Construction of a Historical Aesthetics and Consciousness: The Historical Novel of John Galt, 1779-1839*

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Abstract

The aim of this article is assess the underlying perceptions of history and establishment of concurrent realities in the historical novels of John Galt (1779-1839), a contemporary of Walter Scott. The early nineteenth century is crucial in the development of new narrative styles composed as novels that furnished new rising national and theoretical ideas a flexible and exhaustive locus. The narrative styles were developing hand in hand with the immense rise of new approaches to literature as well as history. The popular genre, i.e. the novel, offered various perspectives to the issues at stake. The historical novel thus was able to offer the discourses of the past and their relevance to their day in multi dimensional ways. Here, thus, one key aspect is the narrative that tells the story, creates a trust and convinces the reader making the past experience the one of the reader.

Key Words: John Galt, Historical Novel, Narrative, Authoritative Voice, Credibility of Narrative.

In a historical perspective social manners and literature are important clues to the aesthetics and philosophy of a period which hold up in the mentality of a society. Looking at the early nineteenth-century growing reading public of cheap and popular novels bestow a clear sight of popular conceptions of the intellectual background of the era. There is a great deal of scholarship on the growth of the novel, its role, how it reflects social norms and ideas. The development of new narrative styles such as the historical novel provides insight to perceptions of reality as well as discussions on acceptable aesthetics of history. In other words As the Platonic and Aristotelian dramatic theory of mimesis the historical novel poses an idea that it is the imitation or representation of history. Thus the historical novel and its methodological theories coalesce with ideas of mimesis and verisimilitude talking about truthlikeness as the goal of the aesthetics of history narratives. The discussions evolve around the problem of unity of narrative and how to present or even translate the historical data so that it is believable and understood by contemporary readers.

The likeness to truth as a major issue in these literary discussions is also a methodological discussion in history writing famous with the Rankean claim of *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. This claim to reality in its social aspect, however, finds its reflection in historical choice of character, or in other words the construction of a national identity. This article will dwell mainly on the

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Scottish author John Galt's (1779-1839) ideas of reality and its relation to his narratives by comparing him to his Scottish contemporary and doyen of historical novel, Walter Scott (1771-1832). These discussions evolve around the genre of novel and its origin which is followed by means of achieving a believable and true story.

In fact these discussions also find its reflection in methodological arguments in history writing of the early nineteenth century It was widely accepted in the eighteenth century that history was a means of understanding human nature. It was made by man and was also comprehensible by him. This point of view, especially developed by Gianbattista Vico, saw history as a man made study that investigates what man has been, is and could be. God was not totally cut out; but divine Providence, according to Vico in his *New Science,* operated primarily through the human mind and will.[2] Galt adhered to these new views in history writing and was deeply interested in revealing the science of man and historicism.

Along these developments during the early nineteenth century writing about pre-1750 Scottish history gained momentum. Interest in this period was fostered by Walter Scott's popular novels and perhaps also by religious discussions (Secessions of the Kirk of Scotland) of the period. The popularisation of the historical novel offered a lively and engaging format that both informed readers and helped to construct a national and historical consciousness. The novel joined other forms of historical writing and became institutionalised as a literary form and played a major role in nation-building narratives by transmitting and forming common conceptions of histories and values.[3] As Vico had already pointed out in the early eighteenth century literature played a social role as an articulator of popular notions and as an instrument of the national voice.[4]

There is a group of novels especially that demonstrate this social role of the novel in early nineteenth century Scotland written by Walter Scott, James Hogg and John Galt.[5] Two of these literary histories, namely *Ringan Gilhaize* by Galt and *Old Mortality* by Scott Both of these novels exemplify how writers often view a certain historical period in different, even opposite, ways and demonstrate how this difference is often based upon the selection of diverse qualities in the national character.[6] It is widely known that in Scott's romantic and historical novels the figure of the Jacobite is offered as representative of the highest values of Scottish national character. In contrast, Scott views other equally historically authentic figures such as the Covenanters (a radical Presbyterian group) as narrow-minded, blood-thirsty, religious fanatics and settles responsibility for the violence of the seventeenth century squarely upon their shoulders. As Beth Dickson points out this view promulgated by Scott is later often received as being 'fair in his estimate of opposing sides'.[7] However, the alternative view to be found in narratives such as Galt's is in which the Covenanters appear to be the heroic ancestors of Scottish Character fighting for political and religious freedom. This difference is partly explained by different approaches to reality and the methodology of how to convey this to the readers.

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2 Vico's ideas had a great influence during the nineteenth century, but certainly was known by French philosophe-historians like Montesquieu who was widely read in Scotland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. See Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy,* vol. 6, London: Image Books, 1985, 162, 161.

3 For an extensive discussion on this see H. O. Brown. *Institutions of the English Novel from Defoe to Scott*., Philadelphia, 1997.

4 *Ibid*., 2.

5 For a comparative study of Hogg, Scott and Galt see D. Mark. "Introduction." *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*. J. Hogg., Edinburgh and London, 1976; R. H. Carnie. 'scottish Presbyterian Eloquence and Old Mortality." *Scottish Literary Journal: A Review of Studies in Scottish Language and Literature* 3:2 (1976) 51-61 and D. S. Mack. "'The Rage of Fanaticism in Former Days': James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and the Controversy over *Old Mortality." Nineteenth-Century Fiction: Critical Essays*. Ed. Ian Campbell, Totowa, NJ, 1979, 37-50.

6 J. Galt. *Ringan Gilhaize, or the Covenanters*. (Edinburgh, 1995); and W. Scott. Old Mortality. (London, 1948).

7 B. Dickson. "Sir Walter Scott and the Limits of Toleration." *Scottish Literary Journal* 18 (Nov. 1991) 46. See also D. Daiches. "Scott's Achievement as a Novelist." *Modern Judgements: Walter Scott*. Ed. D. D. Devlin, London, 1969, 33-62 quoted in Dickson, "Limits of Toleration," 46.

The intellectual background of these authors lay in the eighteenth century idea. Scotland was not isolated from other European countries in terms of interests and culture. French and German *philosophes* influenced it, as it influenced some of them, including Francois-Marie Voltaire (1684–1778), Charles-Lois Montesquieu (1689–1755), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and Immanuel Kant (1706–1790).[8] Interconnections existed between countries and between different types of ideas. It is difficult to draw a line between Enlightenment and non-Enlightenment ideas or attitudes, since a clear-cut definition of the Enlightenment cannot, of course, be given.[9] In general, however, following Kant's influential definition in "What is Enlightenment?" it is argued that Enlightenment thought rested on the autonomy of reason. The Enlightenment, to borrow its own self-glorifying rhetoric, was, in the most general sense, a progressive endeavour meant to liberate man from his bondage to superstition, mainly through rational thought: in other words, it was a project to disenchant the world.[10] Reason and rationalism were widely discussed topics, though adherence to an entirely rational humanity proved more difficult to attain. The period was marked by a freedom to express thoughts and to think creatively without undue regard for boundaries and authorised texts. The Scottish phenomenon was related to this wider movement, with which it shared some family characteristics.[11]

The Scottish Enlightenment contributed to the greater European movement chiefly with its great interest in explaining the nature of man. This turned into a great project of "the Science of Man," which sought to connect all sciences.[12] The project had three fields of enquiry: moral philosophy, political economy and history. The term "Scottish Enlightenment" was first used by William Robert Scott in 1900, but during the late eighteenth century Scottish philosopher Dugald Stewart had already defined, in his collection of biographies of important Scottish philosophers, a Scottish school of philosophy.[13] The term describes an era in Scottish intellectual life whose golden years were between 1750s and 1800 and which had its echoes until the 1830s.

Galt was born into this intellectual environment in Irvine in the west of Scotland and received his formal education as a clerk in Greenock. He then moved to London and travelled in the Mediterranean. He wrote articles and novels for journals, worked for a while as a lobbyist for some petitions relating to the colonies, and later became a settlement/land developer in Upper Canada. However, to later generations he is known primarily as an important practitioner of the historical novel whose work adheres to most of the approaches to this genre as developed and practiced by Scott.[14] In his novels describing Scottish society John Galt certainly thought that he was writing a sort of history rather than pure fiction. His novels were written in the form of annals, memoirs or correspondence, making them seem to be authentic. His readership was already accustomed to this literary style and did not have difficulty in grasping conceptual truths and even factual details in the characters or events of the stories. He freely commented on the ordinary daily events

8 For Kant as an heir to Common Sense philosophers such as Thomas Reid, James Beattie and James Oswald, see M. Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768–1800: A Contribution to the History of Critical Philosophy,* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987, 167–207.

9 Broadie, "Introduction," in *Scottish Enlightenment*, 16.

10 See Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Concept of Enlightenment," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London: Verso, 1973, 3–42.

11 See Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967, 4; and John Robertson, "The Scottish Contribution to the Enlightenment," in *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation,* ed. Paul Wood, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2000, 41–42.

12 For a thorough examination, see *The 'Science of Man' in the Scottish Enlightenment: Hume, Reid and their Contemporaries,* ed. Peter Jones, Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1989; Alexander Broadie, "A Science of Human Nature," in *The Tradition of Scottish Philosophy: A New Perspective of the Enlightenment*, Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990, 92-104.

13 Paul Wood, "Introduction: Dugald Stewart and the Invention of 'The Scottish Enlightenment'," in *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation*, 1, 3.

14 See A. C. Chitnis, "The Scottish Enlightenment in the Age of Galt." *John Galt 1779-1979*, edited by Christopher A. Whatley. Edinburgh: Ramsay Head Press, 1979, 31-50 and C. A. Whatley. "Introduction." *John Galt, 1779-1979*. Ed. Whatley, Edinburgh, 1979, 9-18.

found in western Scotland's parishes or towns, creating characters and daily life that his readers would have either experienced themselves or heard of from others. His economic, social and political history was already embedded in the oral or daily culture described. Galt was not a philosopher or a theorist, but it is evident from extracts of his thought that his perception of the historical novel and history writing were highly concerned with historicism and that his historical sources were not strictly confined to written documents.

Galt was deeply influenced by the mannerism of his period and the diction which he did not see as a reflection of the civil stage of the society, but instead as a peculiarity of his own nation. More importantly, he tried accurately to depict the religious convictions of his subjects; for that, he held, set the very foundation of culture and mentality of the period. Thus, although God was not the main operator in his histories, his presence was always there in the thoughts and actions of his characters. He had no problem in saying that his histories should be read as what the Scottish philosopher Dugald Stewart called the theoretical histories.[15]

Scott was the pre-eminent practitioner of the historical novel and he put it into a theoretical perspective. According to Scott the story-teller and history, both in terms of their written and oral forms, were sources influenced greatly by personal experience, and contained the basis of all creative work.[16] He claimed that as a genre the historical novel took over the task of the romance.[17] They were of the same species; but the historical novel had undergone a change: the novel had similar forms of expression but it also has a role as a producer of culture and nation.[18] The manners described and "the general turn of the composition" went through a change; but the author was confined to some of the peculiarities of "the original style of romantic fiction." In a sense, Scott admitted that the act of writing, especially novels, was taking part in creating a fashion or culture, as much as it was a reflection of it.

The relationship of literary narratives to reality is based on the idea of mimesis. As he explained — in his review of Jane Austen's *Emma* — the sentimental novel had performed its task as the follower of romance and in turn had given way to the newly emerging realistic style. Scott explains that writing a novel was 'The art of copying from nature as...[it] really exists in the common walks of life, and presenting to the reader, instead of the splendid scenes of an imaginary world, a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him.'[19] However, behind this realism or the truth in representation, the novel had an indispensable role of leading the fashion. Although this seems out of place in this discussion it is important to keep in mind Scott's claim in his introduction to *Waverley*, a period in the past becomes outdated or fashionable through literary works such as the novel.[20] As it is discussed below this allows some impositions of the present on the aesthetic and social values systems of the past.

Whereas Scott, like Galt, described historical novel writing as the act of reconstructing the past through creating conjectures in terms of philosophical history writing — the historical novel as a form of Dugald Stewart's conjectural/theoretical history — a widespread notion held at that time was that the historical novel was "intermingling fiction with truth," or that it was "polluting the well of history with modern inventions." Scott saw this point of view as a major problem for the novelist: "it is true that I neither can nor do pretend to the observation of a complete

[15] This refers to the Science of Man studies that perceives universal characteristics in human nature and by conjecture the ability to invoke and fill the gaps in historical data.
[16] James Anderson, *Sir Walter Scott and History,* Edinburgh: Edina Press, 1981, 27.
[17] Walter Scott, "Review of Emma," *Quarterly Review,* 14 (1815-16): 188-201 reprint in *Sir Walter Scott On Novelist and Fiction,* ed. Ioan Williams, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968, 227.
[18] Brown, *Institutions,* 16.
[19] W. Scott. "Review of Emma." Quarterly Review 14 (1815-16) 188-201 reprint in *Sir Walter Scott on Novelist and Fiction.* Ed. I. Williams, New York, 1968, 230.
[20] Scott, Waverley; or, '*Tis Sixty Years Since*, 1814, London: Penguin Books, 1972, 34-35.

accuracy, even in matters of outward costume, much less in the more important points of language and manners."

However, according to Scott, the idea of representing the past as it was created some problem, namely the difficulty that the readership may be unable to understand some of the authenticities of the past.[21] The principal problem then lay not in telling the story as it could have been, but in the author's attempt to reconstruct an understandable past for present or future readers. He thus spoke much of the contemporary reader. What was noteworthy was that he understood the circumstances of the past, aided by contemporary reflection, involving a translation of the past culture for the present one.[22]

It seems from Galt's writings that he has a more historicist approach. He ardently employed Scottish manners and Scottish idioms in his works. His works reflected Scottish culture and perhaps he was indirectly also re-enforcing goodwill and morals, which he saw as essential elements for the transforming of society. During the Enlightenment period writing involved the task of transmitting ethical values to the readers. All the eighteenth and early nineteenth century writers had always emphasized this aspect. Samuel Richardson argued that the novel had to convey information and moral reflections through the medium of a story.[23] The novel had fully and authentically to report human experience.[24] Indeed, Mackenzie himself referred to the aim of novels "as promoting a certain refinement of mind, they operated like all other works of genius and feeling, and have...more immediate tendency to produce it then most reader will find around him in the world."[25] These last characteristics, then, created a sense of realism that could not be found in romances.

His historical narratives showed that not only contemporary politeness, but also the less refined manners and characters of the past were indispensable. Like David Hume, the English essayist and editor Joseph Addison and many others, Galt thought that tradition was a base on which to build a healthy and productive society. "Custom, as well as the approval of our friends, had the effect of making our opinions 'habitual' and 'easie' as well as 'delightful' to us and this in turn could explain why the modern world was filled with what Hume called 'knots and companies' of like minded men and women."[26] Traditions and manners were naturally inherent in a society, but they were also something that society needed to be reminded of or that needed to be re-constructed at times, and such was the effort of the editors of the famous literature magazine *Spectator* such as Addison, Richard Steele, and the famous Scottish novelist and editor Henry Mackenzie.

According to Galt, a translation of the past into the present or language into a contemporary English, or past manners into contemporary decorum was a distortion of the previous reality. Galt in his novels claims that one needs to adhere to the authentic manners and ways of the period one writes about. For example he considered religious experience and morals to be the most fundamental elements in a society's memory and these should be emphasised in a plot. Politeness and rational thought could never by themselves be qualities that could turn a society into a nation nor were they capable of holding the society together. However, religiosity of various eras could differ and each period had its own moral structure. For example, in Galt's Ringan *Gilhaize* the common reference point of the depicted society was their belief and experiences of common constraints of the second half of the seventeenth century. In The *Provost,* Galt gave pragmatic

[21] Ibid. 435.
[22] Brown, *Institutions,* 3-4.
[23] James Leatham, *The Place of the Novel: An Undelivered Lecture,* Cottingham: the Cottingham Press, 1914, 1.
[24] Watt, *Rise of the Novel,* 32 and chapter 1 passim.
[25] Mackenzie, "Essay No 20:" 78.
[26] Nicholas Phillipson, *Hume,* London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1989, 28.

thinking, in terms of business and empire, as an example. Galt assured the reader that this self-interest or improvement and novelty would not always lead a society to disaster, as some liberals like Adam Smith had emphasised, but could benefit it as well. Therefore, he believed each epoch should be dealt in itself and that verisimilitude was of the utmost importance for writing history.

Galt, like Scott, put considerable emphasis on creating a realistic description of characters and manners. Galt frequently remarked in his letters, as well as in his works, that his skill lay in his ability to portray characters. The characters he created, by their role in the events of their time and their psychology, gave the work a sense of realism in terms of manners and traditions, what Blackwood called a graphic description of Lowland Scotland.[27] In his *Autobiography* Galt said that "the discrimination of character is among the most remarkable of my pretensions."[28]

Galt's observations of both Scotland and elsewhere helped him to identify cultural similarities and differences. Like many of his contemporaries he was deeply interested in writing about manners. In one of his letters, his friend James Park described Galt as being so "extreme a mannerist in style."[29] In his novel *Majolo,* the main character similarly reports in the course of his travels "I had adopted two of the most interesting objects of study; the correspondence of physical and moral phenomenon, with respect to individual character, and of natural and political circumstances with respect to national."[30] Hazlitt, a literary critic from Galt's time, described him: "He is only the amanuensis of truth and history...All that portion of the history of his country that he has touched upon (wide as the scope is), - the manners, the personages, the events, the scenery – lives over again in his volumes."[31] His critic Booth later wrote that his characters reflected the truth and that he had a complete fidelity to life "surrounded with all their natural manners and simple activities."[32] Galt himself believed that his ability was "in the truth of the metaphysical anatomy of the characters, which though at first felt as faults in the author, and thought coarse, I have seen in them and [they have] been seen in their true light."[33] Similarly, Scott in his essay, "The Historical Novel," mentioned the problem of reflection and representation of the real when writing a novel. He went on to say that a historical novel was about "manners and sentiments which are common to us and to our ancestors, having been handed down unaltered from them to us, or which, arising out of the principles of our common nature, must have existed alike in either state of society."[34]

Galt's perception of this cultural translation was, however, different. He showed this in his representation of characters, such as the religious zealots, the Covenanters, by using a language that certainly differed from most of his elegant contemporaries. He tried to depict for his readership a Scottish culture that was true and loyal to Scottish history and tradition.[35] His means of establishing this correctness was accomplished in his narrative in the two ways, which were regarded by some of his contemporaries to be vulgar: firstly, by his truthful historical representations and secondly by his Scots usage.[36]

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[27] Blackwood to Galt, Edinburgh, 23 May 1820, EUL, Galt Letters, L.B. 1, ff.114-16.
[28] *Autobiography,* vol. 1, 88-89.
[29] James Park to Galt, February 1812, *Literary Life*, vol. 1, 131-32.
[30] Galt, *Majolo: A Tale*, vol. 1, London: T. Faulkner, Sherwood, 1816, 180-81.
[31] William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age; or, Contemporary Portraits* (1825) reprinted extracts in Peter Kitson, *Romantic Criticism 1800-1825*, London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1989, 164.
[32] Galt, "John Galt: A study in the Scottish Vernacular Novel," by A. Booth , *The Gathering of the West,* Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1939, 16.
[33] Quoted in Ian Gordon, *John Galt: The Life of a Writer,* Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1972, 79.
[34] Walter Scott, "The Historical Novel," reprinted in *On Novelist and Fiction,* 436. Originally it was written as a "Dedicatory Epistle" to *Ivanhoe.*
[35] For instance *The Entail* is seen as a critique "of the displacement of all local Scottish tradition by British mercantile modernity with the stark claim that the dead past is dead and cannot be reanimated." See, Alyson Bardsley, "Novel and Nation Come to Grief: The Dead's Part in John Galt's *The Entail," Modern Philology* 99 (May 2002): 562.
[36] For his use of Scots and English see J. Derrick McClure, "Scots and English in *Annals of the Parish and The Provost." John Galt 1779-1979,* ed. Christopher A. Whatley, Edinburgh: Ramsay Head Press, 1979, 195-210.

It seems that Scott, initially by writing many novels, endeavoured to give the reading nation a related and understandable past. According to Scott, a cultural translation was accomplished by making the manners and language more contemporary. This created shared notions among the members of a nation out of the unintelligible past.[37]

This creation of a common mind was held to be of great necessity for a nation. However, this had another meaning for Galt. The construction of a refined culture and manners should not alienate people from their past manners, nor their histories, no matter how old fashioned and rude they appeared. Contrary to current beliefs, he found that any translation of the past would estrange the nation further from their past. His letters to Robert Peel explain a lot about his intention to make the forlorn past of the Scots of the seventeenth century known to his readers again.[38] His construction of a historical consciousness rested on these principles. According to Scott "It is necessary, for exciting interest of any kind, that the subject assumed should be, as it were, translated into the manners, a well as the language, of the age we live in."[39] The object of the author was not only the transmission of the old but also of the still existing sentiments and manners to the readership and as well as attempting to define these sentiments and manners as Scottish. That is to say, Scott was concerned with selecting a past upon which the future could be built, one that could be transformed into a contemporary generality. This writing procedure was intended to bring about a restructuring of the historical consciousness.[40]

Besides making this necessary cultural translation, which was a distortion according to Galt, for Scott it was essential for a historical novelist that the national values, traditions and history were transmitted to the reader. If a period of the past — its events, manners and traditions — was to become fashionable through the narrations of historians and novelists, the historical novel needed to be a powerful force in the construction the present mind set. Secondly, in order to represent the heterogeneity of a nation, it had to emphasise the particular cultural and historical differences, such as the Scottish one. It was a history that reflected specificities within a wider universal history, as well as a mapping of manners in a natural history of humanity.[41]

Galt would have agreed perfectly with Scott's assertions about the national aspects of the historical novel. Furthermore, Scott believed that a truly brilliant British novel had to show the nation what their traditions used to be and where they came from. This other essence of the novel was – like the epic or romance – to establish "the foundation of a nation and a national identity that represents Britain's 'natural' heterogeneity."[42] Although this understanding of the historical novel appears to be directed to a non-native audience, it could also be used to shape the minds and inform the natives of their own culture and past in an age of transformation.

Thus, according to Scott, the attraction of the historical novel was that it showed the reader a new aspect of the past: "by going a century or two back and laying the scene in a remote and uncultivated district," all became new and startling in the present advanced, civilised period.[43] There were Highland or Lowland manners, traditions, characters, scenery and superstitions; northern – mostly Scots - dialect and costume were described; the wars, the religion, and politics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, too, pleasantly strange. As Hazlitt, the famous literary critic of the time, put it, the object was to "give a charming and wholesome relief to the

37 Quoted in Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture, and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction*, Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1996, 11.
38 Letter Galt to Sir R. Peel, 26 April 1823, BL, Peel Papers, Add. 40355, f. 354.
39 Scott, "Historical Novel," 435.
40 For Walter Ong's view see in Fielding, *Writing and Orality*, 17.
41 Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, London: Penguin Books, 2000, 252.
42 Walter Scott, "Henry Fielding," (1821) in *On Novelist and Fiction*, 46.
43 William Hazlitt, "Sir Walter Scott," in The Spirit of the Age, *The Project Gutenberg EBook*, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11068/11068-8.txt (accessed 09.02.2012).

fastidious refinement and 'over-laboured lassitude' of modern readers, like the effect of plunging a nervous valetudinarian into a cold bath."[44]

Thus, as Scott described, history began to penetrate through the medium of romance, epic or historical novel into the popular mind and helped to construct the historical consciousness, o perhaps the historical aesthetics of a nation. This objective of the historical novel, that it instructed while entertaining the mind, was surely true for Galt as well as Scott. Hume commented likewise for the history books of his time: The "new breed of philosophic historians, erudite yet eager to create an intelligible, instructive and not least, entertaining past, presented in polished prose. The advantages found in history seem to be of three kinds:" it amuses the fancy, improves the understanding, and strengthens virtue.[45] So the didactic endeavour of Enlightenment thinkers was reflected in the aims of historical writing and perhaps as an outcome of this, created a popular form of historical writing, the historical novel, whose intended audience was both the ordinary and the more intellectual readers of the time.

As important as presenting past manners, traditions and ideas of a nations idiomatic diction becomes a major discussion as well. According to Galt, what contributed to the truth of a representation was language itself. As mentioned before, in attempting to establish polite and developed manners in Scotland, language was one of the major themes of discussion. Language was connected to the question of manners, or assessing what was acceptable or not, This related partly to unionist political aspirations.[46] Scotland, perceived as a parochial and underdeveloped region compared to England, needed some polishing. John Clive rightly remarked that besides being far away from the capital, provincialism in the early nineteenth century Scotland meant "on the one hand, minds conscious of limited awareness, a sense of inferiority increased by the burden of an 'uncouth' accent which, in spite of heroic efforts to rid themselves of it, stuck to all but a few envied ones like a burr.[47]

As a result, among the Scottish literati, an urge to purify the language of Scotticisms arose. English was being perceived as the appropriate language for serious works. Lord Craig notes in the *Mirror* that Scots was the spoken language but a writer expressed himself in a language foreign to him "which he has acquired by study and observation."[48] John Home (an Oxford graduate), well representing most educated minds of his time, said "Eloquence in the Art of speaking is more necessary for a Scotchman than any body else as he lies under some disadvantage which [this] Art must remove."[49] As a matter of fact, this reaction towards the vernacular language as the medium of culture led to "particular blindness to the popular tradition."[50]

The discussions on language exemplified and asserted, even in Galt's mind, what language was acceptable, or civilized, and what was not. Galt believed that it was the most appreciable duty to attempt to reflect past manners and language as closely as possible. The problem of language and contemporary developments found reflection in Galt's work *Bogle Corbet*. Mr Macindoe had "learned to speak in a manner intelligible to Christians." Galt, in the same book, however, referred to another problem faced by the change of language. Boggle tried to give a description of how Mrs Possy wept after her husband went bankrupt "roaring and greeting I ought to call it, for the English language, affording no adequate phrase to describe it properly, obliges me to have

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44 Hazlitt quoted in Costain, "Spirit of the Age," 162.
45 Quoted in Porter, *Enlightenment,* 230.
46 Fielding, *Writing and Orality,* 11.
47 John Clive, *Scotch Reviewers: The Edinburgh Review,* 1802-1815, London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1956, pp 18-19. See also John Clive and Bernard Bailyn, "England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 11 (April 1954): 200-13.
48 Cited in Knight, "Edinburgh Periodicals," 22.
49 Quoted in Fielding, *Writing and Orality*, 21.
50 Knight, "Edinburgh Periodicals," 22.

recourse to the Scottish."[51] The civilising power of the past was in the development of history in stages, which certainly was not connected to the language used in these stages. Against the attitude of the time, Galt kept on, although often being criticised by Blackwood and his editors, writing in Scots because he saw it as an inseparable part of the Scottish common people and history. Unlike most of the authors of the time, such as Scott, the vernacular was an integral part of Galt's novels and his characters would be inconceivable without the Ayrshire speech.[52]

Readable literature in the vernacular could be found in native lyrics and epics, which were, as mentioned before, grist to the mill of the Scottish Enlightenment project to find the origins and manners of ancient societies. However, Scots, the native dialect or sister language of English, in the early nineteenth century was used more in poetry or in prose as a *jeux-d'esprit*.[53] Almost all publishers were suspicious of a novel written in dialect: it was a question of demand, whether or not it would interest anybody. Many authors used Scots not for adding idioms but for variety and decorative purpose, "spicing normal English paragraphs with an occasional phrase from the glossarial pepper-shaker;" or it was used as a comic device.[54] Civilization had become so associated with language that language became a basis for discriminating the refined and the civilized from the vulgar and the savage. So language itself came to be regarded as the subject of improvement and Scots needed to be improved into polite Englishmen.[55] Henry Cockburn, a man of letters, remembered in the early nineteenth century that although in his childhood an English boy would be mocked for his accent, English became the language of polite society and a fashion. He noticed that Scots was falling out of use among the gentry with great speed, though not among common people. It became a fashion that richer Scottish boys were either sent to English schools or tutors were hired to eradicate their native accent. "Francis Horner was sent to study with the Reverend John Hewlett in Middlesex for two years, and Hewlett was pleased to inform his father, just before Horner returned to Edinburgh to read for the Scotch bar, that "the principle object for which your son came to England has been accomplished." He "got rid of the Scotch accent and pronunciation, and acquired the English so completely as not to be distinguished from a native."[56] Sir John Sinclair, a Scottish MP, made so clear in his *Observations on the Scottish Dialect*, 1782, that change of language would be "of use to my countrymen...particularly those whose object it is to have some share in the administration of national affairs." For those who wanted to improve themselves, "new manners must be assumed, and a new language adopted."[57] In 1823 the recently founded Edinburgh Academy also hired a master for English with a pure accent, meaning an English accent. Many both famous and ordinary Scots, because of the requirements of the age started to take lessons to change their speech patterns, and even magazines published English Synonymy, listing English replacements for Scottish words.[58]

Galt seemed to agree with those who believed that English translations of works written in Scots would not give the same effect or meaning.[59] As Galt aimed to create an authentic description of the society, he tried to give also a clear description of its language: so much so that on one

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51 Galt, *Bogle Corbet ; or, The Emigrants*, London: n. g., 1831, 28, 230.
52 He considered a small trip to Scotland as an opportunity to add to his vernacular vocabulary. Galt to W. Blackwood, Arundell, 23 June 1822, NLS, Blackwood Papers, MS 4008, f. 183.
53 Booth, "Scottish Vernacular Novel," 5.
54 Ibid, 8 and Knight, *Edinburgh Periodicals*, 22.
55 Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791-1818, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, vii; also Crawford, Devolving English Literature,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, 18-22.
56 All cited in Robert Stewart, *Henry Brougham, 1778-1868: His Public Career,* London: The Bodley Head, 1986, 24.
57 Sinclair quoted in Crawford, *Devolving English Literature,* 24-5, 26. Likewise, James Elphinston wrote a whole volume on the Scottish Dialect, *Propriety Ascertained in Her Picture (1786-87).*
58 See for example a series of articles called "Contributions to English Synonymy," *The Monthly Review* 34 (August 1812).
59 Wellek, *Literary History,* 82 and see John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* vol. 2, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, 48-49 and Ibid., vol. 1, 384-85.

occasion before he started to write, he was happy to be able to go back to Scotland for a while in order to freshen up his dialect.[60] The verisimilitude of Galt created a disdain among his critics. His characters' manners and the use of Scots for an audience of the Edinburgh gentility appeared to be too crude.[61] His language was perceived as old-fashioned. The Scottish Augustans had established the polite culture that saw Anglicisation in speech as correctness.[62] It was a derided aspect of Galt's work that many of his contemporaries did not like: Jeffrey interpreted many of his works as vulgar. However, it was Galt's use of language that gave his characters the true manners of their social and educational level, reflecting the degree to which they had been exposed to the world (how much they had travelled etc.).

The language used by Galt in his works, beyond helping to develop understanding of the minds and manners of the characters, reflected the characters' place in the social strata, defined by attitudes about language and civility. There were those who could afford to be taught English pronunciation and those who could not. As one might expect, in Galt's novels the lower classes or the less educated preserved their local language to a greater extent than the educated. Likewise the older people were more likely to use Scots and Scotticisms, and the further back in history the narrative went, the use of Scots became heavier. So, the more traditional and conservative people, being more closely attached to their local traditions, preferred to use Scots.[63] The *Ayrshire Legatees* is the work that best exemplifies Galt's use of language and epitomizes how these characters perceived the changes in the language. Booth remarked: "Galt's reportorial accuracy in transcribing speech patterns strengthens the impression of the historical fidelity which he sought and on which he so prided himself."[64]

Galt believed that he was giving the reader a pure history in terms of manners, characters, mentalities and language. The manners of the characters frame the structure of the works, but they do not interfere much with the flow of historical events portrayed because they are only eye witnesses. However, by representing them without a cultural translation, it was possible to observe some of the ancient forms of contemporary manners as well as allowing the history flow in its natural stream. In a sense, he believed that he portrayed history as it was. He described his characters:

> It may be necessary to explain here, that I do not think the character of my own productions has been altogether rightly regarded. Merely because the incidents are supposed to be fictitious, they have been all considered as novels, and yet, as such, the best of them are certainly deficient in the peculiarity of the novel, they would be more properly characterised, in several instances, as theoretical histories, than either as novels or romances. A consistent fable is as essential to a novel as a plot is to a drama, and yet those, which are deemed my best productions, are deficient in this essential ingredient. For example, in the *Annals of the Parish,* there is nothing that properly deserves to be regarded as a story; for the only link of cohesion, which joins the incident together, is the mere remembrance of the supposed author, and nothing makes the work complete within itself, but the biographical recurrence upon the scene, of the same individuals. It is, in consequence as widely different from a novel, as a novel can be from any other species of narrative.[65]

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60 Galt to Blackwood, 23 June 1822, NLS, Blackwood Papers, MS 4008, ff. 182-83,
61 Olivia Smith, *Politics of Language,* vii; see also Crawford, Devolving English Literature, 18-22.
62 W. Ashton, "Regional Realism in Four Novels By John Galt," Master's Thesis, The University of Guelph, 1979, 72.
63 Derrick J. McClure, "Scots in Dialogue: Some Uses and Implications," *Scots and Its Literature,* Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing, 1995, 87. For the use of Scots see also Manfred Gorlach, ed., *Focus on: Scotland,* Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing, 1985; on the complexity of language and nation relationship in Scotland, see Janet Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire In Eighteenth-Century British Writing,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
64 Booth, "Scottish Vernacular Novel," 9.
65 *Autobiography,* vol. 2, 219.

Galt emphasized his realism in his narrative by making an eyewitness tell the whole story.[66] Eyewitnesses presented truths from firsthand experience. Eye witness testimony played an decisive role in Galt's use of auto-biographical narrative. His autobiographical narration led both to a sense of historical realism as well as a deviation from it in his work. It gives a personalised version of a history. A biased narrator led the reader into the spirit of the time better than an omniscient one. Balwhidder, the minister of the *Annals,* is a clueless but observant character. Often he describes what is happening around him and the world such as the French Revolution or industrial development. However, his grasp of impact or what the inherent parts of the deal is is not complete. Like Gibbon, he does not follow Hume's ideal of detachment, which might have come with the use of the third person. He regretted the use of third-person voices in his book the *Last of the Lairds* and concluded: "instead of an autobiography I was induced to make it a narrative, and in this respect it lost that appearance of truth and nature which is in my opinion, the great charm of such works."[67] Ringan Gilhaize was not written in hindsight like Scott's novels, or as a narrative expressed in the third person, but from the perspective of a narrator who does not yet know yet the outcome of the political events that he is witnessing. It is thus suggested that history is not something that has already been done in the past, but rather something always continuing. Certainly, in speaking of these events, he borrowed from stories that he heard as a boy from old eyewitnesses.[68]

Another means of achieving a believably and truthlikeness is the generational relationship in the historical novel. This gives the reader a sense of origin as well as a sense of coherence to the whole plot. As mentioned before, Galt's history shows his interest in both change and a search for the origin of certain convictions and habits. These histories of origins were related to the present through the various generations. A good example for this metaphoric relationship was applied in his work *Ringan Gilhaize*. It tells the story of the Covenanters through the voice of a Covenanter during the late seventeenth-century tumult in Scotland. His memoirs were connected to his grandfather's experiences, as he lived long enough to include and tell the whole story of Scottish Presbyterianism starting from the early days of the Reformation to his grandson. Galt thus goes back into history by the use of the generational relationship between his narrator and his narrator's grandfather, in order to find the origin of Scottish culture that lay, he held in Scottish Calvinism, no matter how bloody its history was. It is widely noted in Scottish history that after the union of the parliaments of Scotland and England in London in 1707 religion in Scotland has had a significant bearing on the national consciousness. For a people whose "sense of nationhood was removed early in the eighteenth century, religion remained one of the few facets of Scottish civil life in which a collective identity could survive."[69] Galt's Ringan Gilhaize, delivers this importance through his grandfather's narratives and his own experiences to the contemporary reader.

The metaphor of generation, as argued at length by present-day literary historian Brown, has been a common method of depicting in the narration the development and change in a society. Generation both symbolised the cumulative experience of the members of a nation and the background or ancient form and character of a nation. As Brown points out, this experience was conveyed through the narrations of traditions from one generation to the next, containing both descriptions of events and the personal convictions of the author. This passing on of traditions

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66 He found, for example, *Adam Blair* insufficient, as it could have been more striking if it would have been told in the first person. Galt to Moir, London, 14 March 1822, NLS, Blackwood Papers, MS 4008, f 167.
67 *Literary Life,* vol. 1, 270.
68 *Autobiography,* vol. 1, 9-11.
69 Cullum Brown cited in David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: the Sociology of a Nation,* London: Routledge, 2001, 55-56

by the author, intentionally or un-intentionally, consisted both of a description of what was, and of a translation of the "what was" into a new culture. Brown calls this translation a deviation from truth and gives its sources as "the infidelity of memory, or the exaggerations of vanity."[70] The choice of "what was" becomes necessarily particularly relevant. The choice determined how courageous, wise, suppressed and suffering the nation or members of the nation were.

Like many other authors Galt had to deal with the choice and representation of the past within this dichotomy. It was one that left the subject between a progressive, futuristic history and a nostalgic, romantic description of the past; between a romantic style and a pure realistic reflection of the past. As Lindsay, another modern literary historian, pointed out for Scott:

> On the one hand Scott's appreciation of the romantic past led him to steep his imaginative faculties and his antiquarian talents in the heroic or anti-heroic drama of Scotland's history. On the other, his inherently common-sense nature made him support the industrial changes that came with the Union, and which he realised were inevitable [as an inevitable part of stadialism].[71]

22In the early nineteenth century, Scott as well as Galt, both being to some extent the products of Enlightenment, were interested in the past treasures of Scotland and spread those by a tint of emphasis on progress. Scott allegedly suggested that "traditional Highland society contains savage and primitive elements that must be left behind as modern civilisation advances, but that it also contains features that could serve Britain well, once the Highlanders are re-educated for the modern world and their loyalty is harnessed to the imperial cause."[72] As Galt's and Scott's rhetoric was connected to the formation of national manners, this was a compromise between the old and new, progressive changes. Although it may sound contradictory, it was a celebration of civic and commercial values as well as a selection of elements from the undesirable, undeveloped past, i.e. some of the precious pieces valuable for the nation's being and future.[73] This was given in a history by making connections between the past and present.

This point may aid in understanding that in the historical novel of the period there was a flux of history and development depicted and an emphasis placed on experience. To re-emphasise, the use of generations and memory as a leitmotif clung to their historical narrative. Generational relationship to the past had not only an importance of connecting the present to the past but also had a crucial role as a source.[74] The previous generation becomes a source for history, or the means to acquire knowledge about the past, that is to say, the memories of the older generation serve as a source for past habits, manners and beliefs learned through story telling; this hereby also epitomizing the importance of authority. Authority is that which legitimises a narrative, a history, a government or a revolt. Historical sources such as eyewitnesses could help the narrator assume an authentic and authoritative voice. Previous generations served as authentic eyewitness sources and transmitted through the ear-witnesses to the collective memories to the following generation.

Genealogical sequence in history helped to legitimise royal authority or the institution of the church, or verify the authenticity of a certain document. This metaphoric way of thinking about causal relationships was often used for referring to any event or representation from a

70 See chapter 1 in Brown, *Institutions,* 14.
71 Margaret Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature,* London: Robert Hale, 1992, 276.
72 Mack Douglas, "James Hogg in 2000 and Beyond," *Romanticism On the Net 19* (August, 2000), <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/19mack.html>, 05.03.2002, 4.
73 For example Scott used the Jacobites and medieval past to create a cultural nationalism. See Anthony Lake, "'Chapter Three: A Beautiful and Fantastic Piece of Frostwork:' Sir Walter Scott's Ivanhoe and Medievalism," in P*atriotic and Domestic Love: Nationhood and National Identity in British Literature 1789-1848,* Ph. D. diss., University of Sussex, 1997.
74 Mathew Campbell and Jacqueline M. Labbe, eds., *Memory and Memorials 1789-1914: Literary and Cultural Perspectives,* London: Routledge, 2000, 1-4. They explain the great use of memory as history and close connections to historicism in the nineteenth century.

prior reality. As Brown pointed out "this relationship between event and subsequent event or author and text is understood as an assumed analogy with the sexual generation of offspring by parents." The analogy implies an inheritance of authority, a force that allows the same authority to be reproduced; or in Voltaire's words, "the past gives birth to the present." This connection also implies a mystification of authority accomplished by the narrators' deviation from the truth, increasing as the number of narrators from generation to generation. As this process proceeds through various generations, it continually bears the same a degree of legitimacy in various forms. This same process of legitimisation — as Scott thought as the major role of romance and historical novel — led to the construction of culture in its variety. Narrators become the painters of national manners and culture.[75]

The author is the individual who composes or relates a certain story. However, the narrator, who has to convince the reader, is able to confirm and continue the history by referential storytelling to and by following generations. To use Hume's anti-Jacobite remarks, legitimisation was not just a procedure depending on the past but was connected to posterity. In history, on the throne, it is only those with a legitimate authority who had successors.

> Princes often seem to acquire a right from their successors, as well as from their ancestors; and a king, who during his life-time might justly be deem'd an usurper, may well be regarded by posterity as a lawful prince, because he has had the good fortune to settle his family on the throne, and entirely change the ancient form of government ... Time and custom give authority to all forms of government, and all successions of princes; and that power, which at first was founded only on injustice and violence, becomes in time legal and obligatory. Not does the mind rest there; but returning back upon its footsteps, transfers, as being related together and united in the imagination.[76]

Thus, as much as authority legitimised a power, the authority itself was in need of and dependent on social recognition. This question of authority becomes a weighty one in the fields of politics, history and scripture study. This confrontation was present in all its forms in Galt's writings. He was of the opinion that the historical process of legitimising authority was not rational but subjective, dependent on sentiments, as Hume asserted. To believe in an authority was subjective, it was related to conventions of the time, the condition in which a certain individual or state was in and also on one's education – either traditional or formal.

As stated above, the power possessed by certain authorities might change over the ages. A compelling example is the authority of the Bible in the life of an individual and more specifically a belief in Special Providence. The concept of Special Providence is central in Galt's historical writing, especially in *Ringan Gilhaize* when compared to his descriptions of eighteenth-century Scottish society. It is the authority of the Scripture accompanied with the strong belief in Special Providence that guided Ringan during his most difficult times. This same trend was apparent in *The Entail* where Walkinshaw, the main character, sought refuge by opening the Bible at random, by which he could make a psychological connection to his present condition. Nevertheless, history discloses how men moved from the belief that they were guided by Special Providence to the assertion that there were many reasons and forces in human life that made individuals act in certain ways. The authority of the Scripture as a guide, such as Ringan's practice of opening the Bible at random faded away, as other sources began to be consulted in addition to the Bible.

It is true that there was a shift towards a more rational or psychological explanation during Galt's own period. However, in the seventeenth century, men like Ringan believed in Special

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[75] Brown, *Institutions,* 86.
[76] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941, 566.

Providence and the curative powers of the Scripture. They submitted their common consciousness to this authority, which they inherited from their ancestors who told them how they had fought for their independence in the seventeenth century, in the name of Providence, against Charles II and James II. This idea was accepted and handed down to the following generation. Posterity, however, with contemporary developments, changed some of the stories' emphasis, added later experiences to their mental world, and went into another stage of history.

The generations became both the actors in history as well as the transmitters of history to the present as historical authorities. Through generational narrative the past becomes an understandable foreign picture. The relationship of previous generations to the later ones gave authority to their transmission. What they transmitted was the spirit of an age, as the actors showed what was important for them, what they believed, how they had changed and how they handed the history down to the present. Galt depicts less dominant characters, ordinary Scottish people. They were non-heroes who told their own stories. He achieved this by writing in the first person, giving voices to these characters, with their own personal perceptions and prejudices. By doing so, it seems that the narrative tells a true story, pointing to many true versions of stories and histories. This, according to Galt, was history as it had been. It was history according to his historical character, penetrating his thoughts and going directly to the bosom of the nation. In a sense, it epitomized Galt's historical verisimilitude, as opposed to Scott's cultural translation into present manners. However, this aesthetics of history in the eyes of both of the authors relates and explains the grounds to the historical identity of the society.

As a result it is clear that writing historical novel is perceived not as solely fiction. In the minds of the authors there is always a link and truthlikeness to history. History and fiction were still not perceived as excommunicating opposites during the early nineteenth century, but were seen as existing side by side and fictional narrative was just one among many possible forms of history.[77] Mimesis or verisimilitude of historical reality is achieved in creating a historical aesthetics through manners, believe systems, diction and authorial voice that makes these stories believable. However, like popular history or historical drama of today these are creations of certain choices of history and evidently Scott's and Galt's understanding of truthlikeness differ from each other. There is always a connection to the present. Scott talks of a translation of a culture and diction whereas Galt communicates with the help of the metaphor of generations.

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[77] Lionel Gossman, "History and Literature: Reproductions or Signification," in *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding,* ed. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 4–7.

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