

## **John Galt and the paratext: The discourse of authentication in North American emigration literature**

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Many British visitors to North America in the early nineteenth century felt a need to publish personal accounts of their experiences. Many were further compelled to produce guides for intending emigrants. In the case of John Galt, a writer and professionally involved in emigration, it is possibly surprising that he did not do so. He did instead produce two novels, *Lawrie Todd* and *Bogle Corbet*, which were intended as works of both documentation and instruction. As 'instructional novels' these, along with similar creative works on emigration by British visitors to North America, are distinguished by their excessive use of what Gérard Genette refers to as 'paratext'. In Galt's case especially the paratext betrays more than an instructional impulse but embodies his anxieties about authenticating the work by tying it directly to lived experience in North America. This 'discourse of authentication' acts as a constant accompanying refrain throughout this and similar works and it is also supported by the use of certain strategies in the body of the text itself. In Galt's case too the interplay of text and paratext builds up a network of fictional/non-fictional relations that underline his skills as a writer, the ludic impulse behind his writing, and the depth of his interest in the writing process itself.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Studied for BA in English Language & Literature, University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne and MA in English Language, University College London. Taught in English Department at University College London and Indiana University, Bloomington, IN. PhD in History & Theory of Art (Visual narrative semiotics), University of Kent, Canterbury. Worked as editor from 1984, firstly in Classical Music documentation, then from 1987 as Russia & Eastern Europe Area Editor for *The Dictionary of Art* (Macmillan). From 1993 Curator of US & Commonwealth Collections, National Library of Scotland.