



John Galt: Observations and Conjectures on Literature, History, and Society (Transits: Literature, Thought & Culture, 1650-1850)

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This volume offers a reevaluation of the work of Romantic-era Scottish writer John Galt. Galt traveled throughout the Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds and founded the Canadian city of Guelph while remaining in touch with local cultures and politics in Scotland and England. He wrote fiction, drama, and biography based on his personal observations of life and in ways that associated him with the “theoretical” or “conjectural” methods of Scottish Enlightenment historiographers. Galt’s insights into the societies he inhabited and visited, his perceptions of political extremism and class conflict, his attitudes toward community building and progress, his convictions about determinism and historical revisionism, his strategies for manipulating literary genres and readers’ responses, and his ambivalence about the value of literature deserve consideration in light of new thinking in our own fields about what constitutes social knowledge and viable ways to represent it.

The essays in this volume examine Galt’s work in light of the convergence of literature, history, and social theory in Scottish Enlightenment and Romantic-era culture and in our own interdisciplinary environment. Discussing Galt’s work and significance in the many areas, genres, and contexts in which he figures, they broaden the circle of contacts with whom we associate Galt, moving from expected comparisons with contemporaries Walter Scott and James Hogg to unexpected links with such later authors and social thinkers as George Douglas Brown and Harriet Martineau. Moreover, these essays expand the repertoire of works studied, offering the first extended analyses of *Eben Erskine*, *Rothelan*, and the *Travels and Observations of Hareach*, *the Wandering Jew* along with new readings of *Annals of the Parish*, *Bogle Corbet*, and *Ringan Gilhaize*. Overall, the essays draw out the implications of Galt’s practices and relations as a journalist, dramatist, critic, biographer, and novelist, developing grounded conjectures about their significance in Galt’s time and our own.

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