



# Defoe and the Whig Novel: A Reading of the Major Fiction

*By Leon Guilhamet*

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**Defoe and the Whig Novel: A Reading of the Major Fiction** By Leon Guilhamet

his study places Defoe's major fiction squarely in the emerging Whig culture of the early eighteenth century. It offers an alternative to the view that Defoe is essentially a writer of criminal or adventure fiction and to the Marxist judgment that he extols individualism or derives his greatest inspiration from popular print culture. This study reads the novels as reflections of mainstream Whig social and political concerns, the same concerns Defoe revealed in his verse and expository writings before and after his major period of fiction writing, 1719-24.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Guilhamet revisits the writings of Daniel Defoe to evaluate them in terms of cultural and political Whig themes. While Defoe did not slavishly follow one strand or another of Whiggism, he did subscribe to its social and cultural foundations. Guilhamet demonstrates that, through his characters, Defoe presents the stories of those whom society has failed. Religious themes are also presented in the light of the spiritual burden of poverty. These informed Defoe's ideas of repentance and forgiveness. Guilhamet looks at Defoe's major novels as signaling the birth of the Whig novel. (*Book News, Inc.*)

Recommended. (*CHOICE*)

This is a well-informed and lucid study which should have the effect of encouraging its readers to explore for themselves the various lines of affiliation...that run through the canon of Defoe's writings. (*Clio: A Journal of Literature, History, and the Philosophy of History*)

Guilhamet offers appreciative readings of each of Defoe's major novels, contextualized against the backdrop of Defoe's own moral and political writings as well as contemporary discourses of Whig ideology. The background material he provides will be useful for those teaching Defoe's novels in undergraduate courses, in which students require a basic introduction to the period in which Defoe was writing. (*Digital Defoe*)

#### About the Author

**Leon Guilhamet** is professor of English at the City College of New York.

### Users Review

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