name to ‘Bogle Corbet’.

Locations

The many locations in the novel may have been chosen to allow Galt to send a number of specific messages. In the opening sentence Corbet tells the reader that ‘I have led a rigmarole life’ (I, p 1) and the subsequent chapters bear this out. He was born in Jamaica but orphaned before his second birthday and taken to a West of Scotland village by his black nurse to be brought up in the care of a relative of his mother. In his teens he is sent to Glasgow to learn to be a cotton manufacturer but leaves that to set up in partnership as a cloth merchant. In that capacity he goes to London to set up a branch there but, owing to the failings of his partner in Glasgow, the business becomes bankrupt and Corbet is sent to the West Indies to wind up its affairs in Jamaica.

On returning to London Corbet sets up as a merchant in West Indian produce but the decline in that trade increasingly provokes thoughts of emigration to Canada. Gerard

¹⁵ Galt, *Literary Life*, I, p311.

¹⁶ NLS, C & B Letter Books, Vol 68, p81.

Carruthers comments that the novel is ‘historically accurate, documenting declining Scottish profit from tobacco and interlinked slave trades following the American and French revolutions’.¹⁷ Before embarking for Canada he makes a visit to Scotland, including a trip to the Highlands, and finally reaches Ontario. Once in Canada he assumes the role of leader of a group of Scots and sets about constructing, in terms of buildings and community, a new settlement.

The frequent switching of place reflects both Galt’s recognition of the connectedness of trade around the Atlantic and the character of Corbet. The former is a long-standing preoccupation, featuring in his political articles both before and after his sojourn in Canada. In ‘Bandana on Colonial Undertakings’, published in August 1826, he foresees that access via the Mississippi would allow Canadian wheat to be sold more cheaply to the West Indies. In ‘The Colonial Question’ of March 1830 he spells out the danger of allowing the USA to trade with the West Indies at favourable tariff rates. Both articles are discussed more fully in Chapter 3. In *Bogle Corbet* he reminds the reader that ‘grain was not cultivated’ in the West Indies. There was therefore a need to import it and so it had importance to Canada (I, p305). The Jamaica connection also gives Galt scope to comment on slavery. This is discussed more fully below but essentially Galt believes that abolition, while inevitable and right, will not be an unmixed blessing for either planters or black people.

Corbet’s character is essentially reactive. He confesses that he had ‘a habit of acquiescence’ (I, p36). The location changes are, to a greater or lesser degree, forced on him by the agency of others and he seems content to bend to their wills. The exception, it might be argued, is his decision to emigrate to Canada but even this is made necessary by a diminishing income so that he can no longer maintain a comfortable life in England and has to choose between penury there and at least the possibility of prosperity overseas. Once in

¹⁷ Gerard Carruthers, *Scottish Literature in Diaspora*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012) p279.

Canada, however, Corbet is forced to become more assertive. As the most educated person among the group of emigrants and the only one with capital he must display leadership and a decisiveness which has heretofore been lacking. His behaviour in Canada is, in effect, a demonstration of what is required from the type of emigrant which Galt has long urged the Government to encourage.

Class

We can deduce that Corbet was born in the year 1775 since he later tells us that he was fourteen when he had to choose his curators (I, p2) and that that occurred in ‘the spring of the year 1789’ (I, p9). This is the beginning of the French Revolution and thus provides the opportunity to reflect on both politics and class. Galt has to put social class at the heart of the novel if he is to fulfil his purpose of demonstrating his thesis that Government should encourage emigrants with capital rather than impoverished labourers. In one of several examples of intertextuality Galt points out that Lawrie Todd was not ‘familiar with genteelity’ whereas Corbet is ‘of a different order’ (II, p195).

Todd started out as a member of the working class and indeed is arrested on suspicion of seditious activities. Corbet, although he flirts with radicalism as a young man, does so in dilettante fashion and is rapidly pulled back by his elders. (Vol 1, pp51-57) This was prudent because, as Nigel Leask shows, dissemination of radical ideas frightened the Government and ‘was accordingly prosecuted as sedition during the government-orchestrated panic in the years after 1792’ and that ‘the demand for reform itself came to be construed by the Scottish prosecutors as a seditious intention to overthrow king and constitution along French lines’.¹⁸ Thereafter, Corbet assumes the conventional politics of his class until, in Canada, he describes those who have the ‘radical leaven’ as ‘though not unplausible, self-willed and witless at bottom’. (Vol III, p20) The context for this verdict is that a group of working class

¹⁸ Nigel Leask, ‘Thomas Muir and The Telegraph: Radical Cosmopolitanism in 1790s Scotland’ in *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 63, Spring 2007, p54.

emigrants from Glasgow, who have just reached Canada, are minded to go to the United States where they will have 'the privilege of a hand in the government' because they 'have suffered from the want of that at home' (Vol III, p19). As with many other apparently progressive issues, such as slavery, Galt recognises the justice of the workers' argument but is reluctant to espouse it. His fear of social disorder and concomitant respect for rank and station outweigh his logical analysis.

The economic pressures bearing on Corbet and his family are feared and must be resisted because they could force them out of the lower middle class to which they have always belonged and which provides their identity. He may have gone to the village school but, as an orphan, he has two curators 'known in the vernacular parlance by the style and title of doers' (I, p2) to look after his affairs until he comes of age. These are chosen, not so much for their utility as for their status. Galt recognises the importance of class but makes Corbet sensible to its defects. He points out that 'so much do station, wealth, and manners govern the notions of society both in town and country' (I, p14). This is another example of the syndrome outlined above. One of the 'doers' is ineffectual and the other is energetic but misguided. Nevertheless, their status entitles them to be obeyed and Corbet is quite content to do that, despite his recognition of their shortcomings.

These curators determine that Corbet should learn the business of manufacturing textiles and thus he is sent to a weaving company in Glasgow. In this context Galt makes the point that 'real' workers were 'punctual in their attendance, industrious and uniform in their manners' while those like Corbet, young men of good family learning the business, did none of these things despite being 'destined for another and higher sphere' (I, pp38,39). Galt was a lifelong Tory but his conservatism was overlaid by empirical observation and a basic fair-mindedness as is his defence of the lower classes and his sympathy for radicals (see below).

Nevertheless, the progression of Eric Pullicate from radical weaver to rich burgess and landowner gives Galt the opportunity to offer a nuanced view of social mobility. Corbet recognises and gives due weight to Pullicate's talents and does not grudge him his success but he is afraid of it. When the character is first encountered Corbet says that he 'inspired me with something like the antipathy entertained for Doctor Fell' (I, p45). Later, though he admits that he 'could not trace to him one single event by which my happiness had in any degree sustained detriment, I yet felt an involuntary aversion at the sight of him – an antipathy which reason condemned' (II, p154).

In part this fear is explained by the admission that Pullicate has divined Corbet's own weaknesses or 'the inherent commercial defects, not only obvious in my partner, but in myself' (I, p148) but it is more about the way in which a member of the working classes, if he has intelligence and commercial nous, can overtake those who were formerly his superiors. Movement of that kind confounds the assumptions on which the higher ranks believe society is based and threatens the comfortable existences of those of them who perceive, deep down, their own inadequacies.

Jacobin slogans and American declarations are frightening enough to the 'haves' but can be met with repression, as the propertied classes did in the Britain of the 1790s, but applied intelligence and industry are much more subtle foes. In a Scotland which prided itself on literacy and the production of lads o' pairts Corbet can feel that his privileges and superiority could be inexorably eroded by the rise of the working class. Pullicate therefore fulfils the role of antagonist to Corbet. He is everything which Corbet is not. He is shrewdly intelligent, decisive and possessed of a strategic vision, as he shows when he turns down a partnership with Corbet and Possy (I, p 90) because he can see far enough ahead that the firm is doomed. Worse, he moves from inferior to superior, thus threatening the foundations on which Corbet's view of the world is based.

Notwithstanding the danger posed by the Eric Pullicates of this world, Galt is generally happy that society is organised along class lines. Corbet says that society needs to be organised hierarchically (III, p 73) and has one of his characters, a radical weaver turned soldier, say that ‘the world’s like a regiment, we cannot all be officers’ (I, p268). Moreover, life is more civilised among the higher classes because ‘it is the nature of all vulgar people to undervalue those little etiquettes which persons of a better station draw around them as a fence from intrusion’ (III, p51). This is not ironical since it is of a piece with the non-fiction article Galt wrote (‘The British and Americans’, see Chapter 3) where he comments disapprovingly on the lack of ‘quality’ in American society and defends respect for rank in Britain.

Corbet recognises that class distinctions are subtle and not always amenable to rational description but they are the ‘indescribable differences which constitute the essential grades of society’ (III, p52). Nevertheless, the follies of deference do not escape him. When Eric Pullicate and his wife, by now risen in the world, entertain a peer to dinner he notes the general astonishment that ‘it was indeed wonderful that a Lord should eat mutton!’ (I, p199).

Galt’s view of class encompasses the difficulties faced by the lower classes when they have to contend with officialdom. In Canada he had bemoaned the lack of assistance from the provincial government for emigrants and he repeats the charge here. He points out that for new emigrants ‘Government had no officer to assist them’ (II, p272) and that there is ‘no properly accredited officer to direct them’ (III, p22). This is a deplorable state of affairs for ‘nothing can excuse either the Supreme or the Provincial Governments for not having regular establishments to guide and aid those who, to the natural depression arising from their friendless condition, ever stand so much in want of counsel and assistance.’ (II, p 273)

The lack of government help is all the more regrettable because the lower classes have had little to do with officialdom (III, p6) and are confronted with government Departments

which are entirely without flexibility, ‘as if the departments of Government were exonerated from all obligation to introduce new methods into their routine, or to render their system more efficacious’ (II, p311). Here, as elsewhere, Galt’s compassion informs his policies and his policies are both consistent and founded on observation and practicality. The accusation that government is organised for its own benefit rather than to serve the people is one which he has made in his journalism. As he declares, with considerable justification, ‘I did not go about with my eyes shut either with respect to the character of the settlers, or of colonial operations’.¹⁹ This passage has echoes of one of the episodes which increased Galt’s difficulties with the Canada Company, the provincial government and the British government. The affair of the Colombian emigrants, which is described in Chapter 2, would not have been Galt’s problem if there had been an official system of reception and dispersal for immigrants.

Politics

Galt, rather disingenuously, claims in his Autobiography that he has never ‘been a politician all my life’.²⁰ He has, however, worked in a political milieu as a Parliamentary agent and knows how politics works. *The Provost* and *The Member*²¹ testify to his acute understanding of the political mind. He sets out his own position in *the Literary Life*, claiming that ‘I was surely born a Radical, and owe my Tory predilections entirely to a prankful elf, who, delighting in the ridiculous...ever turned towards me the comic aspect of things’.²²

This appears to be an ironical, even frivolous, statement of his politics but in fact it encapsulates Galt’s views very well. He always was a Tory, but not an uncritical one, just as he was always a Presbyterian but never a sectarian. He has Corbet state that ‘intolerance

¹⁹ Galt, *Literary Life*, I, p294.

²⁰ Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p7.

²¹ Galt, *The Member* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996).

²² Galt, *Literary Life*, I, p235.

towards the opinion of others is no proof of rectitude or purity in ourselves' (III, p262). Yet again Galt is emphasising that no one belief, whether political or religious, has a monopoly of wisdom or goodness. He distrusted radicalism's certainties, as he showed in *The Radical*,²³ and seemed to be more comfortable with a politics which was more accommodating of human nature and had a respect for tradition.

Against that backdrop Galt has opinions to offer about both the British and Provincial governments and about the appeal of radicalism to young men. He comments particularly about how it is moderated as they grow older. This was no light matter for the fear of sedition among the bourgeois and upper classes was very real and had, in the course of the French revolution and in the economic depression following the end of the Napoleonic wars, led to repressive measures being taken against so-called radicals. The measures were effective, as Bob Harris describes in relation to the Scottish newspapers of the 1790s, whereby dissent from the 'pro-ministerial, loyalist standpoint was also shaped closely by the threat (and reality) of official and unofficial repression'.²⁴

Michael Lynch notes 'the sense of outrage and fear amongst the propertied classes' at this time.²⁵ Tom Devine states that 'the middle and upper classes sided with the government' in their repressive measures against political reform during the 1790s²⁶ and that in 1816 the radicalism of the workers 'frightened off most middle class support'.²⁷ But it was not just the upper classes. Harris notes that the government's repressive measures 'commanded genuinely broad support from the propertied classes and many of the skilled labouring classes'.²⁸

²³ Galt, *The Radical* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996).

²⁴ Bob Harris, 'Scotland's Newspapers, the French Revolution and Domestic Radicalism (c.1789-1794)' in *The Scottish Historical Review* Vol. 84, No. 217, Part 1 (Apr., 2005), p45.

²⁵ Lynch, p 390

²⁶ Tom Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000* (London: Penguin, 1999) p208.

²⁷ Devine, p225.

²⁸ Harris, p 53.

The American Revolution was an affront because a group of British-descended people decided that they could do better without a King and that they could give a vote to every free man. It took place, however, very far away and although there was a war it was fought on conventional terms and the new rulers of America were recognisably middle class Anglo-Saxons. The French revolution was a wholly different matter. It was closer to home, it championed genuinely radical ideas which threatened the whole basis of existing society and it used terror as a weapon. Worst of all, it might be highly contagious and spread through the workforce. That explains the severity of repression in Britain in the aftermath of 1792.

Galt did not share this view of combatting democracy. At the beginning of the novel he devotes time to consideration of radicalism among the weavers where Corbet is learning the trade. He has some sympathy for them as being ‘undeserving of the contumely with which they were regarded by the higher ranks’ (I, p42) for they are simply trying to better themselves ‘for, I had observed, that the democrats were ever the most ambitious’ (I, p125). Galt understands the fears of the bourgeoisie and is no great lover of radicalism but tends to believe that the fears are generally unfounded. He has noted that it is the more intelligent workers who are democrats and that if they had a legitimate outlet for their ambitions they would soon dispense with extreme politics.

Galt seems to regard the paranoia of the Establishment in respect of radicals as largely misplaced. The careers of Lawrie Todd and Eric Pullicate are examples of the upward mobility which he sees as natural. When the eponymous hero of *The Provost* learns about the proposal for a newspaper to be published by a reform-minded lawyer and ‘three or four young and inexperienced lads that were wont to read essays’ he is concerned that the newspaper would not be altogether clean of the ‘coom of jacobinical democracy’ Pawkie’s

response is not to attempt to prosecute or harass the newspaper but to assimilate the lawyer into the elite of the town, flatter him and let the politics wither away.²⁹

This process is exemplified in the progress of Eric Pullicate. As he rises in the world and acquires wealth, status and property he changes: ‘from a democrat of the very jacobine order he had evolved into a temperate Whig. Had he acquired an estate, he would undoubtedly have been a Tory’ (I, p190). His erstwhile companion, Hugh Cairns, who has now become a soldier, avers that Pullicate ‘was not a right democrat after all, but was only vexed because he had superiors’ (I, p267). But perhaps Galt’s view is summed up by having one of the working class Scots settlers say ‘that I’m no thinking it’s a vera commodious thing for a laborious man to be overly political’ (III, p208). Politics, in this view, should be practised by those who have the education, the time and the means to do it justice. As he shows in *The Member*, Galt recognised the inevitability of the Reform Act of 1832 which extended the franchise but he was Tory enough to be ambivalent about it.

Galt does recognise the dangers of guilt by association and has an ironical comment on how he was perceived in Canada by having Corbet say that ‘I came not to Canada to turn politician, and should avoid observations for the public good, lest they be regarded as seditious offences’ (III, p2). The wounds inflicted by General Maitland were clearly still raw. That does not stop him from criticising both the Provincial and British governments. He believes that ‘Canada, and indeed all colonies, are a burden on the British people greater than need be’ (II, p307) because of ‘the negligent colonial system of the mother country’ (II, p308). He believes that ‘our colonies are peopled on too lax a system... indeed so bad that it might almost justify the supposition that Government, in permitting it to remain unaltered, practised some occult policy to repress the progress of improvement’ (III, p137).

²⁹ Galt, *The Provost*, pp121,122.

All this echoes what Galt has been preaching in his magazine articles that for emigrants it is ‘imperative that Government should establish some law for their regulation’ (III, p49) and that ‘were emigration conducted on proper principles, instead of encouraging the helpless to come abroad, and then leaving them to shift for themselves, I would have them prospectively prepared by some instruction in handicrafts’ (III, p136). He cannot stop teaching even if he knows that most politicians would rather have their pre-determined ideas confirmed than be persuaded by evidence. A Colonial Office Minister, interviewing two friends of Corbet, asks questions only to corroborate his own theories rather than listening to their first hand testimony. One of the interviewees points out that the Minister ‘was a wee hasty catching my thoughts before they were well cleckit’ (II, p129). Corbet also makes the point that ‘those who understand [political economy] least are commonly the most fluent writers’ (II, p142). There is a timeless quality to these remarks, and similar comments can be read in today’s newspapers, as is Galt’s complaint that ‘London is always the last part in the kingdom that suffers’ (II, p246).

Nevertheless, Galt subscribes to stadial theory, the idea that societies progress in stages from hunting through shepherding and agriculture to commerce, albeit with the recognition that it is not an unalloyed good. Corbet states that ‘it is from towns in all countries that cultivation proceeds’ (III, p31) and that ‘the more refined and intelligent man becomes, the farther he recedes from a state of nature’ (I, p308).

It is Adam Smith who is credited with the first statement of this theory which came, as Alexander Broadie points out, in the context of a series of lectures on jurisprudence. Smith evolved his theory in order to explain how property rights became important and why laws were needed to enforce them. The concept of progression from a state of nature to a complex, mercantile urban society was then taken up and developed by other Enlightenment thinkers. David Hume used it to explain the origins of government, John Millar for that of

ranks in society and Lord Kames for patriotism. Adam Ferguson took a more sceptical view, for while he accepted that man went through the four stages, he was not so convinced that these stages inevitably represented progress and improvement.³⁰ He comments that ‘the mighty engine which we have supposed to have formed society, only tends to set its members at variance, or to continue their intercourse after the bonds of affection are broken’.³¹

Galt is inclined to the Ferguson view. He believes in progress and the spread of civilisation but his observations tell him that it comes at a cost. Not all boats are floated on a rising tide. In the context of this particular text a better life for the settlers means the usurpation and displacement of the aboriginal peoples and freedom for slaves presents them with a new set of problems.

Race

As might be expected in a novel which has a number of scenes set on a West Indies plantation and written at a time when there was great debate about the abolition of slavery, Galt has much to say about the subject. He also has a great deal to say about the racial characteristics of Highlanders and about the injustices done to the Indians in Canada.

Galt’s own views are not straightforward. He foresees that emancipation is inevitable but worries about ‘the state that awaits the negroes when the control of their proprietors shall have been withdrawn’ (I, p298). He seems to believe that the lot of the slaves is better than is supposed by the proponents of abolition. He observes that the slaves, at least on this plantation, are happy and wonders ‘would the negroes look so pleased, or submit to be so treated, as they are said to be treated by the philanthropists of England?’ (I, p280) and paints a picture of negroes as happier than the poor in England (II, p21). There is a comparison of slavery with the press gang (II, p35) and, perhaps more feelingly, the comment that ‘a man

³⁰ For a comprehensive summary of the works of Scottish Enlightenment philosophers on stadial theory see Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment, An Anthology* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1997) pp 475-575.

³¹ Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, (London: Millar & Cadell, 1768) p28-29.

may be dragged among you to prison for only a few pounds of debt – is not that slavery?’ (II, p26).

He notes that slavery affects not just the blacks but their owners too: whites in Jamaica, Corbet says, have ‘a coarser tact in manners... than prevailed in England, and society in a lower and less intellectual state’ (I, p293). A plantation owner has taken a black concubine and Corbet comments on the commonness of ‘such domestic connections’ and that his ‘European ideas were a little disturbed at the freedom with which Mr Beans spoke of this arrangement to his daughter’ (I, p304). He also worries about the effect of abolition on West India property (I, p306).

It is possible that Galt’s views on slavery were coloured by the Scottish experience of serfdom in the coal and salt industries. Until finally abolished in 1799 workers in those occupations and their children could in theory be bound for life to their masters. This, as Christopher Whatley points out, ‘brings the Scottish experience within the margins of a slave system’.³² Whatley does, however, go to show that in practice the situation was much more nuanced and that the abolition of the system was, in some cases, urged by the masters and opposed by the workers. The latter group could be ‘distinctly lukewarm about the prospect of obtaining their liberty, fearing that the abolition of serfdom might lead to a reduction in their earnings and a longer working week’.³³

The former group, as exemplified by George Glasgow of Galt’s birthplace of Irvine, believed that freeing up the labour market would lead to lower wage costs and greater competitiveness for Scottish exports. This argument reflected Scottish Enlightenment thinking about ‘the advantages of wealth creation for the improvement of society’.³⁴ In such

³² Christopher Whatley, ‘The Dark Side of the Enlightenment Sorting Out Serfdom’, in *Eighteenth Century Scotland New Perspectives*, T. M. Devine and J. R. Young (eds.), East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999, p 262.

³³ Ibid. p263.

³⁴ Ibid. p269.

debates the ending of slavery, as of serfdom, was not therefore a purely moral issue but required full consideration of the economic effects.

The comparisons of slavery with debtors' prison or pressgangs or the English working class may be valid in material terms but they clearly undervalue the worth of freedom and make no mention of the brutality and lack of humanity shown by some owners to their slaves. Galt's description of the plantations is Panglossian in its depiction of contented, well-treated negroes but it ignores the harsher realities. There may be no 'inferiority imputed' and abolition is inevitable but Galt seems to be suggesting that slavery is not all bad and that slaves not only have a better life than British paupers but that they may not be ready for freedom or equipped to deal with it. There is a strong paternalistic and pragmatic streak running through the passages on slavery.

There is acknowledgement that the owners are demeaned by keeping slaves and some mild criticism of their domestic arrangements in terms of taking black mistresses but there is no exploration of why slavery has a corrosive effect on the masters. Galt is content to record what he has observed (or, more accurately, been told) but his real concern for the owners is in relation to the potential loss of property.

The scenes in Jamaica and the discussion of slavery are remarkable for someone who had never been near the West Indies. Galt was obviously not daunted by lack of first-hand knowledge or by the thought that his work would be scrutinised for authenticity by those who did. There is no clue in either of his autobiographies as to where he did his research for the West Indies but, having done it, he writes with supreme confidence that he is purveying the whole truth yet he seems to have made no effort to understand the slaves' point of view. Eugene Genovese notes that the 'slaves' acceptance of paternalism... signalled acceptance of an imposed white domination within which they drew their own lines, asserted rights, and

preserved their self-respect'³⁵ Genovese also notes that paternalism 'afforded a fragile bridge across the intolerable contradictions inherent in a society based on racism, slavery and class exploitation'.³⁶ Galt has seen the bridge but not the fragility of its foundations. If Galt had some nuanced messages to deliver about blacks he was unequivocal about Highlanders, at least those below the rank of gentleman. Even that class does not wholly escape censure. Captain Dungowan, who Corbet meets on a visit to the Highlands, declares that 'a vain pride is as indigenous among the Highlanders as pepper in Ceylon' (III, p75). How vain is underscored by the remark that it is 'well authenticated in the Highlands that Gaelic was the original language of the world' (II, p214).

Ordinary Highlanders are mocked mercilessly for a number of supposed faults. They are, perhaps unsurprisingly, clannish and 'have but little kindness to spare for the common offspring of Adam' compared to their own 'kith and kin' (III, p83). Galt ignores the fact that lowland Scots were equally guilty of congregating together when they emigrated to Canada, as is the case in this novel. The language of the Highlanders is mocked as 'the dislocated Celtic gibberish in use among the lower classes who frequent the Lowlands' (II, p213) and when they speak English it is an excuse for more mockery as in: 'Thank God we are true clansmen, though we be in Canada, och hon, umph!' (III, p13).

That approximation of Highland English is surprising in a man who gives such care and obvious affection to the representation of Lowland speech in his work. The rendition of the speech of Gaels for whom English was a second language is obviously intended to evoke the laughter of superiority among 'civilised' readers. It is especially surprising that it should be perpetrated by an author who had himself been criticised by English reviewers for his liberal and unapologetic use of Scots as in the *Monthly Review* comments on *Lawrie Todd* (see Chapter 4). Galt seems to have a blind spot about Gaels. While he acknowledges the

³⁵ Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (London: André Deutsch, 1975) p147.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p5.

qualities of other minorities such as Indians and French-Canadians he can find nothing to praise or commend about Highlanders.

The Lowland emigrants consider the Highlanders to be dirty and lazy declaring that ‘they’ll no’ be overly industrious anent improvement’ and that they have ‘splendid propensities for dirt and indolence’ (III, p11). These attitudes towards Highlanders were not uncommon among Lowland Scots at that time. Laurence Gouriévidis comments that there was ‘a stereotypical image of the Celts as constitutionally lazy, if not degenerate’ and quotes James Bruce writing in *The Scotsman* in 1847 that ‘morally and intellectually the Highlanders are an inferior race to the Lowland Saxon’.³⁷ It is still surprising to see Galt adopt such views with fewer qualifications or caveats than he would apply to blacks or Indians. His empiricism and judgements based on observation rather than prejudice seem to have deserted him when considering what were, after all, his fellow-countrymen. Perhaps proximity obscured the view.

He did change his mind about French-Canadians. In the 1807 article, before he had ever met one, he adopts his cousin’s view that ‘the French of Upper Canada are an indolent and thoughtless race’. Subsequent personal contact and observation led him to defend their rights in his journalism and to state in this novel that French-Canadians are ‘the best-disposed and best-bred commonalty in the world’ (II, p270). Galt was always sympathetic to the native peoples of North America. He became friendly with John Brant, chief of the Mohawks, in 1820 when Galt helped Brant to obtain from the Colonial Office a charter for lands in Upper Canada.³⁸ He knew that white settlers would push ever westwards and take over Indian lands but he was slightly shamefaced about the process. One of the settlers recognises that the land ‘was all ta’en from the Indians, who have the best right to the land, if anybody has a right’ (III, p46). Corbet rationalises the building of roads ‘and multiplying the

³⁷ Laurence Gouriévidis, *The Dynamics of Heritage* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) p22.

³⁸ Timothy, p97.

means of conveyance, we make atonement for our usurpation of the wild and wide domains of the aborigines' (III, p219).

This is a not untypical sentiment in Galt's writings. In his *Autobiography* he says that the British forgot the principle of alliance with the Indians until they 'came to be regarded (never on their part) as British subjects'.³⁹ In volume II of that work he discusses the 'unprincipled policy of Christian white men' towards the Indians.⁴⁰ In his short stories for the magazines (as discussed in Chapter 3) he paints sympathetic, sometimes flattering, portraits of the First Nations peoples. He admires Indians in a way that he does not do blacks or Highlanders but, for all that, he still takes their land.

Galt's own overriding aim in Canada was to establish successful colonies and even if he was now removed from the scene of action he still believed that that could and should be done. He recognised that the Indians would be losers in such a development and saw that as regrettable but the spread of Europeans across Canada was a greater good for which the sacrifice of the Indians was necessary.

Gender

In the course of his life Corbet marries, first and for love, a woman who dies in childbirth and then, for practical and certainly not romantic reasons, a woman who bears both his children and the burden of living with a melancholic dreamer who requires considerable stimulus before he is spurred to action. Corbet follows Lawrie Todd who also married for love, was soon widowed and then remarried for practical reasons but Corbet and Todd have such different personalities that the resemblance soon fades.

What do remain are similar male attitudes to women. The aspirations of each sex are contrasted. Corbet considers that starting his first job is 'to enter life; an event, the first which makes youth thoughtful, and is equally important to young men, as marriage to the

³⁹ Galt, *Autobiography*, I, p284.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, II, p81.

gentler sex' (I, p35). For women, marriage is seen as an end in itself for Corbet quotes Lady Delacourt who chose her husband 'as a gown, after looking at many patterns, fixing at last on any one, to save herself from further trouble' (II, p51). Corbet adopts the same principle in looking for a second wife. He chooses Urseline Ascomy despite her having some vulgar habits, consoling himself with the thought that 'much worth may be blended with little delicacy' (II, p 52). We are introduced to her as one of 'two grown up daughters, who were not distinguished for any particular grace in their accomplishments' (I, p258). He is not shy with his criticisms of her, most of which are lazy stereotypes. We are told that she is 'evidently burning with her sex's curiosity' (III, p280) and, when busy, 'doubled her activity and consequently did half as little effectual business as she was doing before' (III, p81).

Yet when they reach Canada Mrs Corbet begins to display more agency and greater freedom to return Corbet's complaints about her. Corbet draws one episode to a close by saying that 'Mrs Corbet is still alive, and nothing, if not critical' (II, p63). On their holiday visit to Niagara Falls it is she who displays much more commonsense than Corbet, refusing to be as overawed as the traveller conventionally is. Corbet eventually acknowledges her supremacy in at least some fields and his dependency on her. He says that 'I leave the whole affair to yourself, Ursey, - you know best how to manage it' (III, p122).

It seems that when the action is in Britain that standard gender roles apply and that when the characters are removed not only to a new country but to one where they are building institutions from scratch then there is scope for women to take a more forceful part, if only to save their men from committing mistakes which would have an adverse impact on their children. When a proposal for many of the new settlers to move to the United States is defeated it is 'the wives who have carried the day' because they are more concerned with feeding the children than with notions of democracy (III, p 36).

Rosemarie Zagari suggests that in the United States in the early years of independence the Scottish Enlightenment conception of rights as duties was applied to women, but not men. In this reading ‘biological differences between the sexes provided a rationale for differentiating rights on the basis of sex’ and while ‘men’s rights were to be enforced by the state, women’s rights were to be guaranteed by men’.⁴¹ She quotes J. C. Ogden, a contemporary orator, as saying that ‘every man, by the constitution, is born with an equal right to be elected to the highest office. And every woman, is born with an equal right to be the wife of the most eminent man’.⁴² Galt seems to be agreeing that, as in the quote above, women should be more concerned with nurturing than voting.

Business

Corbet, early in his career, undergoes bankruptcy as a result of a feckless partner. Galt knew whereof he wrote because he was drawing on his own experience. He came to London in 1804 and the next year established a business with a partner but by 1808 they had to declare bankruptcy.⁴³ Galt obviously learned a few lessons from the experience but was clearly not wholly comfortable with the amorality of the business world. He has Mr Macindoe, the retired merchant, say that ‘if at last ye must fail...what does it signify whether ye pay a crown or a pound, - is it not all by the way of trade?’ (I, p214). Macindoe also advises Corbet that misleading his creditors is only ‘a wee bit innocent white lee anent the packets’ (I, p215). This is another instance of Galt’s nuanced observations and, perhaps, why he remained a Tory. He desperately wanted to be a successful businessman but found some usual business practice distasteful. He appears to have conflated honour and probity more with Toryism than with the mercantile interests gathered round Whiggism and in the final analysis these ‘Tory’ qualities, for him at least, carried more weight.

⁴¹ Rosemarie Zagari, *Women’s Rights before Seneca Falls* in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (eds.) (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005) p682.

⁴² *Ibid*, p684.

⁴³ Gordon, *Life*, p 9.

The main burden of the remarks on business is, not surprisingly, directed to the best means of increasing prosperity in the colonies. He repeats the message he had been delivering in his journalism about the importance of infrastructure, contrasting the needs of Britain and Canada. 'In the Old Country canals and railways are formed for the convenience of an existing commerce, but on this continent they constitute the most efficacious means for spreading colonisation' (III, p219). In other words, infrastructure improves existing commerce in the Old World but is absolutely necessary for initiating business in the New and it is business opportunities which lead to successful colonies. The didactic strain is never far away.

There is repetition of the messages he has been delivering to the Government about who should be encouraged to emigrate and, he now adds, the optimum age at which it should be done: 'Emigration should be undertaken at that period when youths are commonly sent to trades and professions. The hardships are too heavy an apprenticeship for manhood, and to riper years penalty and privation' (III, p302).

This thought may have arisen from Galt's own experience as well as his observations. He was almost fifty when he began his work in Canada and he would have seen just how much of a physical effort was needed to set up a new home and how much mental strain there was in uprooting from a settled existence to build a new community in the wilderness. The urge to teach the lessons of his experience is unrelenting and at the end of the novel he states that the book 'may not be unprofitable to those who may glance at these pages for amusement, and find them in many respects as much devoted to information' (III, p301).

Language

Paul Scott may have deprecated the use of English rather than Scots in the novel but Galt knew his market. He slips in a few jokes against Scots to flatter his English readers and to have a sly dig at his great rival, Sir Walter Scott. For example he makes it clear that Mr

Macindoe, Corbet's chief curator, had spent some time in the West Indies where 'he had learned to speak in a manner intelligible to Christians, for it was not then the fashion to consider Scotch as a classical language and worthy of acquiring, to enable all the world to understand the works of the Border Minstrel' (I, p28).

On this occasion he has followed Scott's model. All the principal characters speak 'Standard' English and it is only, as in Scott, the lower classes who speak Scots, although some of the older characters are allowed the occasional Scotticism. Mrs Pullicate, for example, who has come up in the world from humble origins as her husband's business has thrived, has yet to assume fully 'polite' speech. She tells Corbet that 'the gude man, however, cannot weel be off testifying his respect for my Lord' (I, p195). She thus uses 'gude' and 'weel' but now manages 'off' instead of 'aff' and 'cannot' instead of 'cannae'. (I, p195). Thus is civilisation calibrated.

Galt shows in all his work an acute ear for how people actually talk and he carefully adjusts their registers according to their class, background, education and even interlocutor. Mr Macindoe, now an elderly man, may be 'intelligible to Christians' but his background means he uses words like 'misdoubt' (I, p214), 'lug' and 'anent' (I, p215). Macindoe even essays a pun which depends on differences between English and Scots pronunciations. When Mrs Corbet serves up a dinner with a great deal more bones than meat Macindoe says that, 'it was a wonderful bony dinner' (II, p112).

Corbet is dismissive about Scots. He comments about one character that 'his accent was Scottish, but his language, for purity and propriety, was such as the author of Junius may have spoken' (III, p158). Emma Letley states that success for the Scottish novelist in the early nineteenth century depends 'on his writing with the Scots language without prejudicing the English market'.⁴⁴ She comments in the same passage on 'the high degree of correlation

⁴⁴ Emma Letley, *From Galt to Douglas Brown* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988) p6.

between material success and Standard English'. Both aspects of language presentation can be seen in the novel with Corbet normally eschewing, even being disdainful about, Scots from his assumed position as a bourgeois English gentleman despite growing up in Scotland.

Yet Corbet needs to use Scots to convey precisely his meaning. Thus he talks of 'roaring and greeting...for the English language, affording no adequate phrase to describe it properly, obliges me to have recourse to the Scottish' (I, p230). We can assume that this attitude to language reflects the character rather than the author since Letley also states that Galt 'showed no ambivalence about his own Greenock accent with which he spoke throughout his life'.⁴⁵ The Scots language is not therefore to be dismissed so easily. In Jamaica Corbet comes across a settlement of former slaves who have run away and live a fugitive existence in the mountains. He is surprised to find an old maroon woman who speaks 'Negro Scotch, learned about three score years before, when she had been Dulcinea to a Scottish overseer' (I, p299). In this quote Galt cleverly manages to combine a reproof about the moral laxity of the whites and a reminder of the pervasiveness of accent in speech.

The comparison of Corbet's language with Lawrie Todd's is illuminating of the accuracy of Galt's ear and of his concerns as an author and teacher. Todd does not share Corbet's disdain for Scots. He grew up as a working-class Scot and emigrated at a much younger age than Corbet, but regards Scots as part of his patrimony. Like Corbet he writes in 'Standard' English and uses Scots when it conveys a meaning more pithily than English. Unlike Corbet he will also use it at times of high emotion and in relation to Scottish topics. There are, therefore, fewer Scotticisms in *Bogle Corbet* than in *Lawrie Todd* and thus less need for the glossary Galt appended to the latter novel. His didactic purpose would not be compromised by unfamiliar language. Besides, for *Bogle Corbet* he had the statistical

⁴⁵ Ibid., p 50.

account of Upper Canada to hand as an appendix to give more pertinent information to settlers as well as to meet Colburn's stipulations about the length of the text.

Galt normally uses a fairly plain style in both his novels and journalism but there is one passage in this book which is startling in the way it goes soaring into a high aureate style. When talking of an early morning ride in the forest Corbet speaks of the 'paling sapphire of the East...the grey eyed Aurora...the hermit water-fall was heard afar off, singing to the solitude his ceaseless hymn' (III, pp 191, 192). This is such a departure that the reader wonders if it is due to the grandeur of the scenery that it requires such a register to do it justice or if it is a nod, possibly ironical, to the fashion for the romantic and sublime to feature in contemporary poetry.

Irony

Galt cannot prevent his sense of humour breaking through and usually in this text it is expressed in ironical terms. Corbet describes Mr Rhomboid as 'one of the most learned men I ever knew – in his own opinion' (I, p9). He states that, in Glasgow, merchants gathered around the King William statue, which is 'about as intelligent in his intellectual speculations, as many of those in the mercantile, who study the London prices at his feet' (I, p11). It is not only merchants who are satirised. The legal profession, as usual, is the butt of jokes such as describing the Lords of Session as 'a tribunal before which plaintiffs go not in quest of justice, but for the mere patriotic purpose of settling points of law' (I, p 106). Old wounds are salved in recalling the problems Galt had with his superiors when he named the new settlement of Guelph without the company's permission. Thus he says that for the Canada Company 'names have been among the most important topics of their wisest deliberations' (III, p38). The settlers do not escape his barbs. One of the Paisley emigrants believes that 'Canada is understood to be a neighbour town' of Ohio (II, p238). On Highlanders he states that 'unfortunately, however, we live in an age when even Highland chieftains are used to knives and forks' (I, p 115).

The accretions of civilisation are mocked when Corbet says that ‘we have not yet had our township decorated with a gibbet [but] we are advancing with considerable celerity in the way of refinement’ (III, p272). As discussed earlier, Galt believed in stadial theory but acknowledged that not all progress was beneficial. He is here pointing out, through the medium of irony, some of the drawbacks. He is more comfortable in making these observations through comedy and, commensurate with teaching in parables, probably feels that they are thus more likely to be absorbed than by dry treatise.

Galt also makes some observations on the difficulties of authors. He states that ‘no great man ever only wrote books’ (II, p139). He makes the point that ‘authors are not the best judges of books, and that probably the soundest judgements on the merits of literary works are formed by those who only read’ (II, p140). Corbet is here speaking for Galt who comments in his *Autobiography*: ‘how little an author is capable of rightly appreciating his own works’.⁴⁶ The ironical aspect of that quotation, which Galt would surely have appreciated, is that it is made after the publication of *Bogle Corbet* and in the context of a discussion of that novel.

Intertextuality

The irony in the novel includes both intertextuality and sly references to Galt’s own position. The first of two references to *Lawrie Todd* is worth quoting in full. When Corbet has made the decision to emigrate he says that he was governed:

by the advice of a shrewd Scotchman, recently from America: one Mr Lawrie Todd, to whom I was introduced as an intending emigrant, who had not fixed on his particular destination. He has since published some account of himself, and of his adventures and experience as a settler in the woods of the Genesee Country, and who, although not exactly qualified to instruct an emigrant of habits and wants similar to

⁴⁶ Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p208.

mine, had yet gleaned so much various information, the result both of what he had seen himself, and gathered from others, that I have no doubt he may have lessened many of our prospective difficulties, and taught me to avoid hardships which the stranger in the forest should be well prepared to encounter. (II, p181)

Galt packs a great deal into this passage. He is advertising the earlier novel. He is demonstrating Corbet's sense of *amour propre* when he makes the point that Todd might be presumptuous in offering instruction to the higher-class Corbet. He has, nevertheless, to concede that Todd has amassed knowledge and experience which is worth taking into account. Thus he is reinforcing the need for readers to pay attention to the lessons he is teaching in the novel. He is also reinforcing the need for thorough preparation and reminding readers of the dangers and difficulties of the wilderness. And it is all done in a light and amusing manner.

There is a second reference to Todd. When Corbet reaches Canada and is building his community at Stockwell, he talks of following the plan which 'Mr. Lawrie Todd and his friend Mr. Hoskins did with Judeville' (III, p37). The spelling of the town differs from that followed in the earlier novel where it is spelled as 'Judiville'. The description of the emigrants' ship's approach to Quebec, with the silver appearance of the tin-roofed houses (II, p271) is used again in the short story 'The Metropolitan Emigrants' (see Chapter 3). Galt was an inveterate recycler of material. If a metaphor, like the silver roofs, was good enough in one context then it was good enough to use again. If *Lawrie Todd* was a successful novel then it could be used to help the plot of *Bogle Corbet* as well as possibly inducing the reader of one to seek out the other. Short stories which appeared in magazines, such as 'The New Atlantis' or 'An Aunt in Virginia' (see Chapter 3) were originally plays. In the quest for cash no avenue could afford to remain unexplored.

Galt makes some jokes at his own expense. He has Corbet describe Mr Adage as ‘a man capable of writing very good books’ but ‘the fates preserve me from ever having any thing to do with such a trade’. He goes on to say that ‘only the secondary and inferior of mankind make it a profession; no great man ever only wrote books’ (II, p139). This is a summary of Galt’s own view. In the *Literary Life* he states that ‘I have ever held literature to be a secondary pursuit’⁴⁷ and in the *Autobiography* claims that ‘at no time, as I frankly confess, have I been a great admirer of mere literary character’ and goes on to say that ‘I have sometimes felt a little shame-faced in thinking myself so much an author...A mere literary man – an author by profession – stands but low in my opinion’.⁴⁸ Literature is not much of a consolation prize when the gold medal of business success and colonial fame cannot be won.

Reception

Bogle Corbet was not one of Galt’s favourite works. In the *Literary Life* he dismisses it in three paragraphs ‘as a tolerable book’, summing it up as ‘really worth more than it seems, for it is an attempt to embody facts and observations collected and made on actual occurrences’.⁴⁹ Contemporary opinion tended to agree. The reviews were respectful without being fulsome. *The Gentleman’s Magazine* said that the novel would ‘furnish useful knowledge about gentlemen, mercantile people, and emigration’ and that the author ‘has vigorous intellect’.⁵⁰

The Edinburgh Literary Journal was, almost in spite of itself, complimentary about the novel but then that magazine was published by Constable and was therefore a rival to Blackwood who was supposed to be Galt’s champion. Following an introduction which itemises Galt’s faults, stating that ‘none, we suspect, will rank him high as an author’ and ‘his sentiment has that excess which betrays weakness’, it nevertheless goes on to recommend the

⁴⁷ Galt, *Literary Life*, I, p351.

⁴⁸ Galt, *Autobiography*, Vol II, p 200.

⁴⁹ Galt, *Literary Life*, I, p313.

⁵⁰ *The Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle* (London: Chatto and Windus) June 1831, p 621.

novel. It tells us that it has ‘minute, elegant and faithful touches’, ‘frequent touches of alternating pathos and humour’ and that ‘many of the characters are felicitous and original conceptions’.⁵¹

The New Monthly Magazine was highly in favour of the novel. ‘Familiar truth is the forte of Mr Galt, and the effect of it is excellent in this work’ which has ‘the sheer power of *vraisemblance*’. It commends the book to the reader who will ‘find profit mixed up with a very large share of amusement’.⁵² *The Literary Gazette*, which was published by Henry Colburn, who also published the novel, was not as fulsome as might be expected. It calls the book ‘instructive’ but states that ‘as a mere novel it is inferior in amusement and humour to “Lawrie Todd”, but as work of information and reference we hold it to be one of high value’.⁵³

If contemporary reviewers highlighted the truthfulness of the observations in the novel, later critics were more concerned with the concepts underlying the text. Martin Bowman calls it ‘a particularly interesting example of the tension between realism and romance in Galt’s fiction’ and that Corbet ‘is clearly a descendant of The Man of Feeling’⁵⁴ even if he is rather less lachrymose. Ian Campbell states that *Bogle Corbet* has an ‘almost obsessive interest in change and decay’.⁵⁵ Paul Scott connects Galt with Adam Ferguson and ‘the advantages of reciprocal civility’ in the cooperative development of a community. It is, he says, an illustration of the ‘the idea of man as a social animal which is closely akin to Scottish Enlightenment thought’.⁵⁶

The most recent collection of essays on Galt develops many of these themes.

Kenneth McNeil states that *Bogle Corbet* ‘encapsulates within a single work two distinct

⁵¹ *The Edinburgh Literary Journal* (Edinburgh: Constable) May 14 1831, p305.

⁵² *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* (London: Kent and Richards) January 1831, p 553- 555.

⁵³ *The Literary Gazette* (London: Henry Colburn, April 1831) p 279.

⁵⁴ Martin Bowman, *Bogle Corbet and the Sentimental Romance*, in *John Galt Reappraisals*, Elizabeth Waterson (ed.) (Guelph: Guelph UP, 1985) p 64.

⁵⁵ Ian Campbell, *Dependents of Chance*, in *Reappraisals*, p109.

⁵⁶ P Scott, p99 – 103.

strands...a theoretical realism... and a melancholy romanticism'.⁵⁷ These approaches are not, of course, mutually exclusive. It should also be borne in mind that contemporary reviews are aimed at a different audience than subsequent academic criticism. The novel had respectable sales but it did not do so well as *Lawrie Todd* and while the later critics all find interesting things in the text there is general agreement that, as a novel, it is not on the same level as *The Annals* or the *The Provost*.

Conclusion

Galt succeeded in his declared aims of 'exhibiting the causes which now in this country induce a genteeler class of persons to emigrate' and, having shown why such people emigrate, equipping them with the knowledge to make the best way they can in a sometimes frightening wilderness. Galt's problem is that he has not only to wrap these didactic elements in a cloak of entertainment but that he must also stretch that cloak to cover at least three volumes each of 320 pages. The stretching process leaves the material very thin in places and it has to be patched with extraneous stories such as that of Mrs Paddock and her grandsons as the long lost relatives of Captain Dungowan, a short story about two white men who are assisted by an Indian prior to the siege of Quebec, the long drawn out tale of Colonel Jocelyn and of course the tacking on at the end of the gazetteer of places in Upper Canada.

Even in the main narrative there are a number of miraculous meetings, such as that with Mr Possy and their former servant Sam in Canada (III, p122), useful legacies and a general need to resort to hackneyed plot devices to keep the story going. Ian Gordon, in his biography of the literary Galt, states that 'the extent of my commentary on each [work] being largely a measure of my estimate of its importance' gives a paragraph and a sentence to *Bogle Corbet*.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ McNeil, p302.

⁵⁸ Gordon, *Life*, p viii.

Yet the novel is not without merit. Jennie Aberdein notes that throughout ‘there are scattered good things – interesting thoughts and observation, vivid characterization, energetic action’.⁵⁹ She is right: the novel contains too many longeurs to be wholly satisfying but it is worth reading for the qualities she mentions and for the depiction of Corbet as he develops from a complaisant younger man with very little motivation to one who can be decisive and commanding when required to direct the efforts of a group of settlers to establish a functioning community in the wilderness. It is also, as usual with Galt, full of a pawky humour and it perhaps bears out Paul Scott’s criticism of the ‘fashionless’ English in which it is written that the best of the humour and the easiest flowing passages are those concerned with the Glasgow merchant Mr Macindoe and with the west of Scotland settlers in Canada.

Shining through the whole text is the consistency of Galt’s views on what is required by the Governments in London and Ontario, by colonisers like the Canada Company, and by settlers themselves, to create successful new communities. The same policies which he has been promoting in his journalism and in his dealings with the Colonial Office are repeated here within the confines of an entertainment.

⁵⁹ Aberdein, p 173.

Chapter 6 Conclusion: ‘Formed to lead and forever fond of leading’¹

John Galt’s involvement with North America had a significant influence on the writings he published relating to that continent. In the first place there was the practical stimulus for such literary output. Before he assumed the role of the Canada Company’s first commissioner he was publishing journalism which promoted emigration in general and in particular his beliefs about the type of emigrant which should be encouraged, the respective roles of government and private companies, and the importance of infrastructure in colonisation.

After his return from Canada the practical stimulus was the need for money. He therefore drew on his first-hand knowledge to write the novels *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet* and to contribute to periodicals in a variety of genres, including politics, short stories based on tales he had heard in North America, comparisons of British and American societies and travel pieces.

Consistency

Across all these published texts three strands are clearly discernible. The first is the consistency of his opinions on policy and the way that these views were vindicated over time. At a period when the generally held view was that emigration was the solution to surplus labour and poverty among the working classes in Britain, Galt is tireless in spreading the idea that it would be much more efficacious for Government to encourage middle class emigrants since they would have sufficient capital to invest in both farms and productive enterprises, thus creating employment opportunities for the poor.

He is also clear that companies are much more effective than governments in the creation of successful colonies. In Galt’s view governments should be responsible for the

¹ D M Moir on his friend Galt, quoted in Whistler, p8.

legal framework but ‘private persons’, driven by the profit motive, are much quicker to react, to appreciate what must be done, and better meet the needs of new emigrants.

Didacticism

The second strand is Galt’s desire to teach the lessons he has learned. In fact he is desperate to teach even before he has learned any lessons, as shown by his 1807 article derived from his cousin’s information (see Chapter 3). It is no surprise that he wrote a number of textbooks for children under the pseudonym of the Rev. T. Clark. Gordon lists a number of them on subjects as diverse as history, geography, spelling and religion.²

Galt does not hoard information on the basis that knowledge is power. When he knows something he has a need to impart that knowledge to those for whom, in Galt’s view, it would be useful. This is the basis of his correspondence with the Colonial Office, the Directors of the Canada Company and with the government of Upper Canada. The problem for Galt was that, at the time, his knowledge was not as evident to these authorities as it was to Galt. Where his teaching fell short was that, at least in dealing with authority, he took too little time to ensure that his lessons were understood before proceeding to the next part of the curriculum. He was, more often than not, proved right in time but by then it was too late for his own comfort. Galt was much more successful in teaching his readers possibly because they did not have the power to overrule him. He wrote both *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet* as explicit primers for prospective emigrants. The former, he tells us in the preface, ‘cannot but be useful to the emigrant’, ‘is more important than novels commonly treat of’ and has been written from knowledge gained by ‘inquiry, observation and experience’.³ The preface to the latter tells us that the information in it was ‘studiously gathered to be useful to others’

² Gordon, *Life*, p24.

³ Galt, *Lawrie Todd*, I, pp iv, v.

and that the author's first intention was to offer such information 'in a regularly didactic form' but that just as 'we disguise medicine' so he has mixed 'truth with fiction'.⁴

As Galt states in his autobiography, 'I have, in all my works, kept the instructive principle more or less in view'.⁵ The same principle is present, if less obvious, in his contributions to the periodicals. The short stories depict Indians, not as a degenerate race, but as brave and intelligent, and the settlers as having to overcome considerable natural obstacles. The travel pieces contain the fruits of Galt's observations about the differences between British and North American societies. Both novels and journalism contain much practical advice on how best to deal with the wilderness and to make a success of establishing communities.

He was quite explicit that both *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet* should serve a didactic purpose and even described the latter as 'teaching in parables'.⁶ He chooses to deliver his lessons in the form of novels, partly because that is what his publishers demand, partly because a novel will reach a wider audience than a primer for intending emigrants, but mainly because he believes that his messages will be better absorbed through stories than through direct prescription. The method he chooses is mimesis in that, while he creates characters who will carry the story, their locations and circumstances are closely modelled on reality, as Galt understood it by 'enquiry, observation and experience'.⁷

Enlightenment

There are two facets of Galt's North American literary productions which reveal his debt to the Enlightenment. Alexander Broadie quotes Kant's definition of Enlightenment as having 'the courage to use your own reason'.⁸ Enlightenment is not so much about what is thought as about the way in which thinking is done. People should not simply rely on

⁴ Galt, *Bogle Corbet*, I, pp iii, iv.

⁵ Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p210.

⁶ Galt, *Literary Life*, I, p210.

⁷ Galt, *Lawrie Todd*, I, p iv.

⁸ Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment An Anthology* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1997) p 3-5.

received opinion or the authority of others but should think for themselves and arrive at their own conclusions. Their thinking should also be led by evidence and scientific enquiry and tested by public debate and discussion.

By this definition Galt was a prime example of Enlightened Man. He tested ideas against his own observation and experience and he applied his theories in an empirical way. He was a lifelong Presbyterian in religion and a Tory in politics but did not allow his thinking to be trammelled by either of these beliefs. He was, therefore, even-handed in his dealings with other denominations and fair-minded in his consideration of the aboriginal peoples and of radicals, to the extent that he was misunderstood and vilified by less enlightened men in both the religious and political spheres in Upper Canada.

Galt owed a great deal to the concept of conjectural or theoretical history. As Regina Hewitt explains, Galt wrote fiction, drama, and biography ‘based on his observations of lived and recorded behavior, elaborating on his “models” in ways he associated with the “theoretical” or “conjectural” methods of Scottish Enlightenment historiographers’.⁹ It was a consistent method, serving him well in *The Annals* and *The Provost* and was applied to both *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet*.

The Enlightenment historians, such as Dugald Stewart who is credited with coining the term, used the method to postulate the likely causes of historical events and developments.¹⁰ Stewart stated that he would ‘take the liberty of giving the title ‘theoretical or conjectural history’ to the process of ‘supplying the place of fact by conjecture... from the principles of their nature and the circumstances of their external situation’.¹¹ This is exactly what Galt is doing with current developments in society. He said that his novels ‘would be

⁹ Regina Hewitt, *Introduction to John Galt Observations and Conjectures on Literature, History and Society* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2012) p1.

¹⁰ Aaron Garret, *Anthropology: the ‘original’ of human nature*, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, Alexander Broadie (ed.) (Cambridge: CUP, 2003) p79.

¹¹ Dugald Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith* (1793), reprinted in *Dugald Stewart Selected Philosophical Writings*, Emanuele Mortera (ed.), (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007) pp 188, 189.

more properly characterised, in several instances, as theoretical histories'.¹² He also says that he has restrained 'the scope of inventions entirely to probabilities'.¹³ The same method applied today might be described as dramatized documentaries.

It is another facet of Galt's didacticism that he derived his lessons from lived experience and careful observation of how communities developed in the wilderness. He had evidence to support his conjectures and his policy prescriptions and it is community development which provides the experimental data which challenges, although Galt himself does not explicitly make such a challenge, one of the other widespread theories of the Enlightenment, that of stadialism.

Stadialism theorises that man developed through four economic stages from hunter-gatherer, pastoralist, agriculturalist to commercial.¹⁴ Victoria Woolner points out that the theory was used to account for the assumed superiority of Europeans, especially British, over both indigenous Americans and the French-Canadian *habitants* of Canada and as a justification for cultivating the wilderness.¹⁵ She also suggests that it was deployed by the British to denigrate the citizens of the United States because 'American rejection of British rule was read as a deliberate regression from a more civilised state'.¹⁶

She cites *Bogle Corbet* as supporting this view by stating that it highlights the 'seductive (and ultimately destructive) power of the American emphasis on the individual versus the collective'.¹⁷ This misses Galt's subtlety and skill as an author. Corbet is a middle-class man who was burned by radicalism in his youth and would have been suspicious of democracy. In *Lawrie Todd*, with an American setting, the hero is not unaware of the

¹² Galt, *Autobiography*, II, p219.

¹³ *Ibid.*, II, p210.

¹⁴ Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997) p133.

¹⁵ Woolner, p105.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p130.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p132.

power of the collective and harnesses it for his own purposes. Galt is not so much contrasting America and Canada as pointing up the differences between two very different types of men.

The idea that stadialism was a progression and that the commercial stage was the summit did not go unchallenged. Adam Ferguson's *Essay on The History of Civil Society* cast doubt on this view and suggested that much was lost as well as gained in achieving a commercial society. Duncan Forbes interprets Ferguson as saying that it is 'community that is likely to be a casualty in the progress of civilization' and that 'if you destroy community you destroy man's essential humanity and equilibrium and happiness'.¹⁸ Ferguson himself stated that by progress 'the bands of community must become less firm'.¹⁹ This was a view which Galt tested by experience and observation. His North American novels may even be viewed as the *Essay on Civil Society* in action since they demonstrate not only the worth of community but the way in which having to fight for existence, in this case against a malevolent nature rather than a human enemy, strengthens both the man and the community of which he is a part.

It might also be noted that one of the markers of stadial progression, according to Silvia Sebastiani, was the feminisation of society as seen in the increased incidence of 'refinement and civility'.²⁰ Galt's depiction of women in both *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet* conforms to that Enlightenment ideal in that women are helpmeets and civilisers but should not seek to trespass on to the male preserves of business and politics.

In *The Annals* and *The Provost* Galt examined development and change in established communities over the previous sixty years. In *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet* and in many of the periodical pieces he is telling us how a new community is established and pointing out that it does not start from scratch but is built on the beliefs and attitudes which settlers bring

¹⁸ Duncan Forbes, *Adam Ferguson and the Idea of Community*, in *Edinburgh in the Age of Reason* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1967) p43.

¹⁹ Ferguson, *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, p149.

²⁰ Sebastiani, p75.

with them. In terms of style or innovation Galt's North American literature does not break new ground. He uses the self-revelatory autobiography in the novels and he recycles material from his previous work and from the stories he has heard into the periodicals. He also has to pad out the novels to meet his publisher's needs and to fulfil his own desire to provide information to prospective settlers. What he does do is to give us the not inconsiderable fruits of his first-hand and hard won experience and vivid portraits of the Old World making its way in the New.

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