The Prince and the Provost

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On a superficial reading, the Scottish novels of John Galt are deceptively simple—so simple, in fact, that a contemporary reviewer wrote of Galt's third major novel, *The Provost*: "It reads so easily and naturally, that I felt as if I were composing it as I went along." Responses such as this seem to have deterred reviewers in Galt's day from looking much beneath the surface of his narratives, and they tended to admire him merely as a "painter" of national manners, attempting in prose what Wilkie attempted with his genre painting—a point of view encouraged by the fact that his Scottish novels were published by William Blackwood, who specialized in works "illustrative of Scottish life and manners." With only a few exceptions Galt's modern critics have made similar judgments about his work, and generally have failed to appreciate both the actual complexity of his best novels, and the particular philosophical beliefs and commitments, universal in significance and applicability, out of which they grew. This article offers a different interpretation of Galt's own favorite novel,

1 "Letter of Thanks From an Occasional Contributor," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, XI (Jan-June, 1822), 743.

2 Among modern critics Bradford Booth has argued against regarding Galt merely as a provincial novelist whose works bear only a local significance, while Erik Frykman has attempted to see Galt against the background of the Scottish Renaissance of the later eighteenth century, as J. H. Millar advised at the end of the nineteenth century. See Bradford Booth's edition of *The Gathering of The West* (Baltimore, Maryland, 1939); Erik Frykman, "John Galt and Eighteenth Century Philosophy," *Papers of The Greenock Philosophical Society* (Greenock, 1954), and his *John Galt's Scottish Stories* 1820-1833 (Uppsala, 1959). See also J. H. Millar, "The Novels of John Galt," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, CLIX (1896), 871-882. Although Frykman recognizes the influence upon Galt of the eighteenth century Scottish philosophy, he does not interpret the major novels rigorously against this background. Other critics, such as David Craig in his *Scottish Literature and The Scottish People* 1680-1850 (London, 1961), continue to deny Galt's principal novels a general significance, perhaps in reaction to the well-meaning but simplistic attitudes to Galt as a writer expressed by Jennie Aberdein in her biographical study *John Galt* (London, 1936), and Frank Hallam Lyell in his *A Study of the Novels of John Galt*, Princeton Studies in English, XXVIII (Princeton, 1942).
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The Provost, from that usually propounded: an interpretation that stresses the philosophical nature of its major theme, and links it in a satirical relationship with the doctrines of Machiavelli’s The Prince, in order to emphasize that Galt’s major works are more than simple genre pictures of a “quaint” society. First it is necessary to say something about the philosophical background to the novel.

Galt’s views concerning man and society were strongly influenced by the Scottish moral sense philosophers of the eighteenth century—more especially, though not exclusively, by the group headed by Thomas Reid, and known as the Common Sense school—and each of his major novels develops a significant theme of their philosophy. Galt’s masterpiece, Annals of The Parish, published not long before The Provost, develops the theme of progress, which is closely related to the underlying question of self-interest. The Scottish philosophers were generally progressive in their social thinking, and welcomed the commercial and industrial revolutions since they provided the means to create a highly cultivated and “polite” society in which the populace could rise entirely out of “barbarism” to refinement. In order for this to happen in an orderly fashion men must learn to harmonize their innate self-interest with their equally innate sense of public duty, and benevolence toward others. The Scottish philosophers attacked Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Mandeville who made self-interest man’s predominant characteristic, and instead asserted that a proper balance of the selfish with the selfless was both possible and desirable. With the stability guaranteed by this harmony of interests social progress could be achieved in an evolutionary manner, and the individual could attain his own greatest good while contributing to the advancement and improvement of his society. In Annals of The Parish Galt illustrates how these views can be put into practice, in a time of upheaval during the early decades of industrialization, when old interests and loyalties conflicted with new.

It must be mentioned that in his introduction to The Provost, S. R. Crockett refers to Pawkie as a “parochial Machiavelli.” The Works of John Galt, 10 vols. (Edinburgh, 1936), X, xix. Also, Ian Jack is reminded of Machiavelli by Pawkie; see English Literature 1815-1832 (Oxford, 1963), p. 229. Neither of these writers, however, examines the relationship of Pawkie to Machiavelli beyond the mere statement of it, and the present writer’s views on the subject were formed independently and from a very different point of view.

Annals of The Parish appeared in 1821, and The Provost in 1822, the writing of the latter commencing soon after the publication of the former and proceeding rapidly to a conclusion.

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The Provost has been misinterpreted in part by being wrongly equated with the Annals, and for this Galt is largely to blame. In his Literary Life he writes of The Provost as if it were another version of the Annals, dealing this time with the question of social progress in the chronicle of a town during the same period. * This was obviously his original intention since when he broached the subject of his new novel with his publisher the latter responded with enthusiasm, "It is a glorious subject, and I intended to have written you to suggest the idea of a citizen’s chronicle, as the changes, etc., in a town have been so striking during the last fifty or sixty years." Galt’s original purpose is manifest also in the introduction to the novel, where, in his guise as “editor” of the work, he refers to James Pawkie’s narrative as a “history,” and indicates that Pawkie himself is associated with “the manifold improvements which had taken place, both in town and country, since we had visited the royal burgh” (pp. 1-2). * But in spite of these assertions The Provost is not a repetition of the earlier novel. Its major theme is the problem of self-interest, while the question of social progress occupies a subsidiary position, so that the order of the themes in the two novels has been reversed. The Provost is a fictional autobiography and not a chronicle, so that the form is adapted to the new major theme, and the ethical model for the novel is not the set of works of sociological interest, fictional and non-fictional, that helped shape the Annals but rather Machiavelli’s Prince. The Provost is, in fact, a satirical imitation of Machiavelli’s treatise rather than a fictionalized version of the Statistical Account of Scotland. John Galt’s own assertions about his novel should not, therefore, be given too much weight since he was notoriously and self-avowedly a bad critic of his own work, and often failed to realize exactly what he had achieved.

Galt read The Prince for the first time in 1814 and, very naturally, he disliked it since its doctrines run counter to everything that the Scottish philosophers had to say concerning man and society. He wrote in his Literary Life that at first he considered the work “an odious


1All citations from the novel in the text are from The Works of John Galt, ed. D. Storror Meldrum and William Roughhead (Edinburgh, 1936), X. This edition is essentially a reprint of the edition of Galt’s Work published by Blackwood in 1895-96, and edited by D. Storror Meldrum.
collection of state maxims for the regulation of the policy of kings."\textsuperscript{8} He made the villain of his tragedy \textit{Asbol} a thorough-going machiavellian,\textsuperscript{9} and in his essay "The Seven Years War in Germany" Galt condemned Frederick The Great when "the commentator on Machiavelli showed how well he understood the practice of those maxims which he pretended to refute."\textsuperscript{10} In his first important Scottish novel, \textit{The Ayrshire Legatees}, published not long before \textit{The Provost}, Galt exposes the young lawyer, Andrew Pringle, to criticism for espousing a machiavellian view of politics. Thus Galt's abiding reaction to the doctrines expressed in Machiavelli's treatise was one of repulsion.

It was not long after first reading \textit{The Prince}, however, that Galt came to interpret it as a satire on the ruthless and selfish pursuit of power. He detected a satirical incongruity between the dignified, scholarly form of Machiavelli's treatise and its morally objectionable subject matter, between its calm intellectual manner, and the theory of tyranny based on the worst aspects of human nature which it presents. Galt also found incongruous the implied assumption that the writer was presenting something new, whereas in Galt's view what he was actually doing was to methodize the unsavoury policies that power-hungry and ambitious politicians had always employed. Once he interpreted \textit{The Prince} in this way Galt thoroughly enjoyed it, and twenty years later wrote, "I must have in a manner devoured it, for I do not recollect a word, while I retain the most racy recollection of the pleasure it gave me."\textsuperscript{11} Whereas at first he had been repelled by the ideas presented in the treatise, he was now amused by what he considered a subtle attack on those ideas, which he found no less repulsive in themselves.

Under the influence of this conception, the critical accuracy of which is not here at issue, Galt almost immediately wrote an imitation of Machiavelli's work, which he called "Instructions In The Art Of Rising In The World," and which he published in two parts in the \textit{New Monthly Magazine}.\textsuperscript{12} The piece was left unfinished when there was an outcry from readers who failed to recognize the ironic intention,

\textsuperscript{8} I, 161.
\textsuperscript{9} The play was published in the \textit{Literary Life}, Vol. III.
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Literary Life}, II, 21.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, I, 161.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{New Monthly Magazine}, I (1814), 18-19; 127-129. The piece appeared in the issues for February and March under the pseudonym "G. Halton, Esq.", a rearrangement of Galt's name.
but it must briefly be considered here since within it lay the seed of The Provoost that germinated seven years later.

Galt called his sketch a "parody," and wrote that it was written "in grave irony," but "The Art Of Rising" is not, strictly speaking, intended to burlesque The Prince. Rather, it is meant to imitate what Galt felt to be Machiavelli's purpose, in a low burlesque manner. Galt introduced the doctrines of The Prince into an undignified milieu in order to diminish and ridicule them in a more direct and forceful way than Machiavelli's own incongruities (as Galt interpreted them), had done.  

The leading ideas and underlying assumptions of Galt's treatise have quite obviously been taken from Machiavelli's. Both works are predicated upon the ultimate self-centeredness of mankind, the primacy of ends over means, the incompatibility of success with virtue, and the greater importance of the former. In both treatises a self-seeking pragmatism is advocated, the principal components of which are cunning, dissimulation, and a selfish foresight. By acting according to this formula the ambitious individual, it is predicted, can attain wealth and power as he manipulates and exploits others effectively. To do so he will pretend to virtues that he does not have (such as liberality, gratitude, and devotion), while he breaks his word and exploits every situation to his own advantage, no matter how unpromising it may at first seem.

Stated thus baldly, out of context, such views and attitudes can only seem repugnant, but in The Prince they are rendered more persuasive by virtue of the dignified setting in which they are applied, and the serious didactic form and elegant style by which they are presented. The incongruities detected by Galt do little to undermine the doctrine of The Prince, but it is severely undercut when it reappears in "The Art Of Rising," for in addition to adopting what he considered to be Machiavelli's deliberate inappropriateness of form, as if he had some conventional moral teachings to offer, Galt denies the leading ideas of his piece any dignity, by virtue of either style or setting, and subjects them to the diminution that is the prime intention of "low" burlesque. Instead of the regal sphere, the grand design, and the world of "state-craft," Galt presents Machiavelli's ostensible doctrines in a sordid

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15 Galt preferred "low" to "high" burlesque, and though at times he uses snatches of parody or mock heroic for critical purposes, he is more inclined to the kind of burlesque found in travesty, aimed at the morals and manners of men, rather than at the style of a given work, or a particular author.
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modern setting—in a world of petty bourgeois, money-grubbing merchants where minor intrigue, domestic betrayal, and “getting on” are the significant factors. Everything is seen in business terms; success is to be achieved not by conquest and major political subversion, but by underhand commercial dealings, and by mercenary marriages to rich and delicate women who might be expected to die off at an early date. Such marriages should be repeated as frequently as possible in order to build up a good working capital, for “Marriage to a man, may be compared to the subdivision of labour in manufactures; the oftener it is repeated, the greater will be its produce.”¹⁴ The modern successful man must betray friends, family and benefactors alike.

Galt thus brings the main ideas of The Prince down from their princely heights into the streets and market-place in order to expose them for what they really are. In order to emphasize what he is doing, he reminds the reader that his model is “the celebrated essay of that illustrious Florentine, whom statesmen have never ceased to culminate for disclosing the secrets of their craft.”¹⁵ In a commercial and industrial age, which Galt feared was more and more leading to the self-interested control of the many by the few with power, Machiavellian practice, immoral in itself, had lost the glamor with which it was attended in the sixteenth century, and so was exposed by the unglamorous and deliberately inelegant methods of “low” burlesque.

When he came to write his Scottish novels Galt wished above all else to expose the principle of self-interest both in general ethical terms, and in its particular manifestations in the social behavior of individuals, and the institutions of society. Although this question is dealt with in all his novels, it is foremost in The Provost, which grew out of “The Art Of Rising” although Galt himself did not recognize this explicitly.¹⁶ The Provost too is an “art of rising,” as Provost Pawkie admits at the outset when he says that he began “to entertain the hope and assurance of rising to the top of all the town, as this

¹⁵Ibid., p. 18.
¹⁶Galt nowhere acknowledges any connection between his novel and Machiavelli’s treatise, but the numerous references to Machiavelli in his writings after 1814 suggest that this writer had made a deeper impression on Galt than he perhaps realized. Further, the Annual grew from an idea which Galt first thought of in 1813, so to suggest that The Provost grew from an idea first formed in 1814 is not out of line with Galt’s habits of composition; in fact Galt typically brought ideas into his later books that had been suggested in his earlier works.
book maketh manifest, and the incidents thereof will certificate" (p. 9). There is the same kind of disparity of form and content that we have noted in the earlier piece, and which Galt thought he saw in "The Prince. Galt interpreted in an ironical sense Machiavelli's statement that he wrote his treatise to communicate his "knowledge of great mens actions, which I have learned by a long experience of moderne affairs," (p. 3)\(^7\) and his own didacticism in "The Art Of Rising" and The Provost is intended ironically. Pawkie's declared aim in writing his life story is "the instruction of posterity," but what in fact he teaches, is how to rise in the world, not how to attain virtue. Galt makes Pawkie's real intentions clear in an ironic passage in which the Provost, who considers himself one of their number, writes that a public figure "has a good right to set forth the particulars of the discretion and prudence by which he lifted himself so far above the ordinaries of his day and generation. Indeed, the generality of mankind may claim this as a duty; for the conduct of public men, as it has often been wisely said, is a species of public property, and their rules and observances have in all ages been considered things of a national concernment" (p. 5).

In spite of these high-flown claims Pawkie is a "little" man, and as he is at the same time both a practicing Machiavellian, and a typical politician and merchant of his day, the undignified setting in which he thrives as well as the author's belittling of his personality completely undercut his Machiavellian teaching, and expose to ridicule those aspects of his social behavior in which he represents some of the pernicious tendencies of modern society in their most glaring forms. Galt's purpose in this novel is therefore both to attack the ethical position of those who considered self-interest to be man's principal motivating force, and to expose to ridicule the particular abuses in his own society that were the result of self-interested policies. Each of these factors will be considered in turn, and first it will be noticed how closely the theory and practice of politics according to Pawkie illustrates or runs parallel to many of Machiavelli's central maxims.

The Provost, like The Prince, is concerned with the techniques by which the individual gains power, and the wealth that leads to power, at the expense of the community. The same kind of non-ethical pragmatism is advocated in both works: Pawkie asserts that "magis-

\(^7\) All citations from The Prince in the text are taken from the first English translation by Edward Dacres, published originally in 1640. The edition used here is the Scribner's Three Renaissance Classics, introd. Burton A. Milligan (New York, 1953).
trates and rulers must rule according to the maxims and affections of the world" (p. 243), and Machiavelli suggests that in a corrupt world it is necessary to adopt corrupt methods, and that idealism is out of place because it is not "practical" (pp. 57-58). At various points in his narrative Pawkie professes to support reform, not in order to bring moral principle more fully to bear on social life, but because he wishes to make the techniques for the pursuit of self-interested policies more efficient. He objects to Baillie M'Lucre, his chief rival on the burgh council, not because he is corrupt, but because he is so "inefficiently," that is to say openly, so that he rouses the anger of the public. At M'Lucre's death Pawkie says of his general policy of self-interest "But the thing was not so far wrong in principle as in the hugger-muggering way in which it was done, which gave to it a guilty color that, by the judicious stratagem of a right system, it would never have had" (p. 117). This is illustrative of a statement in The Prince that "It is a thing very naturall and ordinary, to desire to be of the getting hand: and alwayes when men undertake it, if they can effect it, they shall bee prais'd for't, or at least not blam'd: but when they are not able, and yet will undertake it, here lies the blame, here is the errour committed" (p. 13). Unlike M'Lucre, Pawkie takes care that his reach does not exceed his grasp in this way.

It is evident, then, that expediency guides Pawkie as much as it guides the Prince postulated by Machiavelli. Pawkie changes his tactics to suit the changing times in order to retain power, and Machiavelli states "He proves the fortunate man, whose manner of proceeding meets with the quality of the times: and so likewise he unfortunate, from whose course of proceeding the times differ" (p. 94). Pawkie judges M'Lucre to have failed as a politician because he did not understand this, for "he had outlived the times for which he was qualified" (p. 118). Not so Pawkie, who comprehends the new power of public opinion and accepts "that the secret of the new way of ruling the world was to follow, not to control, the evident dictates of the popular voice" (p. 145). He realizes that the old authoritarianism will no longer be effective; "therefore," he says, "I squared my after conduct more by a deference to public opinion than by any laid-down maxims and principles of my own" (p. 148). Pawkie adopts the rhetoric rather than the reality of reform, but in doing so hoodwinks everyone (including many of Gait's critics), as to his intentions while continuing to serve himself. He evidently recognizes the truth of another of Machiavelli's principles, "that it is necessary
for a Prince to have the people his friend, otherwise in his adversities
he hath no helpe" (p. 38).

Deception is therefore essential to both Prince and Provost to
retain popular support while they act from motives of self-interest.
As his name suggests, Pawkie relies on cunning and dissembling to
hide his real motives from critical scrutiny, and soon after his appoint-
ment to the burgh council he remarks, "I discerned that it behoved
me to act with circumspection, in order to gain a discreet dominion
over the same, and to rule without being felt, which is the great
mystery of policy" (p. 14). Later he asserts similarly that "It was a
better thing in the world to have power and influence than to show
the possession of either" (p. 59). He consequently disguises his
motives and always speaks "with a circumbendibus." His entire career
is a history of deceptions engaged in to further his own ends; he rigs
national and local elections, instigates public works for private profit
while professing to be an "improver," and uses his political power in
general to add to his wealth. His behavior finally arouses the council
to opposition, and Pawkie admits that this was "partly owing to the
repute I had acquired for canny management" (p. 224). Pawkie
would appear to have entirely assimilated the lesson taught in The
Prince, that it is necessary "to be able to faine and disseim
thoroughly; and men are so simple and yeild so much to the present
necessities, that hee who hath a mind to deceive, shall always find
another that will be deceived" (p. 66).

So that deception may be the more effective, Machiavelli recom-
mends that a Prince pretend to virtues he may not have in order to
dispose the people to support him, and Pawkie acts in this manner
also. At the opening of his narrative he takes note of "the terror
that I was to evildoers" (p. 5), although the evil he is most con-
cerned to extirpate is opposition to himself. When it will help his
schemes to a successful conclusion Pawkie strikes a conventional
moral pose, but in doing so, unlike the Prince, he often fools himself
along with the public, as Coleridge recognized and appreciated.18

This assumption of a moral stance might quiet the apprehensions

18After praising the "Ironic of Self-Delusion, in all parts intelligible to
the intelligent Reader," Coleridge observed that "Selfness is united with
Slyness and a plausibility eminently successful in cheating the man himself
into a happy state of constant self-applause." Coleridge wrote these and
other appreciative remarks on the dedication page of a first edition of the
novel. This was first pointed out by A. J. Ashley in a letter to TLS (Sept.,
1930), p. 757. The quotation given here is taken from Lyell, op. cit., p. 90.
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of the general public, but not those of close political rivals; Pawkie seems well aware of Machiavelli's warning "that hee that gives the means to another to become powerful, ruines himself" (p. 15). Rather than relying solely upon spurious claims to virtue, to political reform, or social improvement, therefore, he seeks to secure his power against potential challengers by more pragmatic means. He has pliant tools appointed to the council, and tries to expose his colleagues as less able than himself although, ironically, he shares many of the weaknesses for which he exposes them. When his opponents on the council at last fight back, he prudently retires from the scene for a while and has a figure-head Provost appointed. This figure-head is the Earl of Eaglesham, a local landowner who is generally benevolent and generally absent, in whose name Pawkie manages the town by prior arrangement. Pawkie can thus shield himself behind the Earl's nobility, benevolence, and absenteeism while still exercising all his former power. On another occasion he has the morally dubious Mr. Keg, a local ex-smuggler, appointed to the Provostry in order that Mr. Keg's misrule might impress the townspeople with his own greater virtue and ability. In either case Pawkie's behavior is an illustration of Machiavelli's maxim that "Princes ought to cause others to take upon them the matters of blame and imputation; and upon themselves to take only those of grace and favor" (p. 71). Pawkie makes himself seem indispensable to the town, in accordance with yet another of Machiavelli's principles, for "... a prudent Prince ought to devize a way, whereby his Citizens alwayes and in any case and quality of time may have need of his government, and they shall alwaies after proove faithfull to him" (pp. 39-40).

Finally, Pawkie is able to overcome his rivals, retain his power and augment it, by exercising the judicious foresight that Machiavelli recommends to his Prince. The prudent ruler must not only take note of present mischiefs but also those to be expected in the future; he must "provide for those with all industry; for by taking order for those when they are affarre off, it is easy to prevent them; but by delaying till they come near hand to thee, the remedy comes too late" (p. 11). Pawkie maintains that another cause of M'Lucre's failure was his inability to exercise this foresight, whereas of himself Pawkie says that he set "the windows of my foresight all open" (p. 14), the better to achieve his ends, the object of which was the greatest happiness of the smallest number.

In general Pawkie resembles most closely Machiavelli's "civil," or "new" Prince, who does not succeed by means of virtue or fortune "but
rather a fortunate cunning” (p. 36). The “new” Prince has “diffi-
culties and oppositions” (p. 80) placed in his way, and yet attains
greatness in spite of his lack of “blood,” for his actions speak for
themselves and “men are much more taken by things present than by
things past” (p. 91). Pawkie is similarly “modern,” and rejects the
past in favor of present expediency. Despite his sentimental account
of the local volunteers gathering during the Napoleonic wars “to de-
fend, as their fathers did of old, the hallowed things of their native
land” (p. 143), Pawkie more typically refers to the past contemptu-
ously as “the primitive ages of a rampantous antiquity.” He rids the
town of some harmless medieval ceremonies which the poor enjoy,
so that he and his class may benefit financially, and his statement
elsewhere that “new occasions call for new laws” (p. 138) is heavily
qualified by his selfish attitudes and behavior. Like the “new” Prince,
Pawkie ignores the traditional aristocracy and rejects the past out of
hand in order to pursue his private ends unimpeded by the barriers
placed in the path of adventurers by older social systems. They both
disavow the forms and values of earlier times, which, despite their
deficiencies, lent stability to society, and seek to manipulate popular
opinion in their favor while feeling little of that sense of community
responsibility that characterizes societies less “modern.”

*The Provost* is an early nineteenth century version of *The Prince*,
but it is a burlesque version in which the author seeks to ridicule
some of the leading ideas and attitudes of Machiavelli’s treatise, as,
indeed, he thought Machiavelli himself had done less obviously for a
subter reading public. By attacking the views and opinions of his
main character Galt sought to uphold the ethics of benevolence of the
Scottish Moral Sense philosophers, and we must now consider the
means by which he achieves this end.

We have noted that Galt imitated what he thought to be Machia-
velli’s disparity of form and content, but, as in “The Art Of Rising,”
he relies much more on the diminution of burlesque to undercut the
doctrines of *The Prince* as they are practised by Provost Pawkie. The
diminution is achieved basically in two ways: first of all, by Pawkie’s
assumption of princely dignity and grandeur, which both reminds the
reader of the milieu in which the doctrines he professes had their
origin, and yet contrasts ludicrously with the details of his actual social
position and setting; and secondly by a very full and comical presenta-
tion of those details, which robs Pawkie of all the dignity he claims
for himself and his ideas. The first method has a hint of the mock
heroic about it, and the second a strong suggestion of travesty.
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Pawkie insists on talking of himself and his burgh in terms more appropriate to a Prince in his Principality. He sees his career as a continuous effort to dominate the town as absolutely as any ruler; he talks of "ruling the town" (p. 225), of adopting "a far more expedient method of governing the community" (p. 230), and he says that his action in dismissing the town drummer was judged "a daring stretch of arbitrary power"—he was felt to be "usurping an undue authority" (p. 165). This apprehension is not unfounded as elsewhere he gloats at having attained "weight and authority with the community, until I had the whole sway and mastery of the town" (p. 129). When at last he proposes to retire he musters a regal dignity, and states "I intended to abdicate my authority and power" (p. 236). Throughout his career he expresses a thoroughly sovereign contempt for the "multitude," whose fickleness he condemns in a manner more appropriate to Shakespeare's Henry IV (p. 237).

Similarly, he speaks of the burgh council as if it were a national government. A petty squabble breaks out over the reconstruction of the church interior, and Pawkie describes how "a faction was begotten" (p. 89), with his party on the one hand, and the "Snedummites" (followers of one Nabal Snedum, a local tobaconist), on the other. The court case in which this struggle ends is depicted as if it were a parliamentary wrangle. Later, after the townspeople have raised a corps of volunteers in response to the threat of a French invasion, Pawkie recounts that the magistrates felt "great alarm and consternation at seeing such a vast military power in the civil hands, over which they had no natural control" (p. 144). When Pawkie and his colleagues plan certain replacements for the council the appointments are considered "a state secret" (p. 233). These verbal claims upon real consequence "diminish" Pawkie's stature since they remind the reader, by the contrast of his words with the facts of his real situation, of his relative unimportance.

The reader is made more forcefully aware of Pawkie's sordid mercenariness, avarice, and ludicrousness by the comically rendered details of his professional life and his personality, which cause the reader to laugh at him, and so at the ideas and attitudes that are most typical of him. He is made to appear a "little" man in order that the doctrines he teaches may be disparaged. As a typical politician of his day, he excites only amusement. The subtle diplomacy, the complex webs of intrigue that characterize the true Machiavellian ruler are far removed from the petty schemes for power and profit in which Pawkie is involved. We find him busily locking up in his shop certain
influential would-be voters at election time; or elaborately pretending to neutrality when two candidates of his own party vie for election in order to be bribed the more effectually; or subverting the entire corps of volunteers, in a time of national emergency, so that by organizing a false election he may corner the market on uniforms sold to the corps.

His whole view of politics is mercenary; as a politician, Pawkie represents some of the worst aspects of the newly emerging bourgeoisie that the commercial and industrial revolutions had produced. The fact that he is also a venal merchant furthers this identification, and denies him any of the dignity which Machiavelli's Prince possesses, for the Prince, although advised to acquire riches both as a sign of his success, and as a means to power, is urged more strongly to achieve glory and "honor" in the more traditional "heroic" way, by military conquest and by subtle statecraft. The doctrines of The Prince are thus debased when applied to the prosecution of money-grubbing adventures. Unlike the Prince, Pawkie is entirely mercenary; the time of his marriage and the choice of a wife are determined by hard-headed economic considerations. Although he sympathizes with the girl hanged for child-murder, he interrupts his account of her execution in order to speculate enthusiastically on the profit made by the contractor who erected the scaffold. When he gives a party for the neighboring gentry he naturally has an eye to the main chance, writing "I was not very clear about how the benefit was to come to book, for the outlay I thought as likely to o'ergang the profit" (p. 194). It is not surprising that most of his activity is devoted to exercising his power and ingenuity to further his own business interests, often at the expense of the poor whom he frequently claims to help.

The details of Pawkie's personality reduce his dignity further, and are so depicted as to render him comical rather than impressive. He has all the snobbery of the newly rich. He begins his career by looking for "some genteel business" (p. 7) in order to advance himself socially; once he has made money he begins to refer to his daughters as "young ladies," and boasts confidentially to the reader that "I was, thank God, in a circumstance to entitle them to hold their heads something above the trades" (p. 155). He becomes contemptuous of the local aristocracy and gentry owing to their lack of practical ability, and he writes condescendingly that "We thought less and less of them, until, poor bodies, the bit prideful lairdies were just looked down upon by our gawsie big-bellied burgesses, not a few of whom had heritable bonds on their estates" (p. 171). And yet Pawkie fawns on the gentry
while he despises them, since he views their social acceptance of him as a most important "test of success." 19

Pawkie, therefore, is belittled by his vulgarity, his snobbery, and the egotism that lies behind these factors of his personality, none of which matches the stature of the Machiavellian Prince. His ego is further undermined by his failures of judgment. He prides himself on his artfulness, as his name would imply, and yet he proves to be all too fallible; he is outmanoeuvred by the less subtle baillie M'Lucre in his first political "job," and supposedly pliant men whom he has appointed to the council turn out to have wills of their own, and oppose Pawkie on important issues so that he is forced into further intrigue, comically described, to get rid of them. When the worthless minister whom Pawkie foists on the burgh proves to be even worse than expected, Pawkie openly laments his misjudgment throughout the narrative. Pawkie also proves to be unexpectedly naive, and to possess a vanity which manifests itself in pomposity so that these factors along with his failures of intrigue, undermine his Machiavellian stance as well as his role as typical politician and merchant of his time.

However, though self-interest is Pawkie's ruling motive Galt does not present him in an entirely one-sided manner, for, like the Scottish philosophers, he believed the moral sense to be latent in all men. Pawkie can be genuinely sympathetic to those in distress, as he is with the girl hanged for child-murder and her family, and with the relatives of those drowned in the great storm, or dragged off by the press-gang. He is also indignant with the farmers for withholding food from the needy townsfolk in order to force a rise in prices. Pawkie is a mixed character, in whom self-interest is, at times, leavened by human sympathy and a humorous plausibility that is also implied in his name. Pawkie's sympathetic self occasionally provides the reader with a glimpse of a more benevolent attitude to life which his usual behavior denies, and which it is Galt's concern to emphasize by his comic exposé of Pawkie.

Pawkie's associates are less savory than he is. They all operate in a small royal burgh, ironically named Gudetown, which in the Scotland of this period was a by-word for all of the worst aspects of corruption that attend public life, and which could not be further removed in its pettiness and sordidness from the state in which Machiavelli saw the Prince operating. Pawkie's associates are at one

18 This is the title of Chapter XXXV in which Pawkie describes a dinner party that he gives to curry favor with the local gentry.
with the setting, being venal, vulgar, and ludicrous to an even greater degree than Pawkie himself. But Pawkie shares many of their defects, and because in all seriousness he exercises his elaborate schemes on this group of bumbling incompetents and buffoons, he is for this reason also deprived of dignity, while ridicule is cast on the doctrines of The Prince exercised in such a "low" setting so ineptly and upon such despicable and insignificant people.

Finally, Galt ensures that the reader condemns Pawkie for all that he embodies and teaches, by making him constantly self-contradictory, and by subjecting him at the hands of the oppressed townsfolk to various indignities that are described in a broad comic fashion after the manner of Smollett, the author who exercised the greatest literary influence on Galt. Pawkie's frequent claims to patriotism, selflessness, and reasonableness are belied by the words that appear most frequently in his narrative, words such as "management," "job," "policy" (in the pejorative sense), "advantage," "device," "stratagem," "interested" (meaning self-interested), "tool" etc., and by the series of images of entrapment and manipulation that run through his account of his life. He can use such an image without ever realizing its import to the reader, as when he says, upon his return to active politics after a period of judicious absence, "I began to put forth my hand again into public affairs" (p. 74). The ironic comedy to which these inconsistencies give rise is supplemented by the Smollettian "high jinks" in which Pawkie becomes involved, particularly in the various riots that break out as a result of his high-handedness. He is hit in the face with a dead cat while reading the riot act, pursued through the streets by brawny servant girls a"
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literature, and its message is as valid today as it was in Galt's time. The novel is also a critical commentary upon the more dangerous moral developments that attended social progress in Galt's day when the selfish manipulations of the newly powerful middle class threatened to open up divisions in society that would bring a halt to future progress, and thus negate the improvements that Galt had hailed in Annals of The Parish. In this respect The Provost is a cautionary tale, and anticipates others that were to follow later in the nineteenth century.

Throughout his life Galt was interested in the conflict between private interest and public duty, which was the central ethical problem faced by the Scottish moral sense philosophers of the eighteenth century. Galt's commitment to the tenets of their philosophy ensured that he viewed man's life in society as a complex and many-sided matter, and he reproduced his sense of this complexity in the subject matter, the form, and structure of his novels whose surface simplicity has done so much to divert the attention of critics from the significance of his works as pointed analyses and critiques of the new society that was being produced by the commercial and industrial revolutions.

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*In 1832 Galt wrote to Blackwood to propose a story about a burgh deputation "which shall embrace a case of private interest with public virtue." Oliphant, op. cit., 1, p. 468.