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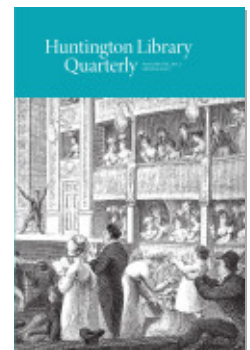
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Literary Evaluation and Authorship Attribution, or Defoe's Politics at the Hanoverian Succession

Nicholas Seager

ABSTRACT In this essay, Nicholas Seager argues for re-attributing two pamphlets to Daniel Defoe: *A Secret History of One Year* (1714) and *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty and Her Last Ministry* (1715). These works, published shortly after the Hanoverian succession, were excluded from Defoe's canon by Furbank and Owens on the grounds that the writing was poor in quality. A closer review of the external and internal evidence, however, points to Defoe as the author of these occasional political tracts, which reveal his attempts to attenuate what he perceived as the harmful effects of government by a single-party ministry.

KEYWORDS: Daniel Defoe; Robert Harley; *A Secret History of One Year*; *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty and Her Last Ministry*; Furbank and Owens; attribution studies

❧ **THIS ESSAY ARGUES FOR** Daniel Defoe's authorship of two pamphlets published weeks apart following the Hanoverian succession. *A Secret History of One Year* (1714) and *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty and Her Last Ministry* (1715) were each de-attributed on the grounds that they are not very well written. I submit that, in cases such as these, a literary-evaluative approach to authorship attribution is inappropriate; a fuller assessment of external and internal evidence indicates that Defoe wrote both titles. Literary evaluation—by itself, without reference to clear criteria, and without citation—is an unsuitable means of arguing for the authorship of occasional political writings.

These re-attributions clarify Defoe's motives at a transitional moment when the Whig supremacy was taking shape under a Hanoverian king and former lord treasurer Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, was facing impeachment. They illuminate Defoe's widely overlooked view of English politics in the first age of party: his promotion of moderation and a balance of parties, to be attained through the monarch's appointment of

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ministers and resistance to single-party rule. It was an ideology broadly shared by Queen Anne and her “managers,” leading ministers who sought to operate above party, including Defoe’s patrons Sidney Godolphin and Harley. Defoe’s defense of the beleaguered Harley in 1714–15 is simultaneously a vindication of the political vision that informed Harley’s conduct when in power. The Hanoverian succession seemed to Defoe to herald a new kind of politics in which the monarch’s role was further withdrawn and his authority used mainly to sanction the supremacy of a single-party ministry. In the reassigned pamphlets and Defoe’s contemporaneous political writing, we see him resisting as well as adjusting to the changed political situation following 1714.

Evaluation and Attribution

The welcome reduction of the Defoe canon by P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens has provoked sustained debate.¹ However, there has been relatively little movement of individual titles between the four categories into which they placed the 570 works included in John Robert Moore’s *Checklist*: “certainly by Defoe,” “probably by Defoe,” “unsolved problems in attribution,” and “de-attributed.”² This essay accepts Furbank and Owens’s invitation to revisit and augment evidence for the Defoe canon. They state that further research may occasion titles to be reclassified; and de-attribution is usually not an affirmation that Defoe did not write a given piece but rather a robust interrogation of the grounds offered for his having done so. Often these grounds are lamentably lacking when past bibliographers have failed to supply their rationales.³ New evidence may alter the attributional status of a work. For example, *The Storm* (1704) is listed by Furbank and Owens as “probable,” mainly due to its connection to a secure attribution, the poem “An Essay on the Late Storm,” which is quoted in the prose work.⁴ The fact that a contemporaneous writer associated Defoe with *The Storm*, one of the few pieces of external evidence not caught by Furbank and Owens, surely elevates it to “certain.”⁵ With less clear-cut evidence than this, a handful of individual attributions have been revisited in the wake of Furbank and Owens’s efforts, resulting in an endorsement of de-attribution, doubt of a “probable” ascription, or an argument for Defoe’s authorship of a rejected work. In the case of *Reflections upon the Late Great Revolution* (1689) and *A Vindication of the Press* (1718), scholars have offered further evidence that buttresses

1. Kathleen “Kit” Kincade, “The Twenty Years’ War: The Defoe Bibliography Controversy,” in *Textual Studies and the Enlarged Eighteenth Century: Precision as Profusion*, ed. Kevin L. Cope and Robert C. Leitz III (Lanham, Md., 2012), 133–68.

2. John Robert Moore, *A Checklist of the Writings of Daniel Defoe*, 2nd ed. (Hamden, Conn., 1971); P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, *Defoe De-attributions: A Critique of J. R. Moore’s “Checklist”* (London, 1994); P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, *A Critical Bibliography of Daniel Defoe* (London, 1998). Ashley Marshall tabulates Furbank and Owens’s data from *Critical Bibliography* in an attempt to differentiate between kinds of evidence and degrees of probability for attributions; “Beyond Furbank and Owens: A New Consideration of the Evidence for the ‘Defoe’ Canon,” *Studies in Bibliography* 59 (2015): 131–90.

3. P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, *The Canonisation of Daniel Defoe* (New Haven, Conn., 1988).

4. Furbank and Owens, *Critical Bibliography*, 54.

5. *The Republican Bullies: Or, a sham Battel between two of a side, in a Dialogue between Mr. Review and the Observator* (London, 1705), 2.

the de-attributions.⁶ For *The Apparition of Mrs. Veal* (1706), Defoe's authorship has been doubted, if not absolutely denied, based on the work's content.⁷ With *The Age of Wonders* (1710), *A Narrative of the Proceedings in France* (1724), and *Reasons for a War, in Order to Establish the Tranquility and Commerce of Europe* (1729), Defoe's authorship has been advocated in response to de-attribution.⁸ Also, a number of works not previously associated with Defoe have been reassigned to him—namely, *Observations Made in England, on the Trial of Captain Green* (1705), *One Word with the Craftsman Extraordinary* (1729), and *Christianity Not as Old as the Creation* (1730).⁹

The works that have hitherto been proposed for re-attribution, along with the new ascriptions, lack external evidence for Defoe's authorship: no contemporaneous witness unequivocally asserts that Defoe wrote them. In Furbank and Owens's schema, they may be admitted as "probable" at best. The two items I propose for re-attribution both have external evidence: warrant for Defoe's authorship comes from outside the text itself. Furbank and Owens follow the sound principle that, though external evidence is not definitive, "internal evidence increases enormously in weight when there is some, even very slight, external evidence present."¹⁰ *A Secret History of One Year* and *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty* were de-attributed, despite external evidence, not because more plausible candidates for authorship emerged, or because they contravene Defoe's style or ideas, or because he denied writing them.¹¹ They were de-attributed because they were deemed to be weak performances, of too low a quality to have been penned by Defoe. Assessing the available evidence for authorship of these pamphlets will both restore them to Defoe and indicate that pronouncements about literary quality represent a dubious methodology for authorship attribution, particularly of occasional political tracts.

It helps to be precise about what constitutes a value judgment. Though axiology is often implicit in claims about style, form, argument, and the like, I refer to assessments expressly about merit, worth, or efficacy. There is some external evidence for Defoe's authorship of a poem called *Good Advice to the Ladies* (1702), but because that

6. K. R. P. Clark, "Defoe, Dissent, and Early Whig Ideology," *Historical Journal* 52 (2009): 595–614; Stephen Bernard, "After Defoe, Before the *Dunciad*: Giles Jacob and *A Vindication of the Press*," *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008): 487–507.

7. George Starr, "Why Defoe Probably Did Not Write *The Apparition of Mrs. Veal*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 15 (2003): 421–50.

8. Frank H. Ellis, review of *Defoe De-attributions*, by Furbank and Owens, *Review of English Studies* 47 (1996): 263–66 at 265; Maximilian E. Novak, "A Narrative of the Proceedings in France: Reattributing a De-Attributed Work by Defoe," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 97 (2003): 69–80; Maximilian E. Novak, "Defoe as a Defender of the Government, 1727–29: A Re-Attribution and a New Attribution," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 71 (2008): 503–12.

9. James Kelly, "The Worcester Affair," *Review of English Studies* 51 (2000): 1–23; Novak, "Defoe as a Defender of the Government," 507–12; *Christianity Not as Old as the Creation: The Last of Defoe's Performances*, ed. G. A. Starr (London, 2012).

10. Furbank and Owens, *Critical Bibliography*, xxvi.

11. He did indirectly, though: in February 1715, Defoe mendaciously said he had written no books since Queen Anne's death the previous August; *An Appeal to Honour and Justice* (London, 1715), 55.

evidence is contradictory Furbank and Owens state: “One is thrown back on one’s stylistic intuitions, which in our case are rather against the poem’s being by Defoe. For one thing, the run of the verses, and the particular way of handling enjambment, do not sound right for him.” There is nothing overtly evaluative in this appraisal. An anti-Sacheverell title from 1710 is also in a style that the bibliographers say “does not seem at all to suggest Defoe”; however, it is also judged “pedestrian” and “colourless.”¹² Here, the assessment of style is patently evaluative. Evaluation, of course, can take the form of a simple pronouncement, or it can be done with reference to criteria and with citation and argument.

Evaluation is an undertheorized aspect of attribution studies.¹³ It is commendable, therefore, that Furbank and Owens discuss as well as apply it, briefly arguing for the negative part evaluation can play in debating authorship—it constitutes potential evidence *against* but not *for* an attribution.¹⁴ Thus, Lewis Theobald’s assessment of the authorship of the *Henry VI* trilogy (“there are several Master-Strokes in these three Plays, which incontestibly betray the Workmanship of *Shakespeare*”) is invalid.¹⁵ However, the derision heaped in some quarters on parvenu ascriptions like “A Funeral Elegy,” “A Lover’s Complaint,” and “Shall I Die?” presumably does count against Shakespeare’s authorship of these poems. In response to Gary Taylor’s assertion that “judgments of quality cannot be made the primary, or even the secondary, basis of attributions of authorship,” Brian Vickers insists that “judgment of quality can indeed form a legitimate element in authorship discussions.”¹⁶ John Jowett does not overcome the impasse by stating (with reference to Vickers’s treatment of “Shall I Die?”) that “doubts as to the poem’s literary quality cannot form the basis for a judgment as to its authorship.” But significantly he faults Vickers’s approach by noting that “the analysis of the poet’s use of rhetoric, metaphor, and meter relies ultimately on subjective judgment as to whether it is done skilfully or badly, the imputation being that if the poem is poor writing it is therefore not by Shakespeare.”¹⁷ One is reminded of Pope’s relegation of the bad bits from Shakespeare to the foot of the page and of the embarrassment with

12. Furbank and Owens, *Defoe De-attributions*, 12, 40–41.

13. Several contributors to *Evidence for Authorship: Essays on Problems of Attribution*, ed. David V. Erdman and Ephim G. Fogel (Ithaca, N.Y., 1966) use literary evaluation as a matter of course without defending its suitability for attribution. See the comments by Arthur Sherbo (“The Uses and Abuses of Internal Evidence,” 6–24 at 6–7, 14, 18; “A Reply to Professor Fogel,” 115–20 at 117), Ephim G. Fogel (“Salmons in Both, or Some Caveats for Canonical Scholars,” 69–101 at 84–85, 89, 94), and George de Forest Lord (“Comments on the Canonical Caveat,” 102–14 at 105).

14. Furbank and Owens, *Canonisation*, 5–6, 42–43; Furbank and Owens, *Defoe De-attributions*, xxxiii.

15. *The Works of Shakespeare* [. . .] *with Notes, Explanatory, and Critical*: By Mr. Theobald, 7 vols. (London, 1733), 4:110.

16. Gary Taylor, “Shakespeare’s New Poem,” *New York Times*, December 15, 1985; Brian Vickers, “Counterfeiting” *Shakespeare: Evidence, Authorship, and John Ford’s “Funerall Elegye”* (Cambridge, 2002), 14.

17. John Jowett, review of *Shakespeare, “A Lover’s Complaint,” and John Davies of Hereford*, by Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60 (2009): 493–97 at 493, 495.

which Victorian critics acknowledged that Defoe wrote *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, books now read as “classics.” Furbank and Owens say: “Defoe no doubt sometimes wrote badly, but it is safe to assume that he was not capable of certain *kinds* of badness, as of certain *kinds* of excellence.” This principle escapes their rejection of attribution methods that are “purely personal and impressionistic,” and it falls foul of their complaint that “much argument about literary attribution is conducted in terms, not of evidential proof, but of authority.”¹⁸ Samuel Schoenbaum sensibly holds that, for attribution, “intuitions, convictions, and subjective judgments generally, carry no weight as evidence. This no matter how learned, respected, or confident the authority.”¹⁹ He includes claims about aesthetic merit, stating that the “inclination, insufficiently resisted, is to make oversimplified descriptive pronouncements and pass oversimplified value judgments. A scene is by Jonson because it is ‘masterful,’ by Middleton because ‘it has his irony,’ by Peele or Greene or Heywood because it is not very good. [. . .] The limited critical value of this kind of impressionism is sufficiently obvious. As evidence [for attribution] its value is nil.”²⁰

Furbank and Owens evaluate works *incidentally* for a number of “probable” attributions and de-attributions: they praise pieces for which they offer grounds for Defoe’s authorship; they deprecate titles rejected because they lack external evidence (like the anti-Sacheverell tract mentioned above).²¹ However, the two pamphlets I discuss here were removed solely due to their evaluation, despite external evidence, and without the consideration of internal evidence that a contemporaneous attribution usually demands. Even Vickers uses evaluation as only an “element” in attribution, not unilaterally, one that does not outweigh more tangible evidence. Equivocal support for the evaluative approach comes from Harold Love, who approves as a “valid argument” Ephim Fogel’s objections to a Marvell attribution by George de Forest Lord: “Marvell is a good writer; therefore he cannot be the author of the ‘Second advice,’ which in Fogel’s view is a bad or at best a mediocre poem. Any attempt at rebuttal has to find ways of showing that it is a good poem.” Perhaps the important factor here is that Lord attributed the poem to Marvell on broadly evaluative grounds with no external evidence, so Fogel’s rebuttal applies the same principle. Love does not make this caveat, however, and even goes on to speculate about why American readers, because their accents more closely resemble those of Renaissance England, might like “A Funeral Elegy”

18. Furbank and Owens, *Defoe De-attributions*, xxxiii, xxxii; Furbank and Owens, *Canonisation*, 15.

19. S. Schoenbaum, *Internal Evidence and Elizabethan Dramatic Authorship: An Essay in Literary History and Method* (London, 1966), 178.

20. S. Schoenbaum, “Internal Evidence and the Attribution of Elizabethan Plays,” in *Evidence for Authorship*, ed. Erdman and Fogel, 188–203 at 200–201.

21. For instances, see Furbank and Owens, *Defoe De-attributions*, 7, 15, 31, 48, 50, 53, 54, 63, 70, 71, 72, 85, 89, 90, 100, 106, 111, 112, 134, 143; the adjectives applied to various rejected works include “repetitive,” “sanctimonious,” “prosy,” “bland,” “parsonical,” “humourless,” “incompetent,” “unconvincing,” “unremarkable,” “laborious,” “inept,” “dullish,” “windy,” “vacuous,” “platitudinous,” and “banal.” Furbank and Owens, *Critical Bibliography*, 109, 147, 158.

more than British readers and so approve the Shakespeare attribution.²² If this is correct, it surely proves little more than the contingent nature of value judgments. Is the student who wishes to reassign to Defoe a couple of political pamphlets that chime with his known ideas and that contemporaries considered to be his also obliged to show that they are *good* enough? In my discussion of each pamphlet, I detail the external and internal evidence for Defoe, and I aim to counter negative evaluative judgments in a roundabout way—by showing that they do not command consensus, are misplaced when adduced to debate authorship, and, in this case, take insufficient stock of the pamphlets’ place in Defoe’s articulation of his political ideas.

~ A Secret History of One Year

Following George I’s accession and ministerial changes in favor of the Whigs, those who had served in Anne’s last Tory ministry feared repercussions for their role in negotiating the Treaty of Utrecht and allegedly favoring the Pretender’s succession. Certain Whigs nevertheless worried that the new king was too lenient in offering posts to Tories.²³ A pamphlet by the Whig polemicist John Oldmixon, *The False Steps of the Ministry after the Revolution* (October 1714), written as a letter to an unnamed lord, looked back to the “lenity and moderation” that William III and Mary II initially extended to the “*Evil Ministers*” who had served James II. In consequence, “the *Parliament* was compos’d of an Unnatural Medley of *Williamites* and *Jacobites*.” “I cannot but hope it will have some good Effect on your Lordship by applying it to the late Managers,” Oldmixon writes, gunning for those responsible for “the *Peace*, the *Twelve Lords*, the *Treaty of Commerce* with *France* and *Spain*, the *Catalans*, the *Tyranny* of the *Commission of Accounts*, and the *Insolence* of the whole Faction.” After this inventory of Tory misdemeanors, Oldmixon suggests that “the fatal *Moderation*” and “Lenity of King *William’s* Reign” is both an analogue for and cause of the current situation: “For the late *Managers*, when they declar’d for *France* and the *Pretender*, did only in an open manner, what they had been doing clandestinely ever since the Revolution.”²⁴

Apparently in response to Oldmixon, *A Secret History of One Year* (November 1714) argues that “it is a very great Mistake to say that the King immediately employed the same Instruments in carrying on his Government of the Nation, which had been the Agents of King *James’s* Tyranny.” Certainly William exercised his characteristic clemency in pursuit of political unity: “Since he was now to be King, he desir’d to be King of all his People, and not to begin his Reign with Blood.” However, William’s ini-

22. Harold Love, *Attributing Authorship: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 2002), 94, 148–49.

23. See W. A. Speck, *Stability and Strife: England, 1714–1760* (London, 1977), 169–75; Ragnhild Hatton, *George I, Elector and King* (London, 1978), 120.

24. John Oldmixon, *The False Steps of the Ministry after the Revolution* (London, 1714), 7, 12, 17, 23, 22, 24. Pat Rogers writes that, from 1713 to 1715, Oldmixon perpetrated against Defoe “one of the most sustained campaigns of detraction which any individual has ever had to face,” including hostile responses to Defoe’s three-part *Secret History of the White-Staff* (1714–15), and Oldmixon repeatedly reviled Defoe in *The History of England* (1735); Rogers, *The Letters, Life, and Works of John Oldmixon: Politics and Professional Authorship in Early Hanoverian England* (Lewiston, N.Y., 2004), 134, 132.

tial employment of Whigs meant that “His Majesty put himself and the Kingdom wholly into their Hands, the very first step that he took in Government”; their officiousness and partisanship promptly “obliged His Majesty to change hands” and to incorporate more Tories, balancing the parties in his ministry. Moreover, Britons should remember that “the first Revolution [1688] has not been the Type of this [1714] only, but the Parent of it; and that K. *William* restor’d the Nation to that Liberty by which the Settlement of the Succession in the Protestant Line of *HANNOVER* has been made able to take Place.”²⁵ The author indicates that George I might come to regret allying himself exclusively with Whigs who are baying for Tory blood.

The *Secret History* was attributed to Defoe in 1717 by the Whig journalist Abel Boyer as part of an attack in *The Political State of Great Britain* that described Defoe as a hack who had “prostituted his Pen to the vilest Purposes” and alleged that Defoe was “famous for writing upon, for, and against all manner of Persons, Subjects, and Parties.” Boyer pointed to Defoe’s reliance on “the Beneficence of his Masters, and in particular the E[arl] of O[xford],” characterizing Defoe as a hired pen who operated a “Forge of *Politicks* and *Scandal*, for which, for these Six Years past, he supplies *Monthly*, often *Weekly*, the *Publishers* in and about *Pater-noster-Row*.” There is probably no stronger contemporaneous statement of Defoe’s venality and duplicity—or of his productivity. Boyer listed fourteen titles, constituting seventeen separate works, that he believed Defoe had written.²⁶ Defoe responded in *Mercurius Politicus* with an equally personal attack on Boyer, whom he labeled “the *Scum* of Hackney Scribblers,” a man of dissolute morals, a plagiarist, and a pirate. Boyer’s attributions, he said, have mostly missed their mark: “Of all that Number, there is but one that I was sole Author of, not above three that I ever had any Hand in, and five or six that I never saw in my Life.”²⁷ Leaving aside the thorny issue of shared authorship, this denial-cum-concession does not deal in specifics and cannot be credited: Defoe lied about not having written works he did, and he certainly wrote more than one of those Boyer pinned on him. His denial is an inadvertent admission of wide-ranging activity.

Another candidate for authorship of the *Secret History* has been proposed. Furbank and Owens assert that it was “ascribed to Robert Walpole by Walter Scott, in vol. 13 of his edition of the *Somers Tracts*. Moore dismisses Scott’s attribution as ‘erroneous.’”²⁸ These statements are not quite correct. The ascription to Walpole dates back to the mid-eighteenth century.²⁹ Scott in the early nineteenth century neither initiated nor endorsed it, as his headnote indicates:

25. Daniel Defoe, *A Secret History of One Year* (London, 1714), 16–17, 10, 19, 23, 6. It was advertised as published “this day” in the *Daily Courant*, November 30, 1714, and in the *Evening Post*, November 30–December 2, 1714, though it is mistitled in both as “The Short History of One Year”; an advertisement with the correct title appeared in the *Evening Post*, December 9–11, 1714.

26. Abel Boyer, *The Political State of Great Britain* (London, June 1717), 632.

27. Defoe, *Mercurius Politicus* (London, July 1717), 407–9, 471–73.

28. Furbank and Owens, *Defoe De-attributions*, 66.

29. A *Third Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts*, 4 vols. (London, 1751), 4:401. *A Secret History of One Year* is listed without an author’s name two years earlier in *Proposals for Printing by Subscription*,

This Tract is not to be found in Mr Coxe's list of Sir Robert Walpole's publications, nor in that given by his son the Earl of Oxford in the *Royal and Noble Authors*. It may be considered as in some degree a reply to that which precedes it [Oldmixon's *False Steps*]. At least this account of the revolution politics, is given upon a more lenient principle, vindicating King William, both on account of the Act of Indemnity and his conciliatory conduct towards the tories. It does not seem at all probable, that Walpole should at this crisis have thought it proper to advocate these principles.³⁰

Scott doubts the attribution that he inherited with the *Somers Tracts*: he could find neither authority nor rationale for Walpole. Moreover, Moore does not mention Scott when he says that the *Secret History* is "sometimes mistakenly attributed to Robert Walpole."³¹ Moore does not examine the history of the Walpole ascription, but he correctly announces it erroneous. Neither William Coxe in his 1798 biography nor any modern historian has considered this pamphlet in connection with Walpole. Scott is right that Walpole, who chaired the committee that investigated and impeached Harley and Bolingbroke, is an implausible candidate for the authorship of a tract that tries to palliate hostility to the Tories and warns against the monarch's overreliance on Whigs. As J. H. Plumb states, "Walpole was determined to destroy the late ministry and to destroy them in the most public fashion."³² The Walpole attribution must be disregarded.

The bibliographers who supported Defoe's authorship of the *Secret History* between the 1860s and 1970s were William Lee, William Peterfield Trent, Henry Hutchins, John Robert Moore, and Maximillian Novak. Trent's argument, never published, is the fullest, relying not just on his stylistic "tests," which are of limited value, but also on his identification of parallels with Defoe's known views and the fact that a contemporaneous advertisement for the *Secret History* stated that it was by the same author as the first two parts of *The Secret History of the White-Staff*.³³ This additional external evidence bolsters Boyer's attribution; whether they are independent is impos-

A Second Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts (London, 1749), and likewise two years before that in Thomas Osborne, *A Catalogue of Some Tracts and Pamphlets, collected by the Late Earl of Oxford. Number I* (London, 1747), 44.

30. *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts*, ed. Walter Scott, 2nd ed., 13 vols. (London, 1809–15), 13:573–74. "Earl of Oxford" is an error for "Orford"—that is, Horace Walpole, compiler of *A Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England* (Twickenham, 1758).

31. Moore, *Checklist*, 113.

32. J. H. Plumb, *Sir Robert Walpole*, 2 vols. (1956–60; repr., London, 1972), 1:212.

33. William Peterfield Trent, "Bibliography of Daniel Defoe," 1015–18. This unpublished typescript is held in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. The advertisement Trent notes is the first *Evening Post* one (see note 25, above). See also Trent, "Bibliographical Notes on Defoe—I," *The Nation* 84, no. 2118 (June 6, 1907): 515–18 (<http://www.unz.org/Pub/Nation-1907juno6-00515>), which says that "there really seems to be no ground for ascribing 'A Secret History of One Year' to Sir Robert Walpole."

sible to say, but this is stronger external evidence than we have for many accepted Defoe attributions. Some nineteenth-century lists of Defoe's writings before Lee's 1869 biography acknowledged Boyer's attribution without adopting the pamphlet.³⁴

Furbank and Owens challenge Defoe's authorship solely with reference to the book's quality: "This absurdly repetitive and incompetent piece of writing can, one feels, hardly be by Defoe: the bumbling dialogue between the 'venerable Gentleman' and the 'noble Lord' almost reads like parody."³⁵ Since this dismissal, critics writing about the secret history genre have noted the work without evaluating its contents or authorship.³⁶ Several Defoe scholars have mentioned it. Manuel Schonhorn notes the tract in his discussion of Defoe's argument that James II, when Duke of York, had a "Popish" party working for him. Schonhorn cites *The Secret History of State Intrigues in the Management of the Sceptre* (1715) and *A Secret History of One Year*, acknowledging Furbank and Owens's de-attribution of both but stating, "I am certain that the first is Defoe's; the second is perhaps doubtful."³⁷ *The Secret History of State Intrigues* was de-attributed on the basis that there is no known external evidence for Defoe's authorship and that it attacks pamphlets Defoe wrote. Schonhorn does not give the grounds for his certainty and doubt (respectively) about these works. Novak, who disregards Furbank and Owens's de-attributions, only lists *A Secret History of One Year* with works illustrating Defoe's developing tactic of undermining efforts to establish the truth about the previous ministry.³⁸

Robert Mayer, in the most substantial critical discussion, acknowledges the *Secret History's* de-attribution, "at least partly on grounds of style," and relates the tract to developments in early modern historiography. Mayer considers ways in which the *Secret History* uses dialogue to illuminate a political message, qualifies the authority of its sources to draw attention to the constructed nature of historical truth, and avoids the "rhetorical eccentricities of many of the other secret histories" published at this time. Mayer surmises that "Defoe eschews the outlandish rhetoric that disqualified other secret histories from serious consideration as historical texts."³⁹ The fact that a late eighteenth-century history cites the *Secret History* to illustrate the point that the Whigs pursued their self-interest through alliance with William supports Mayer's case.⁴⁰

34. [Machell Stace], *An Alphabetical Catalogue of an Extensive Collection of the Writings of Daniel De Foe* (London, 1829), 29; *The Works of Daniel De Foe, with a Memoir of his Life and Writings by William Hazlitt*, 3 vols. (London, 1840–43), 1:15. For Lee's biography, see note 45 below.

35. Furbank and Owens, *Defoe De-attributions*, 66.

36. For example, see Eve Tavor Bannet, "'Secret History': Or, Talebearing Inside and Outside the Secretorie," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 68 (2005): 375–96 at 395.

37. Manuel Schonhorn, "Defoe and the Limits of Jacobite Rhetoric," *English Literary History* 64 (1997): 871–86 at 876, 885n24.

38. Maximillian E. Novak, *Daniel Defoe: Master of Fictions* (Oxford, 2001), 465.

39. Robert Mayer, *History and the Early English Novel: Matters of Fact from Bacon to Defoe* (Cambridge, 1997), 174.

40. Thomas Somerville, *The History of Political Transactions, and of Parties, from the Restoration of King Charles the Second, to the Death of King William* (London, 1792), 577.

Mayer's analysis redresses to some extent Furbank and Owens's objections to the quality of the work. If one were inclined to re-evaluate the tract, one might say that Oldmixon's purporting to draw on authorities from William III's time is effectively countered by the multiplication of perspectives in the *Secret History*. The voices of a "Noble Lord" and "a certain grave Gentleman" from William's era are interspersed with the narration of a "Relator" (supposed by Lee and Trent to be Defoe himself) as well as authorial commentary. The *Secret History* thus stages both a debate and its interpretation, putting the onus on readers to sort between competing accounts, making them revise genre expectations in the process. It uses the propagandistic tactic of rebutting by ventriloquizing one's opponent, having a more authoritative speaker contradict the opposed position. Boyer claimed he could recognize Defoe's "loose Stile and long-winded, spinning way of Writing, which is the same in all the Productions of this celebrated Author."⁴¹ This negative assessment led him to name Defoe, whereas Furbank and Owens say they cannot recognize anything of Defoe in repetitive dialogue. Each position has bias. I am not sure what in the *Secret History* reads like unintended parody, though the later dialogue is a bit dry (the gentleman speaking has, however, been characterized as "grave"). The *Secret History* might be compared to Defoe's *Minutes of the Negotiations of Monsr. Mesnager* (1717), of which Furbank comments: "Unfortunately, the last portion of the *Minutes* [. . .] seems too spun out and grows wearisome. This diminishes the effect of the work, yet it remains one of Defoe's most original inventions."⁴² However, as early as 1741, the *Minutes* was misunderstood by Richard Savage as "a Book calculated to vilify the Administration in the four last Years of Queen Anne's Reign," which casts doubt on its propagandistic efficacy, as we now believe Defoe was vindicating Harley's ministry.⁴³

My aim is not so much to re-evaluate *A Secret History of One Year* as to suggest that assessments of merit are historically contingent and bound up with what one is looking for. Moreover, they are selectively adduced as evidence for attribution. In the context of Mayer's research on developments in historiography that prize inventive historical parallels, self-consciousness about historical transmission, and the maintenance of a staid approach that lends authority, the *Secret History* fares quite well. In terms of challenging an antecedent argument (Oldmixon's) and in having its readers sort between perspectives and apply history to current affairs, the pamphlet is perfectly good for its type. It shows a more sophisticated and accurate historical sense than Oldmixon's pamphlet: rather than an oversimplified account of post-Revolutionary politics, this version corroborates modern understandings of William III's developing motives in selecting ministers.⁴⁴ For balance, William Lee said, "I think this one of the

41. Boyer, *Political State*, 633.

42. P. N. Furbank, "Defoe's *Minutes of Mesnager*: The Art of Mendacity," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 16 (2003): 1–12 at 12.

43. *Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1741, 491.

44. For modern analyses of party politics from the opening of the Convention Parliament to the close of 1690, see E. L. Ellis, "William III and the Politicians," in *Britain after the Glorious Revolution, 1689–1714*, ed. Geoffrey Holmes (London, 1969), 115–34 at 121–23; Henry Horwitz, *Parliament, Policy,*

most valuable of Defoe's historical tracts," and Trent writes approvingly.⁴⁵ Arguments about authorship of anonymous writing must eschew evaluation. I now set forth the further evidence for Defoe's authorship of the *Secret History* and indicate the tract's importance for an assessment of his political thought.

Defoe rarely passed up an opportunity to defend William III: "I shall never suffer the Name of King *William* to bear any Reproach, that I can wipe off."⁴⁶ The "Relator" in the *Secret History* states that "he could not in Justice restrain himself from so clear a Vindication of His Majesty's Conduct, which he thought was his Duty as a Subject."⁴⁷ Defoe defended William, during and after the monarch's lifetime, on many matters—over his right to the throne, in the face of xenophobic attacks, on account of the treaties of Spanish partition, over his right to a peacetime standing army, and even over the Glencoe Massacre. Some of these topics—the Whig bugbears of the standing army and Spanish partition—are mentioned by Oldmixon in *False Steps*. Defoe was always especially riled by Whig and Dissenter criticism of William (High Churchmen toasting the culprit mole was to be expected), and he continually railed at the "Prodigious Ingratitude" the nation extended to William.⁴⁸

It is not surprising that Oldmixon's slighting account of William's political management provoked Defoe to respond. Defoe considered William an able politician, commending "his Moderation in Governing, or his Policy in Managing; His Prudence in Council, His Knowledge in Judging, his Wisdom in Determining, or his Bravery in Executing."⁴⁹ This is of a piece with the laudatory treatment of William in the *Secret History*. Defoe resented the manner in which William had been harried by political parties during his reign, which was "13 Years [spent] in Hurry, Hazard, and constant Perplexity, squeez'd to Death with the Weight of Enemies, and the abominable Treachery of pretended Friends!"⁵⁰ This description accords with the image the *Secret History* gives of William, thrust into the maelstrom of party strife. The standing army controversy, in which Defoe cut his teeth as a defender of William and alienated himself from his Whig friends, remained in his memory the most remarkable instance of ingratitude and mistrust for the savior of English Protestantism and liberty. "The greatest Part of those who fell upon the King on account of a Standing Army," says the *Secret History*, "were of the Number of those very Men who were most intense in the Revolution."⁵¹

Though my account of Defoe and William III is thus far fairly general (others may have defended William on these terms), a quite specific parallel exists. In the

and Politics in the Reign of William III (Manchester, 1977), 17–49; and Wouter Troost, *William III the Stadtholder-King: A Political Biography* (Aldershot, U.K., 2005), 220–27.

45. William Lee, *Daniel Defoe: His Life and Recently Discovered Writings*, 3 vols. (London, 1869), 1:238; Trent, "Bibliography," 1017.

46. *Defoe's Review, 1704–13*, ed. John McVeagh (London, 2003–11), 4:754 (January 13, 1708).

47. Defoe, *Secret History of One Year*, 39.

48. *Review* 3:198–99 (March 30, 1706); 4:95 (March 25, 1707).

49. *Ibid.*, 4:755 (January 13, 1708).

50. *Ibid.*, 6:113 (May 17, 1710).

51. Defoe, *Secret History of One Year*, 39.

Review in 1707, Defoe addresses the very question posed by Oldmixon in *False Steps*—“Why did [William] employ King James’s Friends!?”—in terms that match the account in the *Secret History*. In the *Review* essay, as in the later pamphlet, those who ask the question have only partially understood the history:

King *William*, at his first Coming to the Crown, *did* put the whole Management of Affairs into the Hands, of the *Whigs*, *he did* trust those that assisted in the Revolution, *and only them*, and all them that Places could be found for.

And what was the Consequence? I beseech you, Gentlemen, do not force me to give the Reason, why His Majesty was oblig’d to dismiss them again; why he was forc’d to throw himself into the Hands of his Enemies, and fly from those that had brought him in, to those that endeavour’d to keep him out!

What shall we say, or rather how shall I avoid saying, that his Majesty trusted them, till the great Cause, that obliges all wise Princes to shift Hands, came upon the Stage, I mean, *Knavery*. In short, Gentlemen, for ’tis in vain to mince the Matter, they prov’d the very same or worse Knaves, as those they had turn’d out; the King was bought, sold, betray’d and abus’d by intolerable Briberies, Treacheries and Villainies, by unsufferable Avarice, Party-makings, Oppressings, and injurious Treatment of all Sorts of his Subjects, till at last they grew haughty and insolent, as they were false and mercenary, and His Majesty was forc’d to put himself into the Hands of his Enemies, to save himself from the Hands of his Friends.⁵²

This account is very similar to that of William’s early experiences of English politics as detailed in the *Secret History*: because the Whigs who opposed and deposed James proved venal and domineering, William gradually opted to employ Tories who had formerly supported James.⁵³

The *Secret History* cultivates an analogy between William and Harley as men who aimed to rule with a mixed government and who made expedient use of High Tories and Jacobites without adhering to their views. This was Defoe’s main line of defense when writing on Harley’s behalf in the next two and a half years.⁵⁴ Like Harley,

52. *Review* 4:99–100 (March 27, 1707).

53. By no means was this a prevailing or obvious view at the time. Defoe made this idiosyncratic assessment in very similar terms in two places, seven years apart. As a contemporary states: “’Tis confess’d by all, that too much Lenity to the Friends of King James, was the chief Thing that made King William’s Reign uneasy to Himself and People”; *A Cry for Justice* (London, 1716), iii.

54. Defoe, *The Secret History of the White-Staff* (London, 1714), 13; Defoe, *Appeal*, 42; Defoe, *An Account of the Conduct of Robert Earl of Oxford* (London, 1715); Defoe, *Secret Memoirs of a Treasonable Conference at S[omerset] House* (London, 1716), 22. See further Daniel Szechi, *Jacobitism and Tory Politics, 1710–14* (Edinburgh, 1984), 182–93.

William had “an Aversion always to the hot Men of the other Side”—the Tories—and he aimed to crush “the evil Spirit of Division and Dissention in ENGLAND,” but along the way he had to use “Jacobites” (in the sense of those who had served James before his removal rather than those who supported his right after it).⁵⁵ Another parallel between the *Secret History* and Defoe’s writing in support of Harley is the admission that “the Command of the King to a Subject does not justify that Subject in any Illegal Action.”⁵⁶ Defoe frequently makes this argument, which the Whigs were invoking in their calls for Harley’s impeachment. He concedes the legal point—a monarch’s command does *not* excuse treason—but proceeds to qualify it, here in relation to James II’s ministers who retained office and elsewhere with reference to Anne’s. I will have occasion to discuss this matter in more detail below.

Another piece of evidence that supports Defoe’s authorship comes in the Relator’s comment on plans for British colonies in South America:

He gave us a Plan of the Design His Ma[jesty] had laid for a South Sea Company, by a Conquest on the Continent of AMERICA, as well on the Gulf of MEXICO, as on the Coast of the South Sea; upon the Foot whereof that Clause was inserted in the Gr[and] Alliance; that whatever the ENGLISH conquered in the SPAN[ISH] WEST INDIES should be their own.⁵⁷

Defoe repeatedly promoted a design for colonies on opposite coasts of Spanish America, pointing out the provision in the articles of the Grand Alliance. He claimed, both in print and in letters to Harley, to have presented a scheme like this to William III. He endorsed a version of it in 1711 when Harley’s proposal for a South Sea Company opened up the prospect of British colonies in South America, and he continued to write on the subject into the 1720s.⁵⁸ The two-coast plan is particular to Defoe, so its presence in the *Secret History* is substantial evidence for Defoe’s authorship.

More parallels with Defoe’s works might be offered, but none as idiosyncratic as the South Sea scheme and the defense of William’s early dealings with English parties. The *Secret History* conforms to the terms on which Defoe had started defending Harley, too. The charge of bad writing, the only evidence offered against Defoe’s authorship, is advanced without citation; it is also countered by assessments such as Lee’s and Mayer’s, more than a century apart. No internal evidence points away from Defoe.

The significance of the pamphlet for Defoe’s political outlook is considerable. Rather than simply screening Harley, the *Secret History*’s real aim, unachieved, is to

55. Defoe, *Secret History of One Year*, 36–37, 40.

56. *Ibid.*, 11.

57. *Ibid.*, 40.

58. *The Letters of Daniel Defoe*, ed. George Harris Healey (Oxford, 1955), 345–49 (Defoe to Harley, July 23, 1711); Defoe, *An Essay on the South Sea Trade* (London, 1712 [for 1711]), 44; Defoe, *Review* 8:246–49 (July 19, 1711) and 8:281–84 (August 7, 1711); Defoe, *A New Voyage Round the World* (London, 1725); Defoe, *A General History of Discoveries and Improvements* (London, 1725–26), 287–98.

ensure the continuance of that man's—and Defoe's—political ideals: moderate government that eschews partisan dogmatism, predicated on the monarch's independence and careful balancing of extreme interests through the selection of ministers. Defoe feared for the political health of a nation whose king (George) sought to govern through an alliance with one party. The case of an earlier foreign monarch with a limited knowledge of domestic politics (William) was instructive, and it offered a conciliatory alternative to a Whig supremacy. The *Secret History*, then, is an important expression of Defoe's convictions, in which he counters the acceptance of narrow party allegiance as the norm in British politics. In the event, his voice was ineffectual: the Hanoverian alliance with the Whigs came about despite his efforts.

~ *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty and Her Last Ministry*

A Secret History of One Year defends Harley only obliquely; its main purpose is to correct the historical record on William III and to warn against government conducted through the monarch's alliance with one party. But a major aim of Defoe's political writing between the fall of 1714 and the summer of 1717 was Harley's defense. On the day before Harley's removal as lord treasurer by Queen Anne, July 26, 1714, Defoe wrote to him: "I Think it my Duty to Repeat my assurances of my following your Worst Fortunes, and of being, fall it foul or fair, your Constant, faithfull and Steddy as Well as Humble and Obedt Servt."⁵⁹ Anne died on August 1. George I, to Defoe's delight, was proclaimed king; Harley, to Defoe's dismay, faced the growing inevitability of impeachment under a monarch he had alienated by sanctioning Britain's separate peace with France and by allegedly courting the Pretender.

Apologizing to his beleaguered patron for his reticence at this precarious time, Defoe wrote to Harley on August 26: "Indeed my Lord, the juncture has been So Nice I hardly could Tell which way to direct words So to Suit the Fluctuating Tempers of the people, as Not to do harm instead of Good." But Defoe had by now devised a strategy to palliate Whig recrimination: "In this difficulty My Lord I find the way to Talk with them is by Little and Little, gaining upon their Furious Tempers by Inches. This therefore is but an Introduction and Speaks all upon Generalls, and will be followed with Another and Another as things present."⁶⁰ The "Introduction" is generally assumed to be the first part of *The Secret History of the White-Staff*, published in September 1714, around the same time as *Advice to the People of Great Britain*. These efforts were followed by "Another and Another": two further parts of *The Secret History of the White-Staff* (October 1714, January 1715), as well as *The Secret History of the Secret History of the White-Staff* (January 1715), *A Friendly Epistle by Way of Reproof from one of the People called Quakers, to Thomas Bradbury* (February 1715), and, immediately after Harley had been imprisoned in the Tower, *An Account of the Conduct of Robert, Earl of Oxford* (July 1715).

59. *Letters*, 443 (Defoe to Harley, July 26, 1714).

60. *Ibid.*, 444–45 (Defoe to Harley, August 26, 1714).

Such at least are the defenses of Harley published between September 1714 and July 1715 accepted as Defoe's by Furbank and Owens (*Advice to the People of Great Britain and An Account of the Conduct of Robert, Earl of Oxford* are admitted as "probable"). J. A. Downie surmises that "Defoe defended Oxford singlehandedly,"⁶¹ and it is true that, at one time or another, just about every pro-Harley publication in the year between Harley's fall and his incarceration has been ascribed to Defoe. However, in 1992, Furbank and Owens pointed out with bewilderment that a host of *anti*-Harley pamphlets from between 1714 and 1716 had also been assigned to Defoe in the twentieth century, either by Trent or Moore. Furbank and Owens sensibly removed from the canon items like *Tories and Tory Principles Ruinous, An Apology for the Army, The Happiness of the Hanover Succession, His Majesty's Obligations to the Whigs, Hanover or Rome*, and *Proper Lessons for the Tories*. As well as there being no external evidence for Defoe's authorship of any of these pieces, they contradict his known opinions, attack Harley, and repudiate the *White-Staff* pamphlets.⁶²

Perhaps Defoe was not alone in defending Harley. Furbank and Owens also de-attribute four pro-Harley publications from this time. I will describe their grounds for doing so in order, going from the pamphlet with the least evidence for Defoe's authorship to the one with the most. First, *A Letter from a Merry Young Gentleman* (February 1715) is another attack on Thomas Bradbury, who was calling for impeachment. Stephen Whatley at the time attributed it to William Oldisworth; Trent's was the first known attribution to Defoe. Second, *Burnet and Bradbury* (February 1715), although not attributed to anyone else, also lacks external evidence, and some internal evidence points away from Defoe. Third, *Impeachment, or No Impeachment* (November 1714) has external evidence for Defoe: Boyer included it in his 1717 list, discussed above (Defoe, we have seen, denied sole authorship of all but one, unspecified item ascribed by Boyer). *Impeachment, or No Impeachment* is less a defense of Harley (grouped with Harcourt and Bolingbroke) and more a request that the Duke of Shrewsbury, Earl of Anglesey, and Bishop of Bristol also get their comeuppances. Furbank and Owens believe it unlikely that Defoe would have risked offending Anglesey so soon after being imprisoned for doing exactly that in a piece he had been charged with writing for the *Flying Post*.⁶³ Furthermore, there is little attempt in this pamphlet to palliate the accusations against Harley from a narrator who professes himself "far from being a Vindicator of the late Ministry" and who avers: "In short, they who declared for the Peace, and yet declare against the Pretender; such must be either void of common Honesty, or common Sense."⁶⁴ Defoe's line, by contrast, was that the Treaty of Utrecht thwarted the Jacobites. Based on current knowledge, these three are sound de-attributions.

61. J. A. Downie, *Robert Harley and the Press: Propaganda and Public Opinion in the Age of Swift and Defoe* (Cambridge, 1979), 186.

62. P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, "The Lost Property Office: Some Defoe Attributions Re-considered," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 86 (1992): 245–67.

63. P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, *A Political Biography of Daniel Defoe* (London, 2006), 138–39.

64. *Impeachment, or No Impeachment* (London, 1714), 20, 19.

The fourth de-attributed Harley defense is *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty and Her Last Ministry, Relating to the Separate Peace with France. By the Right Honourable [sic] the Countess of ———* (January 1715). The strategy of this work is to absolve the Harley-led ministry from having breached the terms of the Grand Alliance in unilaterally treating with France, partly by condemning the conduct of the Dutch and Austrians, but mainly by insisting that the impetus for peace came from Anne herself. An anonymous countess, one of the “very few, about Her Majesty, to whom She imparted her Thoughts in these Particulars,” relates Anne’s unguarded moments—the “secret Lamentations from Her Mouth”—when the queen pathetically expostulates on the human cost of war.⁶⁵ These moments are punctuated by political surmises:

The making the last Peace with *France*, was not so much the Design and Contrivances of a Party, as some would have us believe; neither was it a Concert between the Ministry and *France*, founded on the Corruption of Persons concern’d, and which was procur’d by Bribes, Pensions, Presents, &c. from *France*; but had its beginning from, as it was in all its Parts prosecuted and finish’d, by the express Resolution, and earnest Applications of Her Majesty personally, mov’d to it, as is said, from Her Natural Abhorrence of Cruelty and Blood, and Her deep Concern, occasion’d by the Ruin of Her Subject’s Families, and the Lives of Her People, and from no other Occasion whatsoever.⁶⁶

Far from having swayed the queen, her ministers acted compassionately in accordance with her wishes. In speeches that the countess overhears, Anne exculpates her ministers, particularly Harley, who has to be persuaded to press for peace. The pamphlet details the pains everyone took to ensure that the allies gained satisfactory terms. It specifies that everything was conducted through Parliament, so that there cannot now be complaints about the legality or indeed the secrecy of the former ministry’s actions.

Memoirs was ascribed to Defoe along with *The Secret History of the Secret History of the White-Staff in Queen Anne Vindicated* (February 1715), which is very probably by William Pittis.⁶⁷ Pittis wrote of Defoe: “When a Man has chang’d his Principles which are his very Nature, ’tis not a Work of much Labour for him to do the same Thing by his Name; and if such a one puts on the Resemblance of a *Person of Honour* or

65. Defoe, *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty and Her Last Ministry* (London, 1715), 13, 22. It was advertised as published “this day” in *The Post Boy*, January 4–6, 1715.

66. Defoe, *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty*, 24–25.

67. William Pittis, *Queen Anne Vindicated* (London, 1715), 5. The first published attribution of which I know is William Peterfield Trent, “William Pittis: The Difficulties of a Pamphleteer and Biographer,” I and II, *The Nation* 98, no. 2554 (June 11, 1914): 692–94 (<http://www.unz.org/Pub/Nation-1914jun11-00692a02>); no. 2555 (June 18, 1914): 722–24 (<http://www.unz.org/Pub/Nation-1914jun18-00722>). Theodore Newton adopts the attribution (apparently without knowledge of Trent’s piece); “William Pittis and Queen Anne Journalism,” *Modern Philology* 33 (1935–36): 169–86; 279–302 at 296. I am grateful to Tom Bolze at Yale’s Beinecke Library for verifying two “Pittis” inscriptions in their copy and for having a paleographer confirm that they are in an early eighteenth-century hand.

a *Countess*, he does but Act the Second Part of the sam[e] Farce.”⁶⁸ Latterly, Trent inherited the attribution of *Memoirs* to Defoe from James Crossley’s manuscript list of sixty “new” Defoe attributions, drawn up between 1869 and 1883.⁶⁹ Furbank and Owens challenge the attribution, first in the 1992 article and then in *Defoe De-attributions*. What warrants distrusting the external evidence?

Our argument rests on literary grounds. It is very hard to believe that the author of such ingenious and subtle productions as the *White Staff* pamphlets, which manage to present so cunning and plausible a defence of Harley—one based on his known weaknesses of character—could contemporaneously be producing such a clumsy and hopelessly implausible polemic as *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty* (of which Trent writes, “I am afraid that the Countess was a fraud who could not have deceived a baby”).⁷⁰

Like *A Secret History of One Year*, *Memoirs* is proposed for exclusion despite the contemporaneous attribution because it is deemed unworthy of Defoe’s abilities. Trent is quoted in support of its deprecation, but he goes on to say that “the pamphlet is plainly Defoe’s, and, as a whole, does him credit. [...] The tract is a persuasive one.”⁷¹ Again, a reconsideration of the evidence swings the balance in favor of Defoe’s authorship.

On what basis do such claims as “clumsy” and “hopelessly implausible” rest?⁷² We gain more detail in Furbank and Owens’s earlier essay, where they describe *Memoirs* as “a tract in which no effort at all is made to exploit the fictional potentialities of its pretended author, the Countess of ———.”⁷³ *Memoirs* is denigrated and subsequently (consequently?) de-attributed for failing to anticipate Defoe’s later exploitations of persona in secret histories, like that which is considered one of his final efforts to exonerate Harley, *Minutes of Mesnager*, and more obviously in what we now call the novels. If accepted into the Defoe canon, *Memoirs* would be an example of a long narrative adopting a female voice that predates *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*. As with *A Secret History of One Year*, the terms of its de-attribution beg two questions: How appropriate is it to use literary standards in evaluating this work? And how appropriate is it to use this evaluation in assessing likely authorship? My assessment of the critical reception of *Memoirs* will again show that axiological judgments are unreliable guides in attribution.

68. Pittis, *Queen Anne Vindicated*, 10. “Person of Honour” refers to the authorial pose of *The Secret History of the Secret History of the White-Staff*.

69. Furbank and Owens, *Canonisation*, 83–99 (on Trent); *ibid.*, 184–87 (Crossley’s list); Trent, “Bibliography,” 1027; Trent, “Bibliographical Notes,” 517.

70. Furbank and Owens, *Defoe De-attributions*, 69–70; they quote Trent, “Bibliography,” 1053.

71. Trent, “Bibliography,” 1054.

72. The former could certainly refer to its production values: “Honorable” in the title is not the only error, and the pagination jumps from 40 to 49. Of course, these are not authorial features.

73. Furbank and Owens, “The Lost Property Office,” 267.

The case for readmitting this work to the Defoe canon comes in three parts. First, Furbank and Owens's objections to its quality are balanced by other perspectives. Second, the nature of the external evidence needs to be more thoroughly inspected. External evidence in Defoe attribution sometimes gets reported as bare fact—either there or not there—and is not always evaluated in a qualitative way. In this case, it is especially strong: Pittis was carefully picking out his man. Third, I will assess the work's content and contend that internal evidence corroborates the external evidence for Defoe's authorship. In keeping with Defoe's politics, this pamphlet's defense of Harley approbates a polity in which monarchical authority achieves its ends through appointed ministers' parliamentary work.

Judging by how many commentators thought fit to ignore *Memoirs* when it was in the Defoe canon, we might be inclined to concur with Furbank and Owens's assessment. Of Defoe's major biographers, only Paula Backscheider comments: "*Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty*, with its portrayal of the weeping, maudlin queen, would be worthy of the worst of Delarivière Manley's scandalous memoirs."⁷⁴ Notwithstanding the upturn in Manley's critical fortunes in the last twenty-five years, Backscheider corroborates Furbank and Owens's appraisal *avant la lettre*.

However, one scholar who has dwelt on the tract comes to the opposite conclusion. Sandra Sherman calls *Memoirs* "one of [Defoe's] most cunning 'political fictions,'" using the exact adjective—"cunning"—denied to it by Furbank and Owens. As with Mayer on *A Secret History of One Year*, evaluation evidently depends on what one is looking for. Sherman's (perhaps overly ingenious) argument is that Defoe avoids accountability for writing political fictions by flooding the print marketplace with pseudonymous, mutually contradictory accounts of events that collectively defer the satisfaction of complete knowledge and screen their author in a manner analogous to a burgeoning system of financial credit. She compares *Memoirs* quite favorably to the text that Furbank and Owens thought overshadowed it, *The Secret History of the Secret History of the White-Staff*: "Both warn against the practices they deploy, developing a self-reflexivity that implies candor even as it tries to exclude extratextual interrogation."⁷⁵ Moreover, it is worth noting that *White-Staff* has not always enjoyed its present rating as an ingenious defense of Harley. Downie considers it a miscalculation of reader response comparable to *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, and Backscheider labels it an "inept" defense.⁷⁶ Even its intended beneficiary, Harley, disavowed it both publicly and privately as harmful to his cause.⁷⁷ Literary evaluations change with the times.

74. Paula R. Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe: His Life* (Baltimore, 1989), 376.

75. Sandra Sherman, *Finance and Fictionality in the Early Eighteenth Century: Accounting for Defoe* (Cambridge, 1996), 66. Rachel Weil discusses *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty* in her consideration of gendered depictions of Queen Anne. Although her treatment is non-evaluative, the implication is that it is a clever enough polemic in terms of vindicating the peace as an act of compassion stemming from Anne's womanish weakness; *Political Passions: Gender, the Family, and Political Argument in England, 1680–1714* (Manchester, 1999), 172–73.

76. Downie, *Robert Harley, 187–88*; Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, 354.

77. Novak, *Master of Fictions*, 461–62.

Neither Sherman nor Trent, however, was the first commentator to commend *Memoirs*. Pittis, in the otherwise hostile *Queen Anne Vindicated*, passes on some begrudging praise in his explanation of why Defoe is the author: “The Pamphlet has somewhat better Features than what are wont to be Stamp’d on the Works of *John Dunton* of Raving Memory; or I should have concluded it to be the Production of that Man.”⁷⁸ Hence, Pittis concludes, this is by Defoe not Dunton, the latter serving as a byword for zaniness. Dunton is a red herring here because he was writing in favor of impeachment and had tussled with Defoe on the issue as early as the spring of 1714, before Harley was out of power.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the logic here is the reverse of Furbank and Owens’s: the pamphlet has (unspecified) merits that point away from Dunton and toward Defoe.

Pittis’s ascription of *The Secret History of the Secret History of the White-Staff* to Defoe alongside *Memoirs* is significant because Furbank and Owens acknowledge that there are “major puzzles” involved in maintaining that the same person wrote all three parts of *The Secret History of the White-Staff* plus their exposé, *The Secret History of the Secret History*. The latter work attacks the *White-Staff* pamphlets as a smoke screen and associates them with Defoe (some had already identified Defoe’s hand, but others had named Harley as the author). Defoe denied authorship of *The Secret History of the Secret History* in his own voice in *An Appeal to Honour and Justice* (February 1715).⁸⁰ The fact that Pittis was able to cut through the confusion and correctly pin *The Secret History of the Secret History* on Defoe adds to his reliability for the other attribution, the *Memoirs*. Despite the conflicting evidence, all four *White-Staff* pieces are accepted by Furbank and Owens. Accepting *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty* as Defoe’s work involves no such puzzles of conflicting evidence.

Supposing that Defoe did *not* write *Memoirs* does present a puzzle: the degree of confidence and circumstantiality with which Pittis identifies Defoe. Pittis fits the pamphlet into Defoe’s long and involved career, harking back to Defoe’s debt problems and saying that adopting a persona comes naturally to the author of the *Shortest Way*. He elaborates on Defoe’s relationship with Harley, alleges that Defoe may still be in Harley’s pay, and even accuses Defoe of writing both for and against his longtime patron. Pittis identifies the *Memoirs*’ printer, Samuel Keimer, as “his Quaker” (meaning Defoe’s), describing the two as “happily coupled,” and he deliberately picks out Defoe as the author from the array of people writing for Keimer at this time.⁸¹ This

78. Pittis, *Queen Anne Vindicated*, 16.

79. Defoe, *Reasons for Im[peaching] the L[or]d H[igh] T[reasurer]* (London, 1714); Dunton, *The Impeachment, Or Great Britain’s Charge Against the Present M[inistry]* (London, 1714).

80. Defoe, *Appeal*, 47; Furbank and Owens, *Critical Bibliography*, 148–49. Defoe denies authorship of both Pittis attributions but admits to revising two sheets at the printer’s request. In *The Secret History of the Secret History of the White-Staff*, Defoe attributed to Pittis the two-part *History of the Mitre and Purse* (1714), an attack on the earlier *White-Staff* pamphlets and on Harley in defense of Atterbury and Harcourt, and *Reasons for a War with France* (1715), a title for which Pittis was later prosecuted. Defoe and Pittis evidently had knowledge of one another’s activities.

81. Pittis, *Queen Anne Vindicated*, 14, 9. In 1717 Defoe wrote to the recently incarcerated Keimer, sending financial relief, offering religious consolation, and promising future service. The letter was

attribution is not an offhand slur. Pittis is sure that Defoe wrote *Memoirs*; he shows an insider's knowledge of Defoe's affairs, not just the well-publicized history but also the relationship with Keimer, which it was in the interests of both parties to keep secret. We should take stock of the confidence of such a source. The external evidence is not just present: it is weighty.

The unequivocal external evidence necessitates a thorough inspection of internal evidence. One possible link between Defoe and *Memoirs* comes in a passage toward the end, referring to the infamous restraining orders given to Marlborough's successor as head of the army: "In the mean Time, the Affair of the D. of O——d's withdrawing the *British Forces* from the Army happen'd as above. The especial and reserved History may appear by itself."⁸² The promise of another publication on Ormonde is in passing; nonetheless, in May 1715, when Ormonde's impeachment looked likely, Defoe's *A Seasonable Expostulation with, and Friendly Reproof unto James Butler, who, by the Men of this World, is Stil'd Duke of Ormonde* was published, also by Keimer. This, like the *Friendly Epistle* to Bradbury, is among Defoe's pamphlets written in a Quaker's voice.⁸³ It may be anticipated in *Memoirs*.

The content of *Memoirs* marries with numerous aspects of Defoe's defenses of Harley, so, as with *A Secret History of One Year*, the internal evidence supports the external. With respect to the queen, Defoe generally resists the image of Anne as pliable (which is how Pittis depicts her) and indicates that she pressed her ministers for peace.⁸⁴ In his *Account of the Conduct of Robert, Earl of Oxford*, Defoe insists that Harley worked to "restore Her Majesty to an entire Freedom of Acting" so that "She might act with open Eyes, see for Her Self, and give to, not receive Commands from, Her Ministry." The *Account* describes how "the House, with an entire Confidence, came into Her Majesty's Measures"—to wit, "Her Majesty's Opinion, that it was absolutely necessary to put an End to the War."⁸⁵ This take on events, designed to counter the accusation that Harley acted like a prime minister, passes the buck to Anne.

Defoe's *Advice to the People of Great Britain* conjures the image of a queen who inspired "profound Veneration, and an unfeign'd Duty and Affection to her Person" from all her ministers, which matches the presentation in *Memoirs*, where Anne's emotional responses compel a reluctant Harley to bring the war to a close.⁸⁶ As the *Account* explains, "*Her Majesty* was mov'd by the Tendency so natural to Her, and the

published in Keimer's autobiography but not connected with Defoe until James Crossley did so in 1869. It is certainly Defoe, however, because a verse prayer in the letter also appears in *Colonel Jack* (1722); *Letters*, 448–49 (Defoe to Keimer, 1717?).

82. Defoe, *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty*, 75.

83. The main evidence for Defoe's authorship of the *Seasonable Expostulation* is its connection with similar Quaker-voiced pamphlets assigned to him at the time; Furbank and Owens, *Critical Bibliography*, 153–54, 157.

84. See Nicholas Seager, "'She Will Not Be That Tyrant They Desire': Daniel Defoe and Queen Anne," in *Queen Anne and the Arts*, ed. Cedric D. Reverand II (Lanham, Md., 2014), 41–55.

85. Defoe, *An Account of the Conduct of Robert, Earl of Oxford*, 27–28, 38, 54; compare p. 61.

86. Defoe, *Advice to the People of Great Britain* (London, 1714), 11.

Compassion mov'd in Her Breast, by the Expence of the Blood of Her People.”⁸⁷ This is precisely the defense adopted in *Memoirs*. In Defoe’s *Minutes of Mesnager*, the eponymous French plenipotentiary reports that he “had it from such Persons of Honour, as merit to be believed” that even as she was signing off on war measures, Anne “was observed to let fall some Tears; and taking a great Sigh said, LORD! *When will this Spilling of Blood be at an End.*”⁸⁸ As in *Memoirs*, a lachrymose queen in *Minutes of Mesnager* initiates the peace process and Harley complies with her wishes.

The plea in *Memoirs* that parliamentary procedure was followed lines up with identical points in Defoe’s ironically titled *Reasons for Im[peaching] the L[or]d H[igh] T[reasure]r*. In that work, as in *A Secret History of One Year* and *Memoirs*, Defoe insists that, although a sovereign’s command does not absolve a minister who acts illegally, it would have been callous and wrong to have ignored Anne’s overtures.⁸⁹ A variation on this theme comes in *Minutes of Mesnager*, in which the message is that ministers take the brunt of monarchs’ decisions (“it is the Minister who bears the Resentment, not the Sovereign”).⁹⁰ Defoe invokes the defense for himself in the *Appeal*: “If I am fallen under the Displeasure of the PRESENT Government, for any thing I ever did in Obedience to her Majesty in THE PAST, I may say it is my Disaster; but I can never say it is my Fault.”⁹¹ Attributing the peace campaign to Anne is not an implausible strategy that should make us distrust the basic competence of the author. As Harley himself told the House of Lords: “If ministers of state, acting by the immediate commands of their sovereign, are afterwards to be made accountable for their proceedings, it may, one day or other, be the case of all the members of this august assembly.”⁹² Defoe subscribed to the principle that the sovereign’s command was an insufficient plea against treason; he chose to acknowledge the point but to build Anne’s wishes into his defense of Harley anyway. Pittis charges that using the queen as a screen was a favored strategy because “they knew that dead Lyons could not bite.”⁹³ He is right.

There are other parallels between *Memoirs* and Defoe’s known writings from this time. *Memoirs* expresses frustration at Dutch and Austrian ingratitude.⁹⁴ It emphasizes that peace overtures came from France and were only entertained by the British, which did not contravene the terms of the Grand Alliance; besides, the French offered only unofficial proposals, not formal preliminaries.⁹⁵ Inventing speeches for Anne, which

87. Defoe, *An Account of the Conduct of Robert, Earl of Oxford*, 73–74.

88. Defoe, *Minutes of the Negotiations of Monsr. Mesnager* (London, 1717), 47; compare pp. 134, 197.

89. Defoe, *Reasons for Im[peaching]*, 10, 24; compare Defoe, *An Account of the Conduct of Robert, Earl of Oxford*, 63–64; Defoe, *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty*, 5, 50; Defoe, *A Secret History of One Year*, 11.

90. Defoe, *Minutes of Mesnager*, 93; compare pp. 169–70.

91. Defoe, *Appeal*, 46.

92. Quoted in Speck, *Stability and Strife*, 178.

93. Pittis, *Queen Anne Vindicated*, 5.

94. Defoe, *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty*, 6–9.

95. *Ibid.*, 31–32; Defoe, *An Account of the Conduct of Robert, Earl of Oxford*, 55, 81; Defoe, *Minutes of Mesnager*, 139. See Lawrence Poston III, “Defoe and the Peace Campaign, 1710–1713: A Reconsideration,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 27 (1963): 1–20 at 12.

Pittis found so objectionable, was done by Defoe elsewhere, as in *An Account of the Conduct of Robert, Earl of Oxford* and *Minutes of Mesnager*.⁹⁶ Though Defoe was not necessarily alone in making these arguments at this time, there is enough evidence to justify the attribution. This evidence includes the degree of specificity in the contemporaneous source that names him; the fact that nothing in *Memoirs* points away from Defoe, and much internal evidence suggests him, lining up very closely with his writings from this time; and that, whatever one may feel about its “literary” merit, it was a good enough defense of Harley to draw praise from its earliest respondent and more recent critics.

The polemical tracts by Defoe that debate the ministry’s conduct in negotiating a separate peace with France form a knot of considerable historical significance. They are of crucial importance for scholars deliberating the extent and quality of Defoe’s apology for Harley. Defoe’s loyalty placed him in an invidious position: he defended measures with which he disagreed, exculpated politicians he suspected of Jacobitism, and jeopardized his safety with the new establishment. The re-attribution of *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty and Her Last Ministry* allows for a more complete assessment of Defoe’s political service at this precarious moment. In it, he extends earlier arguments, such as the ambivalent stance that following a monarch’s commands extenuates treasonable actions. He also introduces other tactics that he continued to develop, such as depicting Queen Anne’s emotional fragility and political independence. Defoe believed in the right of the sovereign to make war, a prerogative checked by Parliament’s command of the purse; here he invokes this prerogative to vindicate the former ministry. In the short term, Defoe’s defense of Harley could not prevent the former treasurer’s incarceration, but its persistence may have contributed to Harley’s eventual acquittal in 1717. On the eve of Harley’s release, Defoe published the *Minutes of Mesnager*, a lengthy work that obviously exceeds the polemical necessity of justifying Harley’s conduct. In fact, *Minutes of Mesnager* gestures toward the exploitation of persona and perspective that characterizes Defoe’s major prose fictions. Two and a half years earlier, pumping out defenses of Harley from every conceivable angle, Defoe wrote a different kind of work in *Memoirs*.

Conclusion

Evaluation can be done with or without reference to criteria and with or without citation. In short, there are pronouncements and there are arguments. There are good and bad evaluations, and evaluation is not necessarily worthless; in certain circumstances, it may even constitute valid evidence in questions of attribution. Nevertheless, in the case of occasional writings associated with Defoe, evaluation has obstructed rather than assisted confidence in assigning authorship. This essay has indicated the desirability of a separation, as far as possible, of arguments about literary evaluation and authorship attribution when considering the mass of anonymous political writing that

96. Defoe, *An Account of the Conduct of Robert, Earl of Oxford*, 18–19.

appeared in Defoe's lifetime. A great deal of conjecture is cleared when we do not rest on assumptions about an author's writing that are constructed from an unstable canon. Responding to Furbank and Owens, Maximillian Novak has called for a more relaxed approach to evidence for Defoe attribution, given that external evidence is not always forthcoming, whereas Ashley Marshall has proposed even greater stringency and skepticism.⁹⁷ Furbank and Owens's approach remains preferable: external evidence should be sought, assessed, and usually prioritized before internal evidence is considered. Accordingly, the evidence for Defoe's authorship of *A Secret History of One Year* and *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty* is strong enough for their readmission into his canon.

And these pamphlets tell us much about Defoe's political convictions, particularly the desirable independence of the monarch from narrow party politics. The combined implication is that George I should rethink his party management. In *A Secret History of One Year*, William III supplies an instructive precedent as a monarch who initially favored Whigs but was forced to employ more Tories when the self-interest of his ministers became damaging. Queen Anne, though histrionic in Defoe's depiction in *Memoirs of the Conduct of Her Late Majesty*, retains control of ministers who act in her interests through Parliament. This portrayal serves the immediate purpose of exculpating Harley and reaffirms the desirable relationship between sovereigns and servants developed more generally at this juncture in Defoe's political writing. Acknowledging Defoe's authorship of these titles enables scholars to evaluate his efforts following the Hanoverian succession to shape not only accounts of the recent past but also the current situation at a pivotal moment.

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97. Maximillian E. Novak, *Transformations, Ideology, and the Real in Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" and Other Narratives: Finding "The Thing Itself"* (Newark, Del., 2014), 13; Marshall, "Beyond Furbank and Owens," 132.