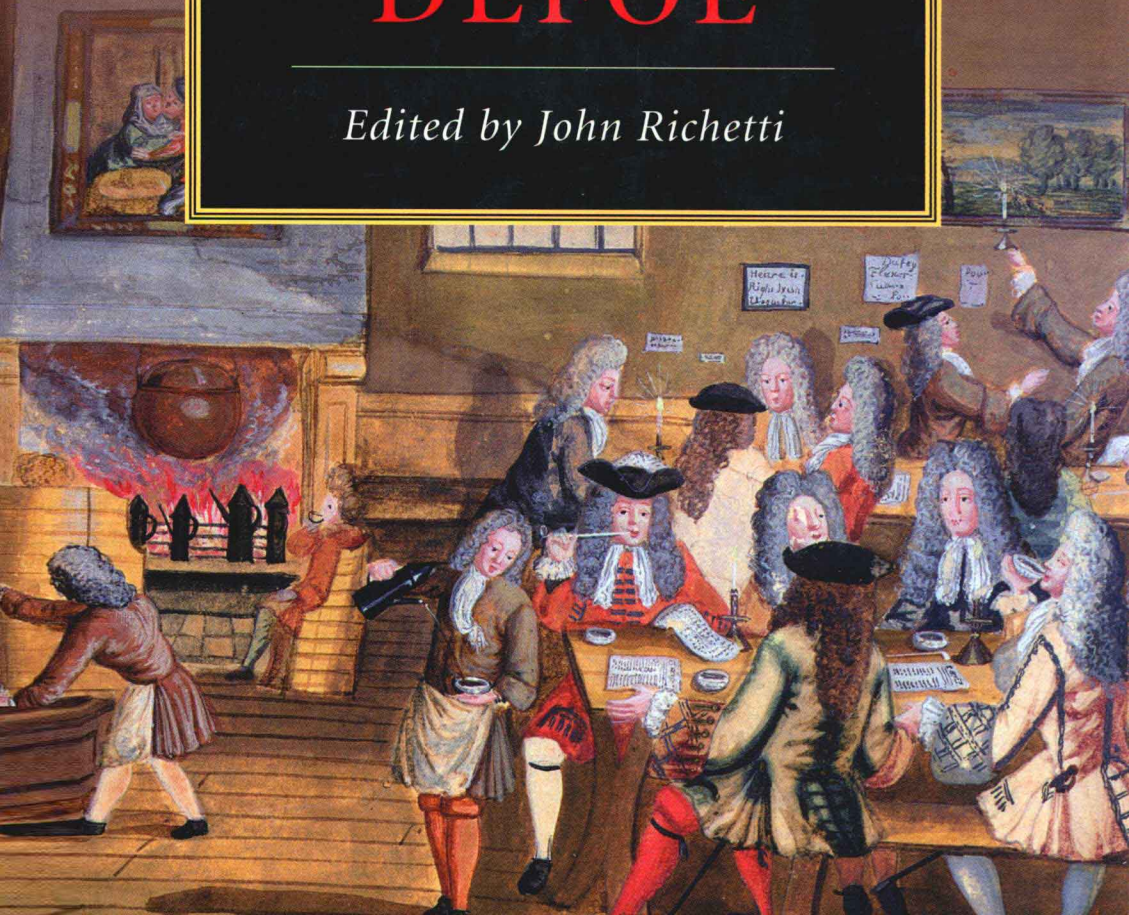


THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO



# DANIEL DEFOE

*Edited by John Richetti*



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## THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO DANIEL DEFOE

Daniel Defoe had an eventful and adventurous life as a merchant, politician, spy, and literary hack. He is one of the eighteenth century's most lively, innovative, and important authors, famous not only for his novels, including *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Roxana*, but for his extensive work in journalism, political polemic, and conduct guides, and for his pioneering "Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain." This volume surveys the wide range of Defoe's fiction and non-fiction, and assesses his importance as writer and thinker. Leading scholars discuss key issues in Defoe's novels, and show how the man who was once pilloried for his writings emerges now as a key figure in the literature and culture of the early eighteenth century.

JOHN RICHETTI is A.M. Rosenthal Professor (Emeritus) of English at the University of Pennsylvania.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

1. “A New and Exact Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster.”  
From *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster and the Borough of Southwark: containing the original, antiquity, increase, present state and government of those cities, by John Stow*. Sixth edition, 1754–55. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Virginia Library. page 160
2. “Broad Street Ward.” From *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster*, by John Stowe. Sixth edition, 1754–55. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Virginia Library. 164

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ELLEN POLLAK is the author of *Incest and the English Novel, 1684–1814* (2003), *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Swift and Pope* (1985), and essays on Behn, Defoe, Haywood, Manley, Swift, and Dorothy Parker, among others. She is Professor of English at Michigan State University, where she teaches feminist theory and eighteenth-century literature and culture, and where she presently serves as Director of Graduate Studies.

JOHN RICHETTI is A. M. Rosenthal Professor of English, Emeritus, at the University of Pennsylvania. His most recent book is *The Life of Daniel Defoe: A Critical Biography* (2005). Among his other books are *Popular Fiction Before Richardson: 1700–1739* (1969; rpt. 1992), *Defoe's Narratives: Situations and Structures* (1975), *Philosophical Writing: Locke, Berkeley, Hume* (1983), and *The English Novel in History 1700–1780* (1999). He has also edited *The Columbia History of the British Novel* (1994), *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (1996), *Popular Fiction by Women, 1660–1730* (with Paula Backscheider, 1997), the Penguin *Robinson Crusoe* (2000), and *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660–1780* (2005).

PAT ROGERS is DeBartolo Professor in the Liberal Arts at the University of South Florida and the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Alexander Pope* (2007).

Relevant previous works include *Defoe: The Critical Heritage* (1972; 1995), *Robinson Crusoe* (1979), and an edition of *Moll Flanders* (1993); two abridged editions of Defoe's *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1971; 1989 and 1993), as well as the introduction to the Folio Society edition (1983), and a study *The Text of Great Britain: Theme and Design in Defoe's Tour* (1998). His current projects include a series of linked essays exploring the *Tour* in relation to antiquarianism, crime, demography, economic geography, politics, topographic and touristic writing, travel, and urban history.

MICHAEL SEIDEL is Jesse and George Siegel Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University. His books include *Epic Geography: James Joyce's Ulysses* (1976), *Satiric Inheritance: Rabelais to Sterne* (1979), *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (1986), *Robinson Crusoe: Island Myths and the Novel* (1991), and *James Joyce: A Short Introduction* (2002). He is co-editor of the first two volumes in the *Stoke-Newington Works of Daniel Defoe*, and wrote the introduction and notes for the Barnes & Noble edition of *Moll Flanders* (2005).

CYNTHIA WALL is Professor of English at the University of Virginia. She is the author of *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century* (2006) and *The Literary and Cultural Spaces of Restoration London* (1998) and has edited works by Defoe and Pope, and the Norton Critical Edition of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.



## CHRONOLOGY

- 1660 or 1661 Daniel Foe born in London (exact date unknown), son of James and Alice Foe.  
Restoration of the Stuart monarchy as Charles II returns to England.
- 1662 Act of Uniformity passed, mandating conformity in religious services to the Church of England Book of Common Prayer and requiring office-holders to be members of the state church. The Foes followed the lead of their minister, Samuel Annesley, and left the Church of England to become Dissenters.
- 1663 Drury Lane Theatre in London reopens.
- 1664 The Conventicle Act outlaws Nonconformist worship in gatherings of more than five people.  
Second Anglo-Dutch War (to 1667). Dutch ships sail up the Thames and destroy much of the English fleet.
- 1665–66 The Great Plague (kills over 70,000 people in London) and the Great Fire of London (consumes most of the old wooden city).
- c. 1671–79 Attends school of the Rev. James Fisher at Dorking, Surrey, and then the Dissenting Academy of Rev. Charles Morton, Newington Green, north of London.
- 1675 Greenwich Observatory established by Charles II.
- 1678 “Exclusion Crisis” as the Earl of Shaftesbury leads a movement to exclude James, Charles II’s Roman Catholic brother from the succession to the throne.

- c. 1683 Foe is established as a wholesale hosiery merchant, living in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange.
- 1684 Marries Mary Tuffley and receives a dowry of £3,700.
- 1685 Death of Charles II – succeeded by his brother, the Catholic James II.  
Louis XIV revokes the Edict of Nantes, ending religious toleration in France.
- 1685 Foe participates in the unsuccessful rebellion against James II led by the Duke of Monmouth, one of Charles II's illegitimate sons.
- 1685–92 Becomes a prosperous businessman dealing in hosiery, tobacco, wine, and other goods. Seems to have travelled extensively on business in England and in Europe.
- 1688 The “Glorious Revolution”: James II is forced to vacate the throne and Prince William of Orange in the Netherlands is invited to reign as William III of England, with James's daughter, Mary, as his queen.
- 1690 William III defeats James II at the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland.
- 1692 Foe declares bankruptcy for £17,000 and is imprisoned for debt.
- 1694 Founding of the Bank of England.  
Foe establishes a brick and tile factory at Tilbury, in Essex.
- 1695 Daniel Foe begins to call himself Defoe.
- 1697 Publication of Defoe's first book, *An Essay on Projects*, a series of proposals for radical social and economic change.  
Death of Queen Mary.
- 1697–1701 Defoe acts as an agent for William III in England and Scotland.
- 1701 James II dies in exile.  
Act of Settlement establishes Hanoverian succession.  
*The True-Born Englishman*, a poetic satire of English xenophobia and a defense of William III, who was Dutch by birth.

- 1702 Death of William III; accession of Queen Anne, James II's daughter.  
England declares war against France and Spain: the War of the Spanish Succession. John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, is named Captain-General of the English army.  
*The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, a satiric attack on High Church extremists.
- 1703 Defoe arrested for writing *The Shortest Way*, charged with sedition, committed to Newgate prison and sentenced to stand in the pillory for three days. He publishes the poem *A Hymn to the Pillory* and an authorized collection of his writings, *A True Collection of the Writings of the Author of The True-Born Englishman* (a second volume in 1705). Released through the influence of the powerful politician and Speaker of the House, Robert Harley, but his brick and tile factory fails while he is in prison. Bankrupt again.
- 1704 The English capture Gibraltar; Duke of Marlborough defeats the French at Blenheim.  
Defoe begins the *Review*, a pro-government newsheet appearing as often as three times a week (until 1713).
- 1704-13 Defoe acts as secret agent and political journalist for Harley and other ministers, travelling widely in England and Scotland, promoting the union of the two countries.
- 1707 Union of England and Scotland.
- 1710 Tories gain control of Parliament under leadership of Robert Harley (later Earl of Oxford) and Henry St. John (later Viscount Bolingbroke).  
Statute of Queen Anne passed by Parliament, limiting copyright to twenty-eight years and recognizing authors' rights.
- 1711 Founding of the South Sea Company.
- 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, ending the War of the Spanish Succession.
- 1713-14 Defoe arrested several times for debt and for his political writings but released through government influence.
- 1714 Death of Queen Anne; accession of George I, the Elector of Hanover.  
Fall of the Tory government.

- 1715 *The Family Instructor*, the first of his conduct books.  
 Jacobite Rebellion in support of James II's son, "James III," the "Old Pretender."  
 Death of Louis XIV of France.  
 Robert Harley (Earl of Oxford) and Henry St. John (Viscount Bolingbroke) are impeached for high treason. Bolingbroke flees to France.
- 1719 *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.
- 1720 *Captain Singleton*, *Serious Reflections of ... Robinson Crusoe*.  
 War with Spain declared.  
 South Sea Company fails ("South Sea Bubble").
- 1721 Robert Walpole appointed First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer.
- 1722 *A Journal of the Plague Year*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Colonel Jack*.
- 1724 *Roxana*, *A General History of the Pyrates*, *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (3 volumes, 1724–26).
- 1725 *The Complete English Tradesman*, volume I.
- 1726 *The Political History of the Devil*.
- 1727 *Conjugal Lewdness*, *An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions*, *A New Family Instructor*, *The Complete English Tradesman*, volume II.  
 Death of George I.
- 1728 *Augusta Triumphans*, *A Plan of the English Commerce*.
- 1729 *The Compleat English Gentleman* (not published until 1890).
- 1731 Dies on 24 April in Ropemaker's Alley, London, in debt, hiding from creditors.

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JOHN RICHETTI

## Introduction

Book II of Alexander Pope's *Dunciad* includes an uproarious parody of the games of strength and speed featured in classical epics. The presiding goddess, Dullness, presents as a prize to the victor, the notorious publisher, Edmund Curll, a "shaggy Tap'stry" depicting Pope's satiric targets in the poem, Grub Street authors and booksellers. And at the forefront of the picture is Daniel Defoe: "Earless on high, stood unabash'd De Foe" (II, 147).<sup>1</sup> Having one's ears cut off, as suggested by Pope's slanderous depiction of Defoe, was in those days a possible if rare punishment for seditious publication. Pope and the members of his elite literary circle viewed writers for hire like Defoe with contempt as nothing more than literary prostitutes who catered to degraded popular taste or produced political propaganda. Defoe had been pilloried (made to stand in humiliating and dangerous public view, hands and head in a locked frame, elevated on a pillar) for parts of three days in July 1703 for writing *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702), a pamphlet the government deemed incendiary. Swift, in a pamphlet in 1708, said that Defoe was "One of these Authors (the Fellow that was pilloryed, I have forgot his name) so grave, sententious, dogmatical a Rogue, that there is no enduring him."<sup>2</sup>

Three hundred years or so later, however, Defoe has had the last laugh on mandarins such as Pope and Swift. Thanks partly to contemporary redactions in film (*Castaway*) and television (*Survivor*), the *Robinson Crusoe* story remains an enduring archetype, just as the book itself is a world classic, translated into many languages. And thanks to the novel's dominance in modern times as a literary form, Defoe is these days a major figure in the history of its development in England, with *Moll Flanders* (1722), *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), and *Roxana* (1724) along with *Robinson Crusoe* read as standard texts for academic study, as founding moments in the emergence of modern fiction. Moreover, it is precisely by virtue of Defoe's career as the versatile professional writer (hack is the word they would have used) that Swift and Pope found so contemptible, that his writings have in the

last three decades or so come to command increasing attention from literary, social, political, and cultural historians.

The bankrupt merchant turned writer and political propagandist, the object of abuse and condescension from traditionalists in his own day, Defoe is arguably the most important writer of the first thirty years of the English eighteenth century, and perhaps the one who is nowadays most widely read. As the thirteen essays in this volume will demonstrate, he was certainly the most prolific and one of the most versatile and effective writers of his time. A political and religious polemical journalist, a satirical and philosophical poet, an economic theorist, a moralist and social commentator, and of course late in life a writer of long narrative fictions, Defoe produced a richly varied body of work. His literary output was staggering, so much so that just how much and precisely what he actually wrote are matters of scholarly dispute.<sup>3</sup> He wrote in many genres, poetic and prose kinds, and he may be said to have inaugurated one characteristically modern mode of publication – the syndicated column, the periodical he called the *Review*, which he produced single-handedly (two and then three times a week) from 1704 to 1713. Defoe, in short, was a major force in the explosion of print and the founding of that free public exchange of political ideas that has been called the bourgeois public sphere in early eighteenth-century England. His restless and omnivorous intelligence, to say nothing of his talent for non-stop articulation, propelled him through a life of writing and political activism without real precedent in England.

As the *Review* especially makes clear, Defoe was a man of the world, deeply immersed in early eighteenth-century politics and economics. A public intellectual well before the phrase came into the English language, he was interested in everything, seemed to have strong opinions about everything, and wrote about almost everything in his world and his time. Brash, opinionated, “so grave, sententious, dogmatical” (in Swift’s sneering phrase), Defoe is perhaps the most indefatigable and energetic author of his day: a veritable writing machine. And yet for all that unceasing torrent of language he produced, Defoe was not chained to his desk. He lived an eventful and indeed danger-filled existence, beginning as a wholesale merchant and entrepreneur and then thanks to bad luck as a businessman/writer – bankrupt after risky speculation and briefly imprisoned for writing *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702) – he was forced to gain his living by writing and as a secret political agent for the powerful Tory politician, Robert Harley, for whom he agitated to promote the proposed union of England and Scotland. From the wreckage of personal and financial disaster, Defoe constructed by virtue of sheer will and persistence a career that made him one of the best-known writers of his time.



The details of Defoe's life and its relationships with his multifarious writings are a recurring emphasis in some of the essays in this volume, which dramatize his intellectual range and literary versatility in the face of many hardships, trials, and setbacks. A majority of the essays deal, naturally, with the long narratives he wrote from 1719 to 1724, which are the works that will appeal most to contemporary readers and which are the most immediately available and pertinent of his works today. But it is worth noting that these "novels" represent only a small fraction of what Defoe wrote. Moreover, the novels are in fact enriched by being placed in the context of Defoe's non-fictional writings, those political, social, economic, and moral works that occupied him for many years. Defoe's novels, that is to say, encompass not only the lives of their individual actors but also their intersection and involvement with issues within the larger socio-historical world in which they acquire their identities; they are novels of ideas as well as of character. Defoe never stops thinking, questioning, and agitating, and some of the essays in this volume will ponder his provocatively original notions about key topics in his narratives such as money,<sup>4</sup> commerce, gender, psychology, politics, religion, empire, and crime that link his novels to the rest of his intellectual life.

Without minimizing the rough and tumble side of Defoe's career in the fractious literary and political marketplace of the early eighteenth century, or his self-aggrandizing and self-promoting tendencies, his often reckless, self-destructive, mendacious, and always radically contentious personality, the essays in this volume take Defoe with full seriousness as an engaged and committed writer and even as an important thinker, finding in his works a veritable encyclopedia of the issues central to his time. The journalist and polemicist without peer, the criminologist, the urbanist, the proto-feminist, the early theorist of globalism and imperialism, the poet and satirist, moralist and social critic, the promoter of Britain's mercantile power and prophet of its future imperial glories, to say nothing of the creator of memorable fictions – Defoe fits all these descriptions and works in all these fields. Much more so than Pope, Swift, and other elite writers of the time, Defoe is a representative of the spirit of his age: forward-looking and open to new ideas, enlightened and rationally pragmatic in the moderate eighteenth-century English sense, religious but not fanatical or exclusivistic in his views. As a religious Dissenter from the merchant classes, lacking the university education and the ruling-class connections or patronage other writers of the time enjoyed, Defoe was an outsider who was thereby able, thanks to sheer intelligence and drive, to offer in his works an overview of the age, biased, to be sure, but comprehensive in its ambition and inventive and revealing in its articulations. In a word, he is perhaps the first truly *modern* English writer.