

**Reading (and Not Reading) Anonymity:  
Daniel Defoe, *An Essay on the Regulation of the Press*  
and *A Vindication of the Press***

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“Whether he were born on the neighbouring continent, or in this island; in London, or in the country; was equally uncertain. And whether his name were Foe, or De Foe, was somewhat doubtful.”

George Chalmers, *The Life of Daniel De Foe* (1790)

**Abstract:** In this essay I take up the anonymous *An Essay on the Regulation of the Press* (1704) and *A Vindication of the Press* (1718), both regularly attributed to Daniel Defoe. While the pamphlets themselves consider anonymity essential to a work being read and interpreted, paradoxically, twentieth- and twenty-first century critics insist on correct attribution as the starting point for interpretation. The consequences and benefits of authorial attribution to these, and other, minor works are not insignificant. The attribution of authorship to a known author ensures that a work will survive; it may even ensure that a work is subject to study and analysis. However, authorial attribution may also foreclose study and analysis because the attributed work, if it is to be by the named author, must be made to cohere within a larger body of work.

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In his introduction to *Defoe: The Critical Heritage*, Pat Rogers writes of the early reception of Daniel Defoe in the eighteenth century:

Throughout the eighteenth century, only a handful of his enormous range of books enjoyed any kind of esteem. Apart from *Crusoe*, there were *The Family Instructor*; the widely popular ghost story, *The Apparition of Mrs. Veal*; in some quarters, *The Complete English Tradesman*; and the *Tour thro' Great Britain*, which reached a ninth edition in 1779. (1)

How strange such a reception must seem to the contemporary, that is, twenty-first century reader, that Daniel Defoe, accepted author of some of the most canonical novels of the British eighteenth century – *Roxana*, *Moll Flanders*, *Robinson Crusoe* – should be “chiefly regarded – understandably enough – as a polemicist and party writer” in his lifetime (Rogers 1).

The great novelist Defoe, Rogers has suggested, is an invention of the nineteenth century, but as I shall argue the process of Defoe’s transformation into a novelist began in the late eighteenth century. This transformation was complicated and delayed by the

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original anonymity of Defoe's writing.<sup>1</sup> The anonymous status of these texts in their original circulation has been obscured by the late nineteenth-century codification of the Defoe canon and biography that produces a teleological critical narrative in which the novels of Defoe represent the perfection of the craft of an "imaginative artist" (Rogers 1) honed by polemic and party writing.

I have detailed elsewhere the means by which the name "Defoe" was circulated as a writer of novels in the late eighteenth-century.<sup>2</sup> The impact of this attribution was not minor. Through the circulation and iteration of the name "Defoe" attached to novels, Defoe became like "Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and all that class of perpetually self-reproductive volumes" (Lamb 8). The name of the author and the title of the novels were folded in together, author and texts abstracted as works, and a hierarchal Defoe canon established. While the novels attributed to Defoe and some key political writings may have achieved that status of "eternae," much of the writings associated with the Defoe canon have received scholarly attention only insofar as they are "by Defoe" and have some use value in narrating the biographical or literary development of the man named Defoe.

That named authorship should be the key to ensuring a text's survival was far from a given in the early eighteenth century. Two texts in the period offer differing views of this relationship between author, text, and textual survival. In "The Preface" to *The Storm* (1704), the author meditates on the responsibility of the writer of history and draws a distinction between orality and print:

The Sermon is a Sound of Words spoken to the Ear, and prepar'd only for present Meditation, and extends no farther than the strength of Memory can convey it; a Book Printed is a Record, remaining in every Man's Possession, always ready to renew its Acquaintance with his Memory, and always ready to be produc'd as an Authority or Voucher to any Reports he makes out of it, and conveys its Contents for Ages to come, to the Eternity of mortal Time, when the Author is forgotten in his Grave. (ii)

The author, here, suggests that by virtue of print, the content of the book is rendered eternal. Print outlives oral performance for two reasons: it can be circulated more widely than speech, and it can be preserved in a material form instead of dependent on memory. Indeed, the preface suggests that the printed volume may live on independent of human actors entirely. It depends on neither its author nor its readers for its preservation. The survivability of the printed book is, the author

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<sup>1</sup> Though this essay takes Defoe as its focus, anonymity was ubiquitous in the long eighteenth century; the anonymous publication of Defoe's works was in no way unique. Robert J. Griffin has been at the fore in the study of anonymity in the period. See: Robert J. Griffin, ed. *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publications from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003., Robert J. Griffin. "Anonymity and Authorship." *New Literary History* 30.4 (1999): 877-95. Robert J. Griffin. "Fact, Fiction, and Anonymity: Reading Love and Madness: A Story Too True (1780)." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 16.4 (2004): 619-637.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Vareschi. "Attribution and Repetition: The Case of Defoe and the Circulating Library." *Eighteenth-Century Life* 36.2 (2012): 36-59.

suggests, intrinsic to print rather than dependent on extrinsic factors. The accepted author of this preface is, of course, Daniel Defoe, and it would hardly be controversial to suggest that *The Storm* and, in particular, its preface survive not simply because it was printed but because it was written by Daniel Defoe.

“The Epistle Dedicatory, to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity” in *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) offers a decidedly different assessment of survival rates of printed texts. In his address to Prince Posterity, the author raises and answers the question of the fate of most printed texts:

What is then become of those immense Bales of Paper, which must needs have been employ'd in such Numbers of Books? Can these also be wholly annihilate, and so of a sudden as I pretend? What shall I say in return of so invidious an Objection? It ill befits the Distance between *Your Highness* and Me, to send You for ocular Conviction to a *Jakes*, or an *Oven*; to the Windows of a *Bawdy-house*, or to a sordid *Lanthorn*. Books, like Men their authors, have no more than one Way of coming into the World, but there are ten Thousand to go out of it, and return no more. (23)

Here, print in no way guarantees survival. Rather, the author suggests that print ensures ephemerality; printed texts are merely temporary and fleeting. Though a text may be printed, that in no way ensures that it will survive in its original form or be read. Rather, the book may be disassembled and its paper repurposed. The condition of print text in the wake of the lapse of the Licensing Act and subsequent flood of publication is, according to this author, impermanence. There are simply too many texts for all of them to be preserved. *A Tale of a Tub* is one of those texts that survived the glut of the print in the early eighteenth century and it did so, like *The Storm*, despite being anonymous in its original publication. Also like *The Storm*, *A Tale of a Tub* has been attributed to a canonical writer of the eighteenth century, Jonathan Swift.

I draw together *The Storm* and *A Tale of a Tub* not to equate them, nor to suggest that authorial attribution alone accounts for their popularity in the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Rather, I bring them together because they offer ways of thinking about the durability and ephemerality of texts that does not recur to a named author. In neither competing account of the survival of printed texts in the early eighteenth century does the author play a large role. For Defoe, the text transcends the author and he or she is forgotten, if noted ever. For Swift, the author very often outlives the text. Yet, the very reason that both *The Storm* and *A Tale of a Tub* continue to be studied, through anthology, facsimile, and edited volume, is largely because they have been attributed to named authors and may thus be placed among the works of Defoe and Swift. The consequences and benefits

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<sup>3</sup> Marcus Walsh, notes that *A Tale* was “an instant success” and its authorship was the subject of much speculation, including by Defoe who suspected Swift as its author (xlvi). Walsh further offers a compelling analysis of the issues surrounding the attribution and possible co-authorship of the text. See Introduction. *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*. By Jonathan Swift. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Xxxi – xc.

of authorial attribution to these, and other, minor works are not insignificant. The attribution of authorship to a known author ensures that a work will survive; it may even ensure that a work is subject to study and analysis. However, authorial attribution may also foreclose study and analysis because the attributed work, if it is to be by the named author, must be made to cohere within a larger body of work.

In the case of Defoe whose ever-changing body of work refuses to cohere and whose novels, such as *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders*, are taken as an endpoint in a writing career, the singularity of a non-novelistic text and its context or topicality may be sacrificed or ignored entirely because of the authorial name retrospectively attached to it. The critical tradition surrounding some of the pamphlets attributed (and de-attributed) to Defoe is particularly exemplary in this regard. In this tradition the pamphlets are made to matter as they may be made to fit into the biographical and literary development of the author – even if these pamphlets are later shown not to be by Defoe – and not as they may have mattered in their publication contexts.

This essay takes as its focus two texts: *An Essay on the Regulation of the Press* (1704), unproblematically attributed to Defoe, and *A Vindication of the Press* (1718), subject to much worrying by Defoe scholars over its attribution. Attribution of these pamphlets to Defoe or arguments over attribution replicate a reading practice similar to the structures of press regulation to which these pamphlets respond that seek to attach names to the text. Moreover, the critical habit of reading them entirely as part of a biographical and literary narrative about Defoe is precisely the reading strategy that the pamphlets themselves caution against and the reading strategy that is complicated by anonymity. This critical reading practice predicated on the importance of the name is informed, in large part, by the late eighteenth-century creation of Daniel Defoe as novelist by the circulating library proprietors John and Francis Noble and the desire on the part of critics to narrate a story of life and works that takes “De Foe’s” novels as an endpoint.<sup>4</sup> I wish to move away from this narrative and instead ask, given its ubiquity: what work anonymity does for pamphlets in the early eighteenth century?

Within these pamphlets we have the identification of two possible functions of the author’s name, one that refers to an individual person with partisan politics and the other that refers to the body of works – both of which eclipse the text itself – and the aim of the pamphlets themselves: a disavowal of those functions in favor of engaging with the content of the text. Within this context, anonymous authorship works alongside textual production and asks for a reading of the content of the text. That it should be common for political pamphlets is not surprising as this form demands attention to the current political context in order to stake a claim for valuation.

The Defoe canon offers a useful case study in the ways in which the process of attaching names to texts privileges the coherent body of works over the singularity of the text and its context. Privileging the *oeuvre* over the individual text introduces a paradox: if Defoe’s political pamphlets were not attributed to Defoe, they would likely

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<sup>4</sup> W. R. Owens, and P. N. Furbank. “Defoe and Francis Noble.” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 4.4 (1992): 301–13.

be considered valuable only in the writing of political history, if at all. Because they are attributed to Defoe, however, these pamphlets are read by many critics solely (if at all) for their relevance to his biography and literary development. In other words, we may read attributed texts *because* they have been attributed—for what they have to tell us about their creator—rather than for the work they do, or did, in the world.

Though attribution to a known author may lead to an otherwise unknown or unremarkable text being read and studied, *An Essay on the Regulation of the Press* is fascinating because its history of attribution rests on its not being read. *An Essay* has remained in the Defoe canon unchallenged since Defoe's first biographer, George Chalmers, included it in his list of works by "De Foe." J. R. Moore's introduction to the facsimile edition constructs a useful and common, it seems, narrative of the text's attribution:

One striking result of the rarity of the tract has been that it has been almost unknown to biographers of Defoe. It has been assigned to him since 1790, when Chalmers included it, at the end of his expanded *Life of Daniel De Foe*, in 'A List of Writings, which are considered as undoubtedly De Foe's.' Chalmers' assignment must have been based on some acquaintance with the overwhelming internal evidence of Defoe's authorship, but there is no other indication that he had seen the pamphlet. Professor Trent owned a copy, but it was purchased eight years after his chapter on Defoe was published in the *Cambridge History of English Literature* and four years after the publication of his *Daniel Defoe: How to Know Him*. Trent's bibliography for his chapter on Defoe lists the title, but his published writings indicate no personal acquaintance with the tract. In 1830 Wilson wrote: 'Not having been able to procure the pamphlet, the present writer is unable to state his argument;...' Lee merely guessed at the contents from the title (which was known from the booksellers' advertisement). Chadwick, Minto, and most later biographers have made no mention of it. Wright offered only a wild surmise: 'Daniel is at them in a moment, and with his *Essay on the Regulation of the Press* mangles their argument like a bull-dog' – a statement more helpful in understanding the habits of bulldogs than in following Defoe's line of reasoning. (xi-xxii)

Moore's introduction is striking in the way it works through all of the key Defoe biographers and bibliographers who have never looked at the pamphlet. Chalmers, it seems, attributed *An Essay* to Defoe based on internal evidence and subsequent biographers and bibliographers accepted that attribution without looking for further evidence. The absurdity of relying on internal evidence for authorial attribution has been well argued by P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens who suggest that attribution has a snowball effect; once one text is let into a canon, it changes the perception of the author and allows for further attributions based upon those changes (*Canonisation* 29). In the case of *An Essay*, its content and style have been guessed at based upon its title and



attribution to Defoe. However, such guesses at content and style, it appears, are the only bases for its attribution to Defoe.

Scholarship on the emergence of British copyright, most notably that of Jody Greene, has invigorated the study of this pamphlet.<sup>5</sup> In *An Essay*, Greene reads the clearest articulation of the rights and responsibilities of authorship that would be codified in the 1709 Act of Anne (124). Greene offers a compelling reading of the text but avoids the problem that this essay, which calls for the owning of texts by their authors, circulated anonymously and its attribution to Defoe rests on a long history of its not being read. Indeed, for Greene, much of the force of her argument, that the origins of copyright lie in authorial liability, relies on the relationship between the biographical incident of Defoe being pilloried for the anonymous *The Shortest Way with Dissenters* (1702) and the anonymous *An Essay* which argues that if an author is to be held liable for his work, he should also be able to profit from it through ownership.

As a counterpoint to the unread-until-recently *An Essay on the Regulation of the Press*, *A Vindication of the Press* has been read, re-read, and ultimately rejected from the Defoe canon because of its anonymous publication and its late addition to the Defoe bibliography.<sup>6</sup> Setting aside the problem of attribution, scholarly discussion of the place of the pamphlet within the Defoe canon, and hence its value as an object of study, reveals much about the critical reading strategies employed when an author is “known.” Otho Clinton Williams’ introduction for the 1951 facsimile edition notes, “*A Vindication of the Press* is one of Defoe’s most characteristic pamphlets and for this reason as well as for its rarity deserves reprinting” (i). Here, Williams slots the pamphlet within the canon on the basis of its “characteristic” marks of the individual author. Still further, Williams notes:

*A Vindication of the Press* is chiefly important for the corroboration of our knowledge of Daniel Defoe. It presents nothing that is new, but it gives further evidence for his pride in authorship, of his rationalization of his actions as a professional journalist and of his belief in the importance of the free press. Many of his characteristic ideas are repeated with his usual consistency in point of view. Although the critical comments in the essay are thoroughly conventional, they offer evidence of contemporary literary judgments and reveal Defoe as a well-informed man of moderation and commonsense ... (v)

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<sup>5</sup> See for example Peter Jaszi. “Toward a Theory of Copyright: The Metamorphoses of ‘Authorship.’” *Duke Law Journal* 2 (1991): 455–502 and Mark Rose. *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

<sup>6</sup> See the exchanges between Furbank and Owens and Maximillian Novak: Furbank and Owens. “*A Vindication of the Press* (1718): Not by Defoe.” *PBSA* 78.3 (1984): 355-360; Novak. “*A Vindication of the Press* and the Defoe Canon.” *SEL* 27.3 (1987): 399-411; and Furbank and Owens, “The Defoe Canon Again.” *PBSA*. 82.1 (1988): 95-98. Additionally, Laura A. Curtis. “The Attribution of *A Vindication of the Press* to Daniel Defoe.” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 18 (1988): 433-444. Stephen Bernard has recently argued that Giles Jacobs may actually be the author of this pamphlet. See “After Defoe, Before the *Dunciad*: Giles Jacobs and ‘A Vindication of the Press.’” *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008): 487-507.

Williams notes the importance of the text because it “corroborates” what Defoe scholars already know about the individual named Defoe but admits the conventionality of the commentary contained therein. Two strains appear in this argument: one points to Defoe as a “proud” individual author, while the other points to the commonplace nature of the arguments and thus to a larger cultural sentiment that remains unexamined and may undermine the attribution. Paula Backscheider echoes the first strain in Williams’ claim about Defoe as individual author: “*A Vindication of the Press* (1718) give[s] the reader important insights into how Defoe saw his writing, how the publishing world worked, and how he functioned in it” (64). Such a reading contributes to Backscheider’s larger discussion of Defoe’s pamphlet writing as a kind of juvenilia.<sup>7</sup>

In arguing against the attribution of *A Vindication* to Defoe, Furbank and Owens take the unextraordinary critique as proof of its authorship by someone other than Defoe:

What is characteristic of this pamphlet is that it does not seem to have any particular target in view, and for the most part the ideas it contains – on the benefits of a free press, on the harmfulness of much contemporary criticism and on the qualities of good writing – are commonplace platitudes. (“*A Vindication of the Press* (1718): Not by Defoe?” 356)

In both identifying its characteristic and conventional elements, the reading of the content of *A Vindication* ceases at the moment when attribution or de-attribution can be established. None of these critics attend to what it might mean for the authorship they so seek for the text to be at once characteristic of an individual author *and* conventional within a period. For Williams, Furbank, and Owens, their critical interest is not in explicating the meaning, content, or context of these pamphlets. Rather, they wish attribute an author and provide evidence for that attribution so that others may engage critically with them.

Donald Foster has noted the “critical impasse” anonymous or contested authorship poses to the critical process (376). Yet, with *An Essay* and *A Vindication* we repeatedly see the cessation of critical reading following authorial attribution. In these cases attribution does not enable further critical engagement, but rather critical disengagement. What is of critical interest is not what the pamphlets argue, but who did or did not write the argument. An analysis of both *An Essay* and *A Vindication* reveal that the pamphlets articulate the very problem that naming the author of a text very often precludes the reading of a text. The named author, these pamphlets claim, stands directly in the way of the reading and engaging with the content of texts.

*An Essay on the Regulation of the Press* was written in response to a bill on licensing the press, introduced into the House of Commons on December 15, 1703, that sought to restrain discussion of political decisions in the press (Moore viii). *An Essay*

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<sup>7</sup> Backscheider claims of the pamphlets, “They are ... important apprentice pieces for Defoe’s novels, and familiarity with them allows us to see the developing artist and the full range of his technical craftsmanship” (46).

rejects licensing because of its arbitrariness and, perhaps more importantly, its ability to be easily corrupted by “Frauds, Briberies, and all the ill practices possible” (*An Essay* 9). Most emphatically, the text worries the current state of politics and fears the control of the press by one party who would appoint a licenser:

Then suppose this or that Licenser, a Party-Man, that is, One put in, and upheld by a Party; suppose him of any Party, which you please, and a Man of the Opposite Kidney brings him a Book, he views the Character of the Man, O, says he, *I know the Author, he is a damn'd Whig, or a rank Jacobite, I'll License none of his Writings*; here is Bribery on one Hand, partiality to Parties on the other; but get a Man of his own Kidney to own the very same Book, and as he refus'd it without opening it before, he is as easie to pass it now, not for the Good or Ill in the Book, but on both Hands for the Character of the Author. (11)

Here, we are presented with a very different function of the author's name than the model of Foucauldian penal appropriation by which the author's name is attached to the text so that the author can be held liable for its contents.<sup>8</sup> Under partisan politics, the author is not meant to answer for his or her text, but rather his or her “Character” (*An Essay* 11). The text in this view is irrelevant; rather, it is the political allegiances, “*damn'd Whig or... rank Jacobite,*” of the author that determine authorial liability. The complaint of the text, here, is that writings will not be evaluated on content but on the name of the author and his or her personal allegiances. The name of the author, then, is not a function within discourse; it is instead the name of an actual person within a political discourse.

The text's worry about partisan control of the press is further articulated in its insistence of the neutrality of the press:

But 'tis pity the Press should come into Party-strife: This is like Two Parties going to war, and one depriving the other of all their Powder and Shot. Ammunition stands always Neuter, or rather *Jack a both Sides*, every body has it, and then they get the Victory who have most Courage to use it, and Conduct to manage it. (17)

The “Neuter” nature of the press that is pressed into partisan service further works to highlight the importance of *An Essay* as a text that was circulated anonymously. Like the press itself, *An Essay*, in order for it to be effective, must be approached as politically neutral. The name of the author, as the text demonstrates earlier, taints the text with the “Character” of the author.

Given this reading, it is hard to reconcile the turn in the last four pages toward the pamphlet's call for “a Law be made to make the last Seller the Author, unless the

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<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault. “What Is an Author?” *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980. 113–38.



Name of Author, Printer, or Bookseller, be affix'd to the Book, then no Book can be published, but there will be some body found to answer for it. Whoever puts a false Name, to forfeit ... &c." (22). Here, the function of anonymous publication seems to be erased in a regulatory impulse. However, if anonymous publication is not read in terms of liability but readability and political efficacy, the argument coheres. Within this scenario the "chain of liability," as Greene calls it, cannot be activated until a text has been read and offense caused. In arguing against pre-press censorship, the pamphlet allows for a proliferation of texts that may be read and, if prosecution is to happen, must be read. In this manner, *An Essay* responds to the threat of pre-press censorship by posing both anonymity (in its publication) and named authorship (in its argument) as modes that ensure that texts can be read.

*A Vindication of the Press* is even more emphatic in its attention to the effects of the author's name on readership. The text first bemoans the effect of named authorship impeding reading due to authorial reputation:

In respect to Writings in general, there is an unaccountable Caprice in abundance of Persons, to Condemn or Commend a Performance meerly by a Name. The Names of some Writers will effectually recommend, without making an Examination into the Merit of the Work; and the Names of other Persons, equally qualified for Writing, and perhaps of greater Learning than the Former, shall be sufficient to Damn it; and all this is owing either to some lucky Accident of writing apposite to the Humour of the Town, (wherein an agreeable Season and a proper Subject are chiefly to be regarded) or to Prejudice, but most commonly the Former. (20-1)

Here, the name of the author is noted as a sufficient impediment to critical engagement with the content of a text. If the author's name is not already of repute or not of "the Humour of the Town," the text is condemned without ever being read. The name does not refer to an individual person but rather to a group of texts bearing his or her name that informs their place in cultural valuation.

In *A Vindication*, however, we have the emergence of another function of the author's name that echoes *An Essay's* earlier discussion of the problem of partisanship and the press:

The Question first ask'd [by the "lower Order of Criticks"] is, whether an Author is a Whig or Tory; if he be a Whig, or that Party which is in Power, his Praise is resounded, he's presently cried up for an excellent Writer; if not, he's mark'd as a Scoundrel, a perpetual Gloom hangs over his Head; if he was Master of the sublime Thoughts of *Addison*, the easy flowing Thoughts of *Pope*, the fine Humour of *Garth*, the beautiful Language of *Rowe*, the Perfection of *Prior*, the Dialogue of *Congreve*, and the Pastoral of *Phillips*, he must nevertheless submit to a mean Character, if not expect the Reputation of an Illiterate. (18-19)

Again, the unnamed author's name refers to an actual person with political allegiances and again such allegiances prevent reading of the text as an aesthetic object. Here, we also see the function of the authorial name as a means of organizing texts. Each named author, Addison, Pope, Rowe, etc., is not named in order to refer to the individual; rather, each name stands in for the texts in which the formal elements the pamphlet wishes to praise are found. Even as the text uses the authors' names as a kind of shorthand, it presents its own desire to move beyond the name and to the aesthetic object that is the text with its "fine Thoughts ... flowing Thoughts ... [and] the beautiful Language ..." The text is clearly interested in names, but as with *An Essay*, the anonymous publication of *A Vindication* thematizes its own interest in the problem of the authorial name.

The critical engagement with these pamphlets amply demonstrates the power of retrospective attribution and the durability of an authorial name to profoundly shape and limit the readings of a text. The original anonymity of both *An Essay* and *A Vindication* is taken merely, if at all, as an afterthought or obstacle to the critic who wishes to place, or displace, the texts within the larger Defoe *oeuvre*. This is not the case, of course, with all texts published anonymously whose authors are then discovered. However, certain genres and forms are more vulnerable to this cessation because they cannot be understood within the framework of the rise of the dominant literary forms, as in the case of the novel, unless attributed to "literary apprenticeship."

As the example of Defoe shows, one such vulnerable form is the political pamphlet. Responding, in some cases immediately, to contemporary political events and meant to be ephemeral, it is no surprise that these texts have limited contemporary readership and literary value. They do, however, present the need and utility of a critical strategy that is not arranged around a single author but one that can contend with the cultural-historical language world in which they operated and the notion of authorship they put forth. The anonymity of these pamphlets, and indeed any anonymous text, cannot be taken as an afterthought or an obstacle. Rather, their anonymity is central to the work they do as texts. The refusal to read the anonymity of these pamphlets is a refusal to read these texts as discrete historically-situated documents and rather subsume them within the *oeuvre* of the novelist Defoe in which their specificity, and thus possible meanings, are lost.

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