This essay reconsiders the attribution of the short critical pamphlet *A Vindication of the Press*, and draws on new evidence, both external and internal, to suggest the author was not Daniel Defoe but Giles Jacob. This reattribution is based on Jacob's inclusion of the work in a list of his own writings that he published in a later work, *The Poetical Register*, and is supported within the pamphlet itself by substantive parallels between it and *The Poetical Register*. The essay shows how attention to the work of booksellers can help to explain textual cruxes, and how in turn this can redirect the understanding of well-established literary-critical narratives. The argument offers more than simply an adjustment of the bibliographical record and an exegesis of literary conundrums. Consideration of the work's previous placement in literary history leads to an adjustment of Jacob's critical reputation, and to a fresh consideration and complication of Alexander Pope's relationship with the so-called 'Dunces'. In addition, in confirming the de-attribution of *A Vindication of the Press*, the essay explores what should happen to texts after their removal from the canon of a major author, particularly those that have attracted critical attention by virtue of their false attribution. The literary culture in which *A Vindication of the Press* was published is discussed, both in relation to its anonymous publication, which generates larger hermeneutical questions about how to take account of anonymity in the early eighteenth century, and to its political positioning, which leads to a brief consideration of the politicisation of literary biography.

[Defoe, Daniel], *A Vindication of the Press*

*This Day is publish'd,*

*A Vindication of the Press: Or, An Essay on the Usefulness of Writing, on Criticism, and the Qualification of Authors: Wherein is shewn, that 'tis for the Advantage of all Governments to encourage Writing, otherwise a Nation would never be secure from the Attempts of its most secret Enemies; barbarous and prejudic'd Criticisms on Writings are detected, and Criticism is justly stated. With an Examination into what Genius's and Learning are necessary*

This article was written while the author was in receipt of a Doctoral Award from the AHRC. I would like to thank Abigail Williams, Sos Eltis, Felicity James, Margaret Bernard and the two anonymous readers for *Review of English Studies*, for their friendly guidance during its composition.
This advertisement is the first to announce the publication, on 18 April 1718, of the anonymously authored pamphlet now known as *A Vindication of the Press.* This thirty-six page octavo was published once under the imprint of ‘T[omas] Warner, at the Black-Boy in Pater-Noster-Row’, who was also the printer of the newspaper in which this advertisement appears. *A Vindication of the Press* was not to be published again until it was reproduced in facsimile, with an introduction by Otho Clinton Williams, for the Augustan Reprint Society, in 1951. By that time, the author of the work was accepted as being Daniel Defoe, and it seems for that reason alone to have been reprinted, being, as it is, an unsophisticated argument about the benefits of a free press, the function and functioning of criticism, and the qualifications that make for a good writer in early eighteenth-century London.

*A Vindication of the Press*, as will be seen, received a fair amount of scholarly attention during the twentieth century, but it has invariably been held in low critical esteem among scholars of Defoe’s works. The body of criticism surrounding this pamphlet has, in one way or another, been almost entirely concerned with the question of attribution. It is hoped that this essay, which will be concerned, first, with the de-attribution of *A Vindication of the Press*, and, then, with the consequences and repercussions of the reattribution of this in some ways remarkable pamphlet, will lead to a more thoroughgoing evaluation of its literary significance.

*A Vindication of the Press* had been included by William Peterfeld Trent and Henry Clinton Hutchins in their bibliographies of Defoe’s work, an attribution Maximillian E. Novak retained in his John Robert Moore (whom, besides

1 *The St. James’s Post*, No. 507, Friday, 18 April to Monday, 21 April 1718.

2 *Verbatim* advertisements appear in *The St. James’s Evening Post*, No. 454, Saturday, 19 April to Tuesday, 22 April 1718, and *The Original Weekly Journal*, Saturday, 19 April to Saturday, 26 April 1718, 1095–2000 (1099). The first of these is referred to in the MS notes of W.P. Trent on *A Vindication of the Press*, see Daniel Defoe, *A Vindication of the Press* (1718), Augustan Reprint Society 29, with an introduction by Otho Clinton Williams (Los Angeles, California, 1951), i. The present essay establishes the author of the *Vindication* as being Giles Jacob and the work will be referred to by the short-title *Vindication* parenthetically in the text. Laura Curtis questions the possibility of Trent’s having seen this advertisement and thus impugns the scholarship of Hutchins, Williams, Moore and Novak, whose works are discussed below. The reproduction above of the advertisement in full shows at least Trent must have seen it. See Curtis, ‘The Attribution of *A Vindication of the Press* to Daniel Defoe’, in John W. Yolton and Leslie Ellen Brown (eds), *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 18 (1988), 433–44 (433–34).


Hutchins, Williams thanks in his introduction (Vindication, p. vi) was soon to support in print the attribution to Defoe, and Williams may have felt some confidence in discussing the attribution, and in placing Defoe's name on the title page of this somewhat minor work. More recently, A Vindication of the Press has been a locus for discussion of the status of works in the Defoe canon, with P.N. Furbank and W.R. Owens arguing persuasively, if not conclusively, that it should be excluded, not least because of a lack of external evidence. In fact, despite Novak defending his attribution of the work (citing the 'authority' of Trent, Hutchins, Moore, Williams, and himself), and Laura Curtis—more cautiously—sugest that it was co-authored by Defoe and another, unspecified, hand, Furbank and Owens have anticipated the acceptance of their position by omitting the work from their bibliography.

I demonstrate here that this omission is correct. Because this essay establishes that A Vindication of the Press was written by a different author, it is no longer appropriate to revisit in detail the extensive critical debate surrounding the attribution and de-attribution of this pamphlet to Defoe. With limited success, this debate, as will be seen, has had recourse to almost all of the resources available to literary and textual criticism, except—until now—to book history. This, in itself, is perhaps worrying, with repercussions beyond this particular author or text. However, the debate has been, in part, about larger issues than those of attribution and the Defoe canon, touching on the essential, troubling question of intellectual 'authority' and its position and legitimacy within academia. For that, at least, it has been worthwhile. Now, rather than revisiting the debate as it concerns Defoe, the author of A Vindication of the Press can be identified from external evidence.


7 Novak, 'A Vindication of the Press and the Defoe Canon', Studies in English Literature 27/3 (Summer 1987), 399–411 (401).

8 Curtis, 'Attribution', 435.


10 For the fullest consideration of this, see Furbank and Owens, The Canonisation of Daniel Defoe (New Haven, Connecticut, and London, 1988).

11 See, for example, Novak, 'Defoe Canon', 401, and Furbank and Owens, 'The Defoe Canon Again', PBSA 82 (1988), 95–98 (96).

12 For a discussion of the characteristics of 'external' and 'internal' evidence, particularly in Defoe studies, see Furbank and Owens, Canonisation, 32–34; also Furbank and Owens, 'Defoe Canon Again', 96. A recent reminder of the difficulty and significance of establishing Defoe's corpus of work is found in Paul Baines and Pat Rogers, Edmund Curll, Bookseller (Oxford, 2007), 113–4.
[Jacob, Giles?], *A Vindication of the Press*

The full title of the pamphlet, as it appears on the title page, is:

Vindication of the PRESS: | OR, AN | ESSAY | ON THE | Usefulness of Writing, | ON | CRITICISM. | AND THE | Qualification of AUTHORS.

The typography of the title page makes some play with the title of Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism* (1711)\(^{13}\)—to which we will return—and suggests that the ‘short title’ by which the work is now known is in some ways misleading. *A Vindication of the Press* might better be known now—as it may have been in 1718—by its subtitle, and it now seems clear that the author himself referred to it in this way. In *An Historical Account of the Lives and Writings of Our Most Considerable English Poets* (E[dmund] Curll, 1720), a compilation that was later reissued by the ‘Castle Conger’ as the second volume of *The Poetical Register* (1723),\(^{14}\) Giles Jacob, the editor, includes an entry about himself with a partial list of his own works: ‘This Gentleman has writ in Prose (besides these two Volumes of *The Lives of the Poets*) a small Volume of Essays relating to the Conduct of Life; an Essay on the Usefulness of writing, Criticism, and the Qualification of Authors; on Justice and Equity; and a great many Law-Books...’\(^{15}\) This *Essay on the Usefulness of Writing*, fairly evidently, is the work known to modern scholars by its alternative title, *A Vindication of the Press*, and can now be confidently attributed to Jacob on the evidence of his own claim to authorship in a work that is indisputably his own, with a signed dedication.

*A Vindication of the Press* is a rare item, known to be present in only two public libraries.\(^ {16}\) This, and the use by Jacob of its subtitle in his incomplete catalogue of his works, has helped to obscure the fact of his authorship. But it is also a puzzling work in other respects, and in their first questioning of the attribution to Defoe of *A Vindication of the Press*, Owens and Furbank ask what the ‘point’ of this pamphlet is.\(^ {17}\) This essay will address this question, and will consider whether the work has any significance after Defoe.

As Novak points out, ever since George Chalmers provided a list of more than a hundred ‘Books which are supposed to be De Foe’s’,\(^ {18}\) there has been an

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13 Only John Oldmixon, *An Essay on Criticism; as It Regards Design, Thought, and Expression, in Prose and Verse*. By the Author of *The Critical History of England* (1728) similarly plays with the title and typography in the first half of the eighteenth century.


15 Jacob, *An Historical Account of the Lives and Writings of Our Most Considerable English Poets* (1720), 300, hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *Historical Account*.

16 New York Public Library, and the Lilly Library, University of Indiana.

17 Owens and Furbank, ‘Not by Defoe?’, 356.

understandable interest in what else among the cumulus of anonymous early eighteenth-century publication might be by the author of Robinson Crusoe (1719). This interest has given a privileged, but impermanent, critical status to works such as A Vindication of the Press. The process of de-attribution, and hence of removal from the mainstream canon, generates troubling questions about the ascendancy of the author over the text in contemporary criticism, and raises the spectre of critical redundancy. It is no small irony that this essay, which raises questions about the invalidation and marginalisation of scholarship following the identification of an non-canonical author for a canonical work, does not seek to situate A Vindication of the Press in the larger contemporary debate concerning the merits and demerits of a free press and literary criticism with which its author clearly intended to engage. It will be interesting to see if this Defoe de-attribution ever now receives such critical attention.

By 1718, Jacob was the author of at least twenty-one titles, some published in more than one edition. The publishers of his non-literary, mainly legal, works were many. The names of Bernard Lintot, Thomas Ward, Daniel Browne, William Mears, Jonas Browne, Matthew Wotton, Thomas Woodward, Robert Gosling, John Pemberton, William Taylor, Jacob Tonson and Edmund Curll appear in various forms and partnerships on the title pages of his works. However, Tonson and Lintot, the pre-eminent literary booksellers of the early eighteenth century, and the copyright holders of Pope’s work, did not—as Jacob might have hoped—publish his literary work. Rather, this work was placed with the less prestigious Curll and his ‘trade publishers’, for whom Jacob wrote prolifically from about 1717.

Of Jacob’s published work up until 1718, Love in a Wood; or, the Country ’Squire. A Farce (1714) was published as by ‘G.J.’ by Ferdinand Burleigh; The Rape of the Smock (1717), a scatological parody of Pope’s The Rape of the Lock (1712; 1714), was published without an author by Rebecca Burleigh;20 A Journey to Bath and Bristol: an Heroic-comic-historic- and Geographical Poem (1717) was also published without an author by James Roberts and Arabella Morice; lastly, Essays, Relating to the Conduct of Life (1717), and the pornographic Tractatus de Hermaphroditis; or, a Treatise of Hermaphrodites (1718) were both published without identification of an author by Curll himself.21 With one exception then—perhaps when he learned the expediency of his later practice—Jacob’s literary works, up to this point, entered the market without his name on the title-page or elsewhere in the book.

20 For Rebecca Burleigh’s relationship with Curll, see Baines and Rogers, Curll, chs 4 and 5.
21 For the controversial circumstances surrounding the publication of this work, see Baines and Rogers, Curll, 112–20; for the discovery of Jacob’s identity as the author of the Essays, see Gary L. McDowell, ‘Giles Jacob’s Conduct of Life’, Notes and Queries 242 (June 1997), 190–93.
In their recent study *Edmund Curll, Bookseller*, Paul Baines and Pat Rogers reveal they have found no ‘record of a writer who got rich through his labours for Curll’. For this, or another, unknown, reason, in 1718—and *only* in that year—Jacob placed a significant amount of his work with Thomas Warner, another, if occasional, Curll associate. This body of work includes *The Court Beauties: a Poem*, inscribed to Henrietta, Duchess of Bolton, wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and lady of the bedchamber to the Princess of Wales, and *A Miscellany of Poems*, a collection of satires, pastorals, odes, lyrics and translations, dedicated to the youthful, popular and recently promoted, Philip James, Duke of Wharton. Both of these works were published as being ‘by Mr. G. Jacob’ on their title pages. It seems likely too that in this year Warner also published a work not previously attributed to Jacob by modern scholarship: the anonymous *A Vindication of the Press*.

At the end of the year *The Poetical Register* (‘1719’ [1718]) was published. That such a range of work is associated with Jacob in the course of twelve months betrays his professional status: Jacob was a hack. In the light of this, the publication together in one year, with a new publisher, of *The Court Beauties*, *A Miscellany of Poems* and *A Vindication of the Press*—the first two under his signature—represents both an attempt by Jacob to distance this work from Curll, and a concerted effort by him to achieve a literary reputation and bid for political patronage.

*A Vindication of the Press* makes no secret of this last ‘point’. The title page (from which the advertisements cited above are taken *verbatim*) insists that ‘tis for the Advantage of all Governments to encourage Writing’. The author alleges that by ‘his present Majesty’s [George I’s] Encouragement, Literature is in a flourishing Condition, and Poetry seems to improve more at this Time than it has done in any preceding Reign, except that of King Charles II. when there was a Rochester, a Sidley [sic], a Buckingham, &c’ (*Vindication*, p. 22). He also declares that poetry ‘is esteem’d by Men of Penetration, no small Wisdom in the present Administration, to bestow Preferments on the brightest and most enterprising Authors of the Age’ (*Vindication*, p. 9). This comparison is not without interest. Jacob seems to have been a Whig. As Abigail Williams has shown, other Whig authors of the period

22 Baines and Rogers, *Curll*, 8.

23 The *English Short Title Catalogue* lists only one joint venture between Warner and Curll, seemingly published in the year in question: [Simon, Viscount Harcourt?], *The Female Phaeton. By Mr. Prior* ([1718]). However, see Baines and Rogers, *Curll*, 99.


25 See Lawrence B. Smith, ‘Wharton, Philip James, duke of Wharton and Jacobite duke of Northumberland (1698–1731)’, *ODNB*, LVIII, 367–71.


27 See, for example, ‘Essay XLVIII. On Kings’, in [Jacob], *Essays Relating to the Conduct of Life: on Various Subjects... The Second Edition, with Large Additions* (1726), 110–1, hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *Essays*.  

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article-abstract/59/241/487/1534308/After-Defoe-Before-the-Dunciad-Giles-Jacob by guest on 16 September 2017
represent patronage as a feature of post-1688 rather than post-Restoration literary culture. For example, Leonard Welsted locates the rise of English letters in the reign of William III. R.O. Bucholz's study of the post-Restoration Stuart and Williamite Court confirms that this Whig analysis of Court patronage as substantially true. Pope's Catholicism and Tory politics, of course, cut him off from the Court and, as he writes, 'Deny'd [him] all Posts of Profit or of Trust', and the *Dunciad in Four Books* (1743) is a sustained attack on the disposition of patronage under the Hanoverians, epitomised in the Poet Laureate, Colley Cibber, 'the Man “who brings | The Smithfield Muses to the ear of Kings”: In this context, the comparison by the author of *A Vindication of the Press* between the Hanoverian and Stuart literary cultures can be seen as an attempt to obviate uncomplicated partisan criticism and claim for the Hanoverian Court a cultural continuity based on literary rather than party lines. In 1718, by openly publishing his poetry under his own name and also anonymously authoring a book of criticism comparing ‘this Time’ to Restoration literary culture, Jacob is both seeking ‘Encouragement’ and trying to bring about the conditions for it.

[Anon.], *A Vindication of the Press*

This essay is partly concerned with re-attributing *A Vindication of the Press*. It will now briefly consider how, although this reattribution might seem to militate against the author’s intended anonymity in the year of publication, it might in some ways recreate his intended anonymous reception for this work.

Marcy L. North has recently written extensively about ‘anonymity’s paratextual functionality’ in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She perhaps provides some models for the functioning and interpretation of anonymity in the early eighteenth. Central to her thesis is the idea that ‘[w]hen early anonymity is viewed as a missing piece of bibliographic information, it loses much of the materiality that gives it definition and meaning’. The question is whether this is the case here. Does the attribution of an author to a text with no author impede understanding of its reception as it facilitates understanding of its genesis? Anonymity can be a stage through which a work passes in the course of its reception.

29 See R.O. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford, California, 1993), 12–35.
31 See Valerie Rumbold (ed.), *Pope, The Dunciad in Four Books* (Harlow, 1999), II and 95–97 (96), hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as the *Dunciad*.
It may be—that we do not know it certainly to be the case here for Jacob—that an author’s name is not ‘missing’ so much as hiding with the intention of being found. If this is the case, literary critics need to take account of different critical moments.

North establishes a critical category of ‘ambitious anonymity’, in which differing degrees of knowledge and ignorance of, and curiosity about, the identity of an author foster the conditions for a work’s reception, and serve to further the author’s ambition; it is, in short, a ‘promotional conceit’. North’s paradigms of ‘ambitious anonymity’ are Edmund Spenser and George Puttenham, who, it is now suggested, operated in a widely different social and cultural milieu to the author of *A Vindication of the Press*—and that milieu may partly be what the author is aping in opting to publish anonymously—but it would seem equally true to say of Jacob that his ‘ambitious anonymity, too, is more ambition than anonymity’. Indeed, as has been noted, in the *Historical Account* Jacob takes off the mask of anonymity, with, as will be shown, unfortunate consequences, both for himself, and—as is likely after this reattribution—for his work.

*Jacob, Giles*, *A Vindication of the Press*

The pivotal question in the debate surrounding the attribution of *A Vindication of the Press* is whether the author’s persona is his own or adopted. As I argue here, Owens and Furbank were correct in deducing that *A Vindication of the Press* was not written by Defoe—or indeed anyone—in an indirect mode but was, in fact, simply ‘the work of a young aspiring author looking for a subject’. In *Defoe De-attributions: A Critique of J.R. Moore’s Checklist* (1994), Furbank and Owens summarise *A Vindication of the Press* as containing, ‘[c]onventional reflections on the benefits of a free press, the harmfulness of much contemporary criticism and the qualities of good writing, by (as he describes himself) a “young author”, a devout Churchman and despiser of conventicles, and an enthusiastic devotee of contemporary theatre’.

This essay will argue that to identify the author of this work it is unnecessary to discuss the substance of these ‘conventional reflections’, which Novak and Curtis try to attribute to Defoe, if instead the attributes of the writer himself are examined. Internally, the pamphlet offers numerous clues. First, the ‘young Author’ (*Vindication*, p. 7) is concerned at the lot of ‘young Gentlemen... entering [sic] the Lists of Writing’ (*Vindication*, p. 22). From the pattern of publication set out above, Jacob could be characterised as such a writer. Curtis asserts the ‘two

34 North, *Anonymous Renaissance*, 104.
36 Owens and Furbank, ‘Not by Defoe?’, 356.
most striking’ supports for her hypothesis (of there being two hands present in *A Vindication of the Press*) are ‘a reference in the pamphlet to Defoe’s *True-Born Englishman* and several conflicting statements about the age of the writer’.39 The reference to Defoe’s work will be discussed below, but the statements in the pamphlet about the age of the author are not, in fact, inconsistent. Jacob was ‘young’ in the sense that he was, as has been shown, at the start of his literary career, but he was also the ‘older author’ Curtis detects interpolating into the text:

Neither can I acquiesce in the common Notion, that the Person who begins most early in Poetry always arrives to the greatest Perfection; for, in my Opinion, it is a Matter of no great difficulty, for a Person of any Age, before his Vivacity is too much abated, and Fire exhausted, to commence a Poet; the great Mr. Dryden not beginning to Write ’till he was above the Age of 30

(*Vindication*, p. 27)40

Jacob states in *The Poetical Register* that ‘G. J.’ (himself, about whom he writes in the third person) was born ‘Anno 1686’ (*Poetical Register*, p. 318). In 1718 he would therefore have been about thirty-two years old. The extract Curtis quotes shows then not the presence of a second, older, hand, but Jacob attempting to find a model for himself as, at ‘above the Age of 30’ and at the publication of his first owned poetic works, he ‘commence[s] a Poet’.

Second, the ‘devout Churchman and despiser of conventicles’ of *A Vindication of the Press* is harder to locate, and may be self-fashioning—the biblical references in the text are certainly few and unremarkable (see *Vindication*, pp. 5–6). That said, in his *Essays* Jacob exhorts the (female) reader to ‘be constant to your Church, and go thither to adore the Almighty’ (*Essays*, pp. 38–39) (the simple didactic prose style of the *Essays* makes a stylistic comparison with the more sophisticated *A Vindication of the Press*—such as has been made with other Defoe texts41—difficult, and so has not been attempted here). Although Jacob elsewhere states proudly that he is related to the ‘Thornburgh’s in Wilts, one whereof was Bishop of Worcester, in the Reign of King Charles I’ (*Poetical Register*, p. 318),42 he seems to have an ambivalent attitude towards the clergy and to have been intolerant of religious hypocrisy (*Vindication*, pp. 31–33).

The references to the ‘Bangorian controversy’ in *A Vindication of the Press* engage in the debate raging in 1717–21, not least in the polemical pamphlets issuing from Warner’s press.43 The attack on Quakers (*Vindication*, pp. 4–5), which has caused

42 See Brett Usher, ‘Thornborough, John (1551?–1641)’, *ODNB*, LIV, 589–92.
43 The *ESTC* lists at least 13 ‘Bangorian’ titles published by Warner (some in more than one edn) up to the end of 1718.
such difficulty to those who attribute the work to Defoe,\textsuperscript{44} may well be awkward defensiveness by the author over the position of Benjamin Hoadly, Bishop of Bangor, who was represented by his opponents, such as Pope,\textsuperscript{45} as being unorthodox and a champion of dissenters.\textsuperscript{46}

Third, Jacob was ‘an enthusiastic devotee of contemporary theatre’, and by the end of the year Curll (once more Jacob’s bookseller) published \textit{The Poetical Register}, in which Jacob writes not only of the ‘English Dramatick Poets’, but also of his being ‘acquainted with the Stage’ (\textit{Poetical Register}, p. 318).\textsuperscript{47} The author of \textit{A Vindication of the Press} protests at the conditions of writing for the contemporary stage: ‘Such are the Hardships a Dramatick-Poet has to struggle with, that either Obscenity, Party, or Scandal must be his Theme, and after he has performed his utmost in either of these Ways, without a powerful Interest, he’ll have more Difficulty in the bringing his Play upon the Theatre than in the Writing, and sometimes never be able to accomplish it’ (\textit{Vindication}, p. 19).

Similarly, in \textit{The Poetical Register}, Jacob writes of his own dramatic work: \textit{Love in a Wood} is ‘Never acted’, while ‘a play ready for the Stage, entitul’d, \textit{The Soldier’s Last Stake}: a Comedy’ (\textit{Poetical Register}, p. 318) was evidently never published or performed, and is now lost. The author of \textit{A Vindication of the Press} complains that under such circumstances: ‘Shakespear and Ben Johnson, were they now living, would be wholly at a Loss in the Composure of a Play suitable to the Taste of the Town’ (\textit{Vindication}, p. 19). This knowledge would seem to be born of experience.

These are not the only connections between this short pamphlet and the compendious reference work. Details about the theatre appearing in \textit{A Vindication of the Press} resurface later in the year in \textit{The Poetical Register}. For example, both works note the initial theatrical failure (almost two decades earlier) of William Congreve’s \textit{The Way of the World} (1700), which, Jacob writes, echoing his earlier complaint, ‘shews [sic] there is still an uncertainty in hitting the Humour of the Town’ (\textit{Poetical Register}, p. 45; see also \textit{Vindication}, pp. 19–20).


\textsuperscript{45} See, for example, Pope’s oblique references to Hoadly in \textit{The Dunciad} in \textit{The Poems of Alexander Pope}, ed. Rumbold, 5 vols (2007–) \textit{The Dunciad (1728) and The Dunciad Variorum (1729)}, III, 68, 74, 77n and 96n, hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as \textit{Poems}.


\textsuperscript{47} The quality of the author’s reading of drama (as opposed to that of other genres touched on in the pamphlet) can be seen in his paraphrase of a line concerning an author’s reputation found in George Farquhar’s \textit{Love and a Bottle} (1698) (see \textit{Vindication}, 25, and Shirley Strum Kenny (ed.), \textit{The Works of George Farquhar}, 2 vols (Oxford, 1988), I, 68). The play had last been performed in June 1712, and even then it was noted as ‘Not Acted these Twelve Years’ (see E.L. Avery \textit{et al.} (eds), \textit{The London Stage, 1660–1800}, 5 vols (Carbondale, Illinois, 1960–1968), II, 280).
Jacob and ‘Whig literary culture’

_A Vindication of the Press_ may, as Furbank and Owens claim, contain ‘conventional reflections,’ but these are not without value _per se_. The text is, for example, a remarkable witness to the function of party politics in early eighteenth-century literary culture, and as such resonates with contemporary literary scholarship, which attempts to ‘confront the post-Romantic separation between art and aesthetics and political ideology’.48 The author writes:

The Question first ask’d is, whether an Author is a Whig or a Tory; if he be a Whig, or that Party which is in Power, his Praise is resounded, he’s presently cried up for an excellent Writer; if not, he’s mark’d as a Scoundrel, a perpetual Gloom hangs over his Head; if he was Master of the sublime Thoughts of _Addison_, the easy flowing numbers of _Pope_, the fine Humour of _Garth_, the beautiful Language of _Rowe_, the Perfection of _Prior_, the Dialogue of _Congreve_, and the Pastoral of _Phillips_, he must nevertheless submit to a mean Character, if not expect the Reputation of an Illitterate [sic] (_Vindication_, pp. 18–19)

The author of _A Vindication of the Press_ here shows his familiarity with the work (or at least the reputation) of poets of both political parties (Pope and Prior being oppositional Tories, the others Whigs), but he expresses pragmatically his understanding that critical evaluation in early Hanoverian London was virtually coterminous with political identity, suggesting, in effect, that to be a Whig poet in 1718 was to be secure of critical praise. As it transpired, this suggestion could not bear the weight of Jacob’s own literary ambition, but it is a significant critical observation. Given the small part Jacob’s _Poetical Register_ plays in eighteenth-century literary history and canon formation—it is, for example, ‘a lender of the last resort’ for Samuel Johnson in his writing of the _Lives of the Poets_ (1779–81)49—this observation is an important complicating consideration, especially as Jacob seems to have been a Whig.

As Roger Lonsdale shows, the Tory Johnson could not be as politically or critically selective as he may have wished in the choice of poets reprinted in the series _The English Poets_ from which the prefaces that constitute the _Lives of the Poets_ are taken.50 That said, while the corpus of work issued in this series was contingent upon trade and copyright considerations, the prefaces are partisan and enact a reconfiguration of the canon and a critique of some of the most reputable poets.

For example, Johnson was particularly antagonistic towards John Milton’s politics and aggrieved at the ‘honey-suckle lives’ of him (see _Lives_, I, p. 368n). Jacob’s was one such ‘life’, although it is not original, being taken almost entirely from J[ohn] T[oland]’s prefatory letter to _A Complete Collection of the Historical, Political and_
Miscellaneous Works of John Milton (‘Amsterdam’ [London], 1698).\(^{51}\) Nevertheless, Jacob’s entry on Milton betrays, as Johnson’s, a political choice. William Winstanley’s The Lives of the Most Famous English Poets, Or the Honour of Parnassus (1687)—the principal source for Jacob in the composition of the Historical Account, which had been published in the year before the ‘Glorious Revolution’—contains a brief but excoriating entry on Milton.\(^{52}\) The simple fact that Jacob turns in this instance to another source reflects the political and critical change in attitudes towards Milton, which had been effected by, among other things, the publication by the Whig bookseller Tonson of the folio fourth edition of Paradise Lost (1688) and by the critical work of the Whigs Joseph Addison and John Dennis.\(^{53}\)

Party political considerations pervade publishing in this period. A striking example of such politicisation can be seen in the attitudes of Jacob and Johnson towards the—in literary terms—marginal figure of John Hampden.\(^{54}\) In his ‘life’ of Edmund Waller, Johnson controversially refers in passing to the Whig hero Hampden as ‘the zealot of rebellion’ (Lives, II, p. 27).\(^{55}\) Jacob’s entry for Hampden’s great-grandson reads: ‘[t]his Gentleman, who was descended from a Family of Patriots for Liberty, has oblig’d the World with one Poetical Performance, call’d, The Rising-Sun. A Poem upon Queen Mary’s Birth-Day’ (Historical Account, p. 297). The ‘Patriots’ here are Hampden, his son Richard,\(^{56}\) and Richard’s son John, the poet’s father.\(^{57}\) ‘The Rising-Sun’ was published in 1704 in the third volume of Poems on Affairs of State, where it is attributed to ‘John Hamden, Esq.’\(^{58}\). Jacob clearly knows nothing about the poet apart from his relationship to these Whig heroes, but considers this in itself of enough interest to his readers to justify the entry. Details such as this, and the so-called ‘conventional reflections’ of the author of A Vindication of the Press, accumulate across texts and across time to support the argument for there being a politicised, and particularly ‘Whig’, literary culture in the early eighteenth century.


\(^{55}\) See also Lives, II, 266 for discussion of reception of Johnson’s characterisation; Hampden’s representation by George Smalridge, Henry Aldrich and Francis Atterbury is glanced at by Pope, Poems, 248–9n.


\(^{58}\) Poems on Affairs of State, from 1640 to this Present Year 1704. Written by the Greatest Wits of the Age Vol. III (1704), 457–68 (457).
Defoe and *A Vindication of the Press*

As to Defoe being a co-author of *A Vindication of the Press*, if there is little reason to suppose he would adopt the persona of this particular author,\(^59\) there can be less to suppose he would assist him ‘by editing and rewriting for him’\(^60\) a pamphlet expressing views to which he was opposed. This may have been the conventional view of his political method elsewhere in 1718,\(^61\) but there is no reason to suppose it was the case here.

That said, this does not account for the other significant obstacle to attributing *A Vindication of the Press* to (or perhaps only to) Defoe: the reference to his work in it. Following the claim that ‘a tolerable [sic] Foundation of Learning’ is sufficient for writing prose, whereas a ‘universal Learning’ is necessary for composing poetry, the author of *A Vindication of the Press* allows exceptions to this ‘in some kinds of Writings’ (*Vindication*, p. 29). Defoe, although unnamed, furnishes the only example:

> The preference of Genius to Learning, is sufficiently Demonstrated in the Writings of the Author of the *True born English Man*; (a Poem that has Sold beyond the best Performance of any Ancient or Modern Poet of the greatest Excellency, and perhaps beyond any Poetry ever Printed in the English Language)[.] This Author is Characteriz’d as a Person of little Learning, but of prodigious Natural Parts; and the immortal *Shakespear* had but a small share of Literature.

(*Vindication*, pp. 29–30)

By 1718, *The True-Born Englishman* (‘1700’ [1701]) had run to many editions. Most recently, it had been republished in 1716; separately, in an edition ‘Corrected and enlarg’d by the Author’, published by Roberts,\(^62\) one of Jacob’s booksellers; and in the second volume of the anthology *Poems on Affairs of State*,\(^63\) with which Jacob may have been familiar (see *Historical Account*, p. 324). Most significantly for the purposes of this essay, it is the first poem in the first volume of *A Collection of the Best English Poetry* (1717)\(^64\)—a reissue with a collective title page of old editions by Warner, the bookseller who in the following year published *A Vindication of the Press*.

It is unknown why the author of *A Vindication of the Press* writes as he does of Defoe. It could simply be commercial canniness. Yet, it could be supposed that

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61 For a radically revised account of Defoe’s involvement with Mist’s *Weekly Journal* in 1718, see Furbank and Owens, *Political Biography*, 159–71.
62 [Defoe], *The True-Born Englishman: a Satyr. Corrected and Enlarg’d by the Author* (1716).
63 *Poems on Affairs of State, from the Reign of K. James I. to the Year 1703. Written by the Greatest Wits of the Age Vol. II* (1716), 7–46.
just as Dryden provides him with one model of poetic career, so Defoe might supply him with another. That said, although many of the titles attributed to Defoe on Warner’s list are disputed—Furbank and Owens de-attribute all but two of the nineteen titles they consider, and these two (nos 346 and 398) are, they argue, only possibly by Defoe65—the publisher of *A Vindication of the Press* did know Defoe at this time—in fact, Warner was near enough to him to betray him to the government later in the year.66 Through Warner therefore Defoe and Jacob may have been known to, or indeed have known, one another. Whatever the case, the relationship, such as it was, was about seriously to deteriorate.

The entry for Defoe in the *Historical Account* is, by comparison with the other entries in the book, brief and dismissive. It reads:

This Author was formerly a Hosier, but since he has been one of the most enterprizing Pamphleteers this Age has produc’d; some Parts of his Life his Inclinations have led him to Poetry, which has thrown into the World two Pieces very much admir’d by some Persons, viz.

I. *The True-Born Englishman*. This is a biting Satire, and sold many Impressions; but his Descriptions are generally very low.

II. *jure Divino*, a Poem of considerable Bulk in Folio. (Historical Account, p. 293)

One explanation for the inconsistency in attitude towards Defoe between *A Vindication of the Press* and the *Historical Account* could be that in Mist’s *Weekly Journal* for 5 April 1718 (published as *A Vindication of the Press* may have been going to press), Defoe attacks what he labels ‘Curllicism’, that is, ‘printed Bestiality’.67 In this, through the anonymous publication at the end of May that year of the *Tractatus de Hermaphroditis*, Jacob was implicated, and Curll, his publisher, deeply so.68 The anonymous author of *A Vindication of the Press* is right to conclude: ‘a Person writing a great deal on various Subjects, should be as cautious in owning all his Performances, as in revealing the Secrets of his most intimate Friend’ (*Vindication*, p. 36).

The actual application of this comparison is impenetrable, but obviously Defoe is not the only author with good reason to hide his authorship under certain circumstances. In the case of the *Tractatus de Hermaphroditis*, Jacob uses anonymity to disassociate himself from low, pornographic material; in the case of *A Vindication of the Press*, the author is presumably aiming at the high literary cachet associated with coteries and anonymous publication, where the identity of an author is a secret known only to ‘his most intimate Friend’.


67 Quoted in Baines and Rogers, *Curll*, 114.

Pope and [Jacob, Giles], *A Vindication of the Press*

There would seem then to be some external evidence for thinking that Jacob is the author of *A Vindication of the Press*, and none for thinking that he was a co-author. It will now be suggested that there is a witness to such an attribution. It was noted earlier that the title page of the pamphlet perhaps alludes to Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, and this—or a (malicious) interest in the author—may have attracted Pope's attention to it. It is not known when Pope became aware of *A Vindication of the Press*. However, it would seem that Pope was aware of the work by the time he came to write the *Dunciad Variorum* (1729), and that he understood Jacob to be the author—an attribution that could be inferred from reading Jacob's own entry in the *Historical Account* (*Historical Account*, pp. 299–300), discussed below. Pope, in the *Dunciads*, as James McLaverty persuasively demonstrates in the only serious and substantial consideration of any aspect of Jacob's work, was both ‘stimulated’ and ‘provoked’ by Jacob's biographical dictionary.\(^{69}\) This can now be contrasted with his reading of *A Vindication of the Press*, while, in turn, Jacob will be seen to stimulate and provoke fresh readings of Pope's work, and to offer some original purchase on Pope's legendary feuding.

Among his revisions to the *Dunciad* in 1729, Pope changes the couplet ‘*W—n, the scourge of Scripture, mark with awe!* | And mighty *J—b Blunderbus [sic] of Law!*’\(^{70}\) to read:

> Jacob, the Scourge of Grammar, mark with awe,
> Nor less revere him, Blunderbuss of Law.

*(Poems, pp. 279–80)*

Valerie Rumbold notes of the first epithet:

> There is no good reason why he [Jacob] of all the writers Pope despises should be ‘the scourge of Grammar’; his *A Law Grammar* was not to appear until 1744. In 1728 the equivalent line had attacked Thomas Woolston (1670–1733), advocate of an allegorical rather than a literal interpretation of the Bible, as a ‘scourge of Scripture’; the figure seems to have outlived its application *(Dunciad, p. 236n; Poems, p. 279n).*\(^{71}\)

In fact, the figure seems rather to have found a new application, which shows that Pope had read *A Vindication of the Press* and identified Jacob as its author. In *A Vindication of the Press*, in his eagerness to engage in the ‘Bangorian controversy’, Jacob sets out his defence of Hoadly, which must be quoted in its entirety:

> In the religious Controversy of late depending, Criticisms have been carried to that height, that some Persons have pretended to fix false Grammer [sic] on one of the most celebrated

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\(^{69}\) McLaverty, ‘Pope’, 22.


\(^{71}\) See also Rogers, *Grub Street*, 288.
Writers perhaps at this Time in Europe, but how justly, I leave to the Determination of those who have perused the Bishop's incomparable Answer; but admitting his Lordship had permitted an irregularity of Grammer [sic] to pass unobserv'd, he is not the first of his Sacred Character that has done it, and small Errors of this kind are easily look'd over, where the Nominative Case is at a distance from the Verb, or a Performance is done in haste, the Case of the Bishop against so many powerful Adversaries. Besides it is apparent and well known, that a certain * Person in the World, who has a very great Reputation in Writing, never regards the strict Rules of Grammer [sic] in any of his Performances.  

*Mr. Lesley, now with the Chevalier.

(Vindication, p. 23).

‘Some Persons’ would seem here to include in their number (if indeed they are numerous) the anonymous author of an anti-Hoadly review of the ‘Bangorian controversy’, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Tenets of the Bishop of Bangor* (1717). The author of this pamphlet discusses Hoadly’s ‘false Grammar’ and scruples over the missing ‘Nominative Case’. The author of *A Vindication of the Press*, in defending ‘a Performance ... done in haste’, offers a pragmatic, limited, and somewhat unsophisticated intervention into a controversy that was, by 1718, of prodigious exactness and ill will. This intervention, and the incidental gibe at the Jacobite and Non-Juror Charles Leslie (perhaps being carelessly fingered as a possible author), displays the author’s Whig credentials and testifies to him being ‘the Scourge of Grammar’ the ‘Roman Catholic Nonjuror’ Pope ‘mark[s] with awe’.

The association between *A Vindication of the Press* and Pope’s figure of ‘the Scourge of Grammar’ has probably been obscured by the biographical footnote on Jacob Pope supplies: ‘... He [Jacob] has writ in prose the Lives of the Poets, Essays, and a great many Law-Books, *The Accomplish'd Conveyancer, Modern Justice*, etc. GILES JACOB of himself, *Lives of Poets*, Vol. 1 (*Poems*, pp. 279–80). In fact, as Rumbold notes (*Dunciad*, p. 236n), Pope’s footnote is a redaction of material from both *The Poetical Register* and the *Historical Account*, the latter of which, from which the above is adapted, reads:

*This Gentleman has writ in Prose (besides these two Volumes of The Lives of the Poets) a small Volume of Essays relating to the Conduct of Life; an Essay on the Usefulness of writing, Criticism, and the Qualification of Authors; on Justice and Equity; and a great many Law-Books, as the Accomplish'd Conveyancer, three Volumes; Modern Justice, Lex Constitutionis, &c. ...* 

(Historical Account, p. 300)

In the process of redaction, Pope’s ‘Essays’ replaces the fuller, though abridged, titles of Jacob’s work, the presence of which would have alerted editors to Jacob’s possible authorship of *A Vindication of the Press*.

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This is perhaps of more than brief bibliographical interest. Pope’s attitude towards Jacob has been reconstructed retrospectively, working from the opinions embedded in the *Dunciad V ariorum* and the critical controversy the work generated and maintained in the 1730s. For example, the printed attack on Pope by Jacob to which Rumbold refers (*Dunciad*, p. 236n), takes place *after* the publication of the *Dunciad V ariorum* and the couplet and footnote on Jacob quoted above. It cannot have provoked Pope’s treatment of Jacob in the *Dunciad V ariorum*.75 Recovering the context in which to read the *Dunciads* is difficult. The genesis of the work is complex, and Pope’s texts exist in an intertextual relationship with each other and with those texts he contests and annexes. Beyond the penumbra of such intertextualities, and frequently lost to the reader, lie the causes of, the courses of, and the justness of Pope’s feuds. This essay will now consider one of them.

Jacob’s earlier printed references to Pope are admiring, although textually not uncomplicated, think, for example, of the textual context Pope supplies in 1729 in the ‘Testimonies of Authors’—the entry for Pope in the *Historical Account* is particularly contentious. Jacob insists in his attack, the second letter to Dennis, evidently published in the first number of *The Mirror* (18 December 1729), that the entry on Pope in the *Historical Account* was ‘of his [Pope’s] own drawing up and approving’.76 This follows the first letter (24 April 1729), published by Dennis in his *Remarks upon Several Passages in the Preliminaries to the Dunciad . . . and upon Several Passages in Pope’s Preface to his Translation of Homer’s Iliad* (1729) (*Works*, II, pp. 353–76 (pp. 372–73)).77 In this Jacob turns Pope’s exposure of Dennis as the author of his own entries in *The Poetical Register* back on him (for the entries on Dennis, see *Poetical Register*, pp. 67–70, and *Historical Account*, pp. 257–61; see also *Poems*, pp. 189–90). Pope mockingly notes this in ‘Errour VII’ of the ‘Errata’ to the second edition of the *Dunciad V ariorum* (*Twickenham Edition*, V, p. 199), where, while removing mention of his own correspondence with Jacob, he reworks the text of Jacob’s first letter to Dennis to his disadvantage, for example, suppressing Jacob’s description of his own ‘Judgment’ as ‘poor’ (cf. *Works*, II, 373).

It is significant that in each of these letters Jacob takes up only Pope’s figure of the ‘Blunderbuss of Law’. Jacob’s failure to mention the seemingly more obscure figure of the ‘Scourge of Grammar’ (while punning repeatedly on ‘Blunders’, ‘Blunderers’, ‘Blundering’ and ‘Blunderbuss’ (*Works*, II, p. 373))

75 For a discussion of Pope’s motivations in attacking Jacob in the *Dunciad V ariorum*, see McLaverty, ‘Pope’, *passim*.

76 For the entry on, and interleaved engraving of, Pope, see *Historical Account*, 145–52. *The Mirror* was a short-lived monthly review, critical of Pope and approving of Dennis, usually misleadingly dated to 1733 when it was bound and reissued. See Walter Graham, *English Literary Periodicals* (New York, New York, 1930), 201–02; Jacob, *The Mirror: or, Letters Satirical, Panegyrical, Serious and Humorous, on the Present Times . . . To Which is Added A Legal Conviction of Mr. Alexander Pope* (1733), 5, hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *Mirror*.

is noteworthy. It is probably a deliberate attempt not to remind Dennis of—or perhaps even not to alert him to—the criticism of him by Jacob contained in the pamphlet to which it seemingly refers (Works, II, p. 374). These omissions have again served to obscure Jacob’s possible authorship of A Vindication of the Press.

In the paragraph preceding that which occasions the epithet, Jacob writes: ‘(setting aside Party) what the World may hope from a generous Encouragement of polite Writing, I take to be very conspicuous from Mr. Pope’s Translation of Homer, notwithstanding the malicious and violent Criticisms [sic] of a certain Gentleman in its Disfavour’ (Vindication, pp. 22–23). This is not the only reference Jacob makes in A Vindication of the Press to Pope (see Vindication, pp. 15–16, p. 18) or to Dennis (Vindication, p. 3), with whom he had a fractious—though slight and unequal—relationship that probably began after the publication of A Vindication of the Press, but certainly before the publication of The Poetical Register (see Works, II, p. xli).

In 1721, after the publication of The Poetical Register and the Historical Account in which Pope correctly detects some collaboration between the editor and Dennis, Dennis writes to Matthew Prior about an encounter with Jacob, ‘a writer of half-penny doggrel [sic]’ and calls him ‘that vile scribbler . . . a very insignificant wretch.’78 As well as the early criticisms in A Vindication of the Press, Jacob addresses a brief poem to Dennis in 1721 (possibly following his encounter with him). In it Jacob rebukes Dennis that, ‘A Critick’s Sense shou’d not in Smoke expire’79 If the smoke is, as seems likely, figurative, it seems to have lasted: in The Causes of the Decay and Defects of Dramatick Poetry, and of the Degeneracy of the Publick Taste (1725[?]), Dennis includes the ‘Facetious Giles Jacob’ in his derisive catalogue of the ‘Divine Bards’ of his age (Works, II, p. 290).

This then is the context in which Jacob’s first published letter to Dennis should be read. In it Jacob writes, ‘In Mr. Alexander Pope’s new Edition of his Dunciad, with Notes and Additions, I find he has done me the Honour to make me your great Friend’ (Works, II, p. 372). This—perhaps knowingly—over-reads Pope’s treatment of the pair, which is more a charge of a conspiracy against literary reputation (Poems, p. 279). It does not betray the sense of any great friendship existing in 1729 between Jacob and Dennis.

So, the author of A Vindication of the Press is admiring of Pope and critical of Dennis, attitudes consistent with those of Jacob at this time, conflicting as some of the evidence seems. In fact, in a perceptive comparison of Dryden and Pope

79 ‘On Mr Dennis’s Smoaking’, in Human Happiness. A Poem. Adapted to the Present Times. With Several Other Miscellaneous Poems (1721), 39.
(anticipating Pope’s ‘Parallel of the Characters of Mr. Dryden and Mr. Pope’ (1729) \(Poems\), pp. 350–7)\(^{80}\), the author of \textit{A Vindication of the Press} writes that Dryden was ‘Persecuted by Envy’ and, (ironically) anticipating the motivation and effects of the \textit{Dunciad Variorum}, writes that Pope, who (he says) has ‘few Superiors in this Age’, should find some solace in the paradox that ‘it is a Reputation to be Scandaliz’d’ \textit{(Vindication, p. 15)}.

McLaverty writes that ‘[t]he origins of the \textit{Dunciad} are shrouded in a mystery worthy of the cloud-compelling queen… we can probably never hope to recover a wholly satisfactory account of them.’\(^{81}\) What can be recovered is Jacob’s recognition, over a decade before he was engrossed in the text, of the conditions that compelled Pope to create first the \textit{Dunciad} and then the \textit{Dunciad Variorum}.

This early critical and personal history has been obscured by the later positions of each with regard to the others—positions into which the publication of the \textit{Dunciad Variorum} seems to have forced them—and to the misattribution to Defoe of the authorship of \textit{A Vindication of the Press}. This early history of Jacob’s promotion of Pope and his works (‘I did every Thing in my Power, by Mr. Pope, who was generally thought to be a rising Genius, to honour and oblige him’ \textit{(Works, II, p. 373)}) is the background to his complaint to Dennis:

But as this Gentleman [Pope] has now gone Counter to all the Rules of Honour, Gratitude, Morality, Justice, Sense and good Manners, and exerted his noble \textit{Billingsgate} Talents in the most shameless and unprecedented Abuse of all his Contemporaries, without making any Distinction between Foe, or Friend, except sometimes to favour the Latter with the greater Load of his Scandal; since this is the glorious Game he hath been playing for above two Years past, surely it is but just in me who am libell’d in his vile Rhapsody, to retract my good Opinion, and to draw my Pen against such an Adversary, and convince him of his great Error, Folly and Madness.

\textit{(Mirrour, p. 6).}

Jacob, it seems, had thought of himself, until the publication of the \textit{Dunciad Variorum} in which his \textit{Poetical Register} (as ‘Lives of the Poets’) figures so prominently, as a ‘Friend’ of Pope: ‘I am one of them, among many others, who never writ, or said the least Thing against him,’till he first became the most notorious Agressor [sic] by writing against us; and then it was, and not before, that we first began to oppose the envious Gentleman, in the unjust Attacks he made on our Reputations’ \textit{(Mirrour, p. 6)}. It may be then that Jacob was justly aggrieved. This is not to suggest that Jacob’s critical judgment was uncommon or (in the case of his own work) unerring. In fact, at the conclusion of his first letter to Dennis, Jacob appears ridiculous in his indignation: ‘[a]s for my self, notwithstanding the Abuse of me by this Poet, I doubt not but it will be confess’d that my Writings in their Way are more useful and beneficial to the World, and of Consequence likely

\(^{80}\) For a discussion of Pope’s identification with Dryden contextualising this comparison, see Rumbold, ‘Plotting Parallel Lives: Pope’s “A Parallel of the Characters of Mr. Dryden and Mr. Pope”’, in \textit{John Dryden (1631–1700): His Politics, His Plays, and His Poets}, eds Claude Rawson and Aaron Santesso (Newark, New Jersey, and London, 2004), 235–62.

\(^{81}\) McLaverty, ‘Popec’, 22.
to last longer, than the idle nonsensical Poems and maim’d Translations of Mr. Alexander Pope: And if so, I shall stand justified in the Opinion of all Men of Sense (Mirror, p. 9). Jacob has not, contrary to this expectation, stood thus ‘justified’. His writings did not ‘last longer’—as has been shown, it is not even certain which are his—and he has been, like many others, condemned by the verdict of literary history delivered by Pope in the Dunciads, a verdict McLaverty forcefully argues is in opposition to Jacob’s own literary history found in The Poetical Register. McLaverty writes of how ‘perplexed’ Jacob was by Pope’s attack, this reconsideration of the background to it, and Jacob’s treatment of Pope, explains why, after the publication of the Dunciad Vario rum, Jacob thought Pope’s poetry ‘nonsensical’. Jacob saw as personal and unprovoked what was, in fact, an intellectual strike at his literary historical scholarship.

A Vindication of the Press: the ‘Pope’ of a ‘Dunce’

The reattribution of A Vindication of the Press suggested in this essay detaches a marginal, disputed and unvalued critical text from the unstable Defoe canon and resitutes it in the less familiar and critically disregarded body of work by an author hitherto characterised as a hack and a ‘Dunce’. Slight though the consequences of this reattribution might seem, the anonymous and, it has been argued, ambitious author of A Vindication of the Press provides some insight into the functioning of the early Hanoverian literary world. Pope dominated—as he continues to dominate—that world, and his later caricature of Jacob, partly founded, it has been suggested, on the recognition of him as the author of this pamphlet, has effectively dictated literary history’s idea of him.

Jacob’s distant, and previously uncharted, relationship with Pope seems from this surviving textual record to have been conducted indirectly—and exclusively—through print. The texts that have been discussed in this essay are not therefore merely the traces of a relationship, they can be said to constitute the relationship itself. If the reattribution of A Vindication of the Press is correct, the conclusion must be that it not only sheds new and significant light on the author of The Poetical Register, but that it complicates and unsettles received critical opinion about Pope and what have collectively and critically become known as the ‘Dunces’, supplying as it does a ‘Dunce’s’ ‘Pope’.

This ‘Pope’ is different to the grotesques of the pamphlet attacks, although ‘the easy flowing Numbers of Pope’, should be contextualised with the ‘Testimonies’ of 1729. In A Vindication of the Press, perhaps unexpectedly, a Whig would-be poet portrays the Tory poet Pope sympathetically. Seemingly without malice or resentment, the author places Pope correctly in his literary culture—recognisable now

82 See McLaverty, ‘Pope’, passim.
from the *Dunciads*—a culture that he presents as being riven by political partiality and riddled with ‘Envy’. In this literary culture, Jacob’s sowing the wind of literary fame would seem to have reaped him the whirlwind of literary infamy, and this previously unrecognised admiration of Pope and other now canonical poets—which is untainted because unmediated through *The Poetical Register*—has been insufficient to shore up his critical reputation, such as it was, in the wake of the publication of the *Dunciad Variorum*.

This essay, it is suggested, retells a forgotten episode in literary history, and recovers the frustrated ambition of a forgotten writer. Pope alone seems to have noticed Jacob’s claim in the *Historical Account* to authorship of *A Vindication of the Press*, and he mocks him with it. Ultimately, it may not be found equal to this mockery, but *A Vindication of the Press* may prove to be Jacob’s quiet vindication, distinguishing him from the other offspring of Dullness, of whom there are ‘a hundred sons, and each a dunce’ (*Poems*, p. 92). If nothing else, re-appropriating the critical position Pope has for almost three centuries occupied, we can finally with some objectivity, if not justice, say of this writer:

*Out of thine own Mouth will I judge thee, wicked Scribler!*

(*Dunciad*, p. 30)

*Brasenose College, Oxford*