

**THE TRAGEDIES OF  
MADDALEN, AGAMEMNON,  
LADY MACBETH,  
ANTONIA & CLYTEMNESTRA**

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The tragedies of Maddalen, Agamemnon, Lady Macbeth, Antonia & Clytemnestra by John Galt

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**JOHN GALT**

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THE  
**TRAGEDIES**  
OF  
**MADDALEN, AGAMEMNON,**  
*Lady Macbeth,*  
**ANTONIA & CLYTEMNESTRA.**

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BY JOHN GALT.

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“Se ella è nato per fare tragedie, il suo sarà o peggiore  
o migliore od uguale.”—ALFIERI.

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## PREFACE.



**T**H**ES**E Dramas are the sketches of pastime, and as such are offered to the public. **MADDALEN** was written in the **Lazzaretto** of **Messina**, to lighten the captivity of quarantine; **CLYTEMNESTRA** during a passage from **Sardinia** to **Gibraltar**; **AGAMEMNON** in the course of my voyage from that fortress to **Ireland**; **ANTONIA**, while obliged to perform a second quarantine in **Cork** harbour; and **LADY MACBETH**, at subsequent intervals, when I could contrive no better way of employing my attention. In compositions so hasty, polished correctness ought not to be expected. I think it would be easier to write others than to make these more worthy of perusal, by any application which I might exert; and I have printed them, because I do not think that they ought to be destroyed.



But although negligence of language be pardonable, the manner and subjects may provoke animadversion; and the names of **AGAMEMNON**, **LADY MACBETH** and **CLYTEMNESTRA**, are calculated to occasion mortifying comparisons. With respect to the style, I consider the characteristics of the British dramatic verse as having been fixed by Shakespear; and his successors, in my opinion, would shew as bad a taste in attempting to introduce a new manner, as in imitating the obsolete quaintness peculiar to the writers of his age. I have, therefore, endeavoured to adapt his simple and colloquial metres to modern modes of expression. But in the structure of the drama, I have ventured to preserve the unities of the Greek theatre, along with the natural circumstances and dialogue of the English; and I have chosen to divide the fable into three parts, (I know not why five should have been hitherto preferred,) and my text will be found to indicate without the aid of marginal notes, what should be the business of the stage. Whether these are actually improvements, experience must decide.

For the manner in which I have treated the often-rehearsed stories of **AGAMEMNON** and **CLYTEMNESTRA**, I make no apology. The former is a

gross and detestable topic; and the latter is so truly horrible, that to have managed either without disgusting, will be no inconsiderable praise. The greatest poets have written on these subjects; and The **ELECTRA** of Sophocles is a hideous and inhuman exhibition.

For presuming to meddle with the awful mysteries of **MACBETH**, I have not one word to offer in extenuation. I thought the almost satanic character of the Lady, possessed traits of grandeur which might be so represented as to excite compassion; and the frame of Macbeth's mind afforded me an opportunity of introducing allusions to Scottish superstitions which Shakespear has not touched; and which are still, in a great measure, new to the poetry of the stage. The play is, in fact, an experiment; and as such, I wrote it with some degree of audacity both in thought and phraseology. It is the best or the worst in the volume.

With regard to the other two pieces, **MADDALEN** and **ANTONIA**; the first was undertaken to try whither such a person as the Dutchess, a character of meaner energies than the generality of those on whom the interest of the solemn drama

is supposed essentially to depend, might be rendered capable of exciting a tragical degree of pathetic sympathy; and the second seemed to afford scope for new situations, and the means of embodying a class of observations, which, though not sufficiently popular for the stage, could only be intelligibly expressed in dramatic circumstances.

*London, 19th April, 1812.*



ERRATA.—Page 4, line 5, for *bedeck't* read *bedeck'd*; page 37, for *Scene V.* read *Scene IX.*; page 35, line 4, for *Approbrious* read *Opprobrious*; page 53, line 9, for *approbrious* read *opprobrious*; page 82, line 4, for *threats* read *throats*; page 99, line 14, for *gratitude* read *ingratitude*; page 120, line 7, for *falsely, sad adorn'd* read *falsely sad, adorn'd*; page 123, line 13, for *Firth* read *Forth*; page 130, line 22, for *alm* read *alms*; page 139, line 9, for *heart* read *breast*; page 177, line 12, for *porticos* read *portico.*