

MOLL FLANDERS

DANIEL DEFOE



EDITED BY ALBERT J. RIVERO

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

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Daniel Defoe
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AN AUTHORITATIVE TEXT
CONTEXTS
CRITICISM

Edited by

ALBERT J. RIVERO
MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

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Preface

Published in London on January 27, 1722, by W. Chetwood and T. Edlin (misspelled “Edling” on the title page), *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* was famous enough to warrant a “second edition corrected” in July, “printed for, and sold by” T. Edlin, W. Chetwood, W. Mears, J. Brotherton, C. King, and J. Stagg (misspelled “Stags”), as well as another “second edition, corrected,” this one “printed for John Brotherton” alone. Near the end of the year two issues of the “third edition, corrected” appeared, one “printed for John Brotherton,” the other “printed for, and sold by” the same six publishers who had collaborated on the second edition. Except for different title pages and minor textual variations, the second and third editions offer essentially the same text, an abridgement of the first edition which, while sometimes correcting errors, introduces others, the publishers’ main goal apparently being the reduction of the length of the book to save paper and decrease other printing costs. It is thus more proper to speak, as previous editors have argued, of a first edition and four issues of the second, though, until such modern editors of the novel as Herbert Davis and J. Paul Hunter began to cast doubts on Defoe’s involvement in its publication, the “third” edition was thought to be the most authoritative. Therefore, most readers of *Moll Flanders*, from the eighteenth century through the first six decades of the twentieth, read the novel either in its reduced “third” edition or in abridgements or chapbook versions not by Defoe. In agreement with current critical consensus, the text of the new Norton Critical Edition of *Moll Flanders* is based on that of the first edition. Although I have silently corrected some obvious typographical errors, I have tried to reproduce the original text as closely as possible, including its original punctuation, altered only (and very rarely) to avoid confusion, and adopting readings from the second edition only in those cases where they improve the sense. I have also changed all instances of “whether” to “whither” and substituted “then” for “than” and “than” for “then” when the immediate context calls for such correction. In a more radical move, explained more fully below (pp. 269–72), I have amended the text to eliminate the muddle caused by the contradictory passages appearing near the end of the narrative—a textual problem first identified by J. Paul

Hunter in his edition of the novel in 1970—by implementing the solution persuasively advanced by Rodney M. Baine in 1972 (see bibliography) that, since the second passage was very likely meant to supplant the first, the first passage should be deleted and replaced with the second.

The varied textual history of *Moll Flanders* in the first two decades or so after its publication suggests that, beginning with its original publishers, the work was marketed to appeal to as many segments of the public as possible, from those whose attention spans would hold through over four hundred pages of text (in the first edition) to those whose reading skills needed the aid of woodcuts (in chapbooks). Though not approaching the huge popularity of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Defoe's first work of prose fiction and one of the best-sellers of all time, *Moll Flanders* succeeded in a marketplace of readers, of varying degrees of literacy, eager to consume all kinds of printed matter, especially "histories" purporting to tell the true yet surprising adventures of men and women who, though usually of humble if not obscure origins, find themselves in extraordinary circumstances that test both their mettle and (at times) their readers' credulity. The variety of Moll's life, as advertised on the title page, suggests several potential audiences, ranging from readers of spiritual biographies and autobiographies (tempted by the word "penitent"), to readers of amatory fiction (seduced by the word "wife" and the hint of incest), to readers of criminal biographies (enticed by those inevitably conjoined words "whore" and "thief"). But the "low" cast of Moll's story, coupled with its dissemination in emphatically downmarket formats like chapbooks and ballads, ensured that the reading of it would be identified primarily with the lower classes. Thus, an anonymous couplet appearing on March 1, 1729, in *The Flying Post; or Weekly Medley*—a periodical long hostile to Defoe and, therefore, more likely interested in political point-scoring than cultural criticism—scoffs that "Down in the kitchen, honest Dick and Doll / Are studying Colonel Jack and Flanders Moll." In a similar vein, in the first plate of *Industry and Idleness* (1747), William Hogarth shows the idle apprentice asleep at his loom under the ballad of *Moll Flanders*—the initial fatal step, it turns out, on his way to the gallows. It would not be until after the publication of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) that upper-class readers would be willing to come out of their reading closets to declare their predilection for "low" reading material. It would be at that point, in a story frequently told by literary historians, that the elevation and legitimation of the English novel would begin, as Richardson and Henry Fielding, occluding their debts to those who came before them—women novelists like Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Hay-

wood, not to mention Daniel Defoe—staked their rival claims to have founded a new species of writing.

Defoe's major contribution to the making of the English novel has long been recognized, though at times his fictional works have been all too easily dismissed as little more than artless reportage. As Ian Watt argued in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), the hallmark of Defoe's fiction—and of the novel in general—is “formal realism,” a term one may roughly define as the author's concern with depicting physical objects or other aspects of his characters' world in their fullness. In Watt's view, the fictions of Defoe and Richardson exhibit formal realism while Fielding's show “realism of assessment,” a more abstract concept referring to ways of structuring narrative that takes into account techniques beyond the representational. For Watt, moreover, the “rise” of the novel is tied to the emergence of the middle class and to the increase in literacy in eighteenth-century Britain. As many readers of Watt's book have noted, his argument is at times circular and based on little if any historical evidence, not to mention that his use of the term “realism” is not very precise. Moreover, his focus on three male writers and virtual exclusion of women authors make his story of the rise of the novel historically untenable. Yet, as an explanation of what happens in Defoe's fiction, Watt's thesis is difficult to best. Whether transcribing Crusoe's account of his building of his fortifications or describing the mechanics of Moll's stealing of a watch and her subsequent ramble through London streets his readers would have been familiar with, Defoe focuses our attention on details that, in the aggregate, give us an illusion of reality, of life lived in the world as we know it. We occasionally catch glimpses of this kind of realism in previous English fiction, but it is Defoe who first manages to sustain this illusion for whole narratives. Defoe's remarkable recreations of the worlds of a stranded mariner in *Robinson Crusoe*, of a man trying to hold on to his sense of self as the city of London collapses around him in *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), and of women struggling to survive by the sheer force of their wills and wits in *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* (1724) appear so artless precisely because they are so artful.

Fortunately for Defoe, his artistic achievement has been recognized and celebrated, even if, at times, reluctantly. The last half of the twentieth century, for example, saw the publication of many important books and articles examining his fictional works in such wide-ranging contexts as criminal biography, economics, the Puritan tradition of spiritual biography and autobiography, and British social and political history. *Moll Flanders*, in particular, became the object of intense critical scrutiny in the 1960s and 1970s, when the extent of Defoe's control over the novel's irony was fiercely debated. Is the

novel, critics asked, consciously ironic or is its irony a function of something else—perhaps, given its rough grammar and syntax, of the author's hasty and careless writing? Framed in those terms, the controversy generated more heat than light, as Defoe gained or lost ground depending on the critic's assessment of his presumed command over the work's irony. With the advent of feminist criticism, the degree to which *Moll Flanders* is a feminist or antifeminist novel became the topic of critical discussion. Is Defoe, in impersonating a woman, advancing the cause of women's liberation from the restraints imposed by a patriarchal society? Or should we question the motives of a male author who, like Defoe and Richardson, engages in literary transvestism? Should we suspect that, rather than liberating his heroines, Defoe is actually coopting them? After all, Moll repents of her acts of transgression and is punished for them, while Roxana, as her narrative breaks off, is racked with guilt over her crimes and terrified of the horrible retribution yet to come. As with the contention over its irony, the controversy over its feminism, while of necessity inconclusive, proved that *Moll Flanders* remained culturally relevant even as critical trends changed, a situation still true today, as the novel continues to generate passionate conversations among critics of varied methodologies and political orientations. Whether interpreted as ironic, feminist or antifeminist, based on criminal biographies, or the product of its author's dissenting background, Defoe's enigmatic text continues to fascinate, challenge, and, as most readers can testify, entertain us.

While I am indebted to previous editors of *Moll Flanders*, I have based my annotations on my own research into primary and secondary sources. I have derived my definitions primarily from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, though I have also consulted the first edition of Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) and Eric Partridge's *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*. From the seemingly inexhaustible archive of contextual materials, I have selected a few items—excerpts from sequels, criminal biographies, and the legal codes of Maryland and Virginia—that will help twenty-first-century students situate the novel in its historical milieu. Of the many excellent critical assessments of *Moll Flanders*, I have reprinted a representative sampling, reflecting various critical methodologies, of the best recent work done on the novel; I have also chosen these critical pieces because of their accessibility to undergraduates.

This edition of *Moll Flanders* would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of many friends and colleagues. Carol Bemis invited me to undertake the project and, whenever called upon, offered her usual expert guidance. Having published a groundbreaking edition of the novel thirty years ago and at work on another, J. Paul Hunter generously shared his editorial discoveries

and knowledge of a text few know as well as he does. Paula Backscheider not only agreed to take time out from her busy schedule to rewrite a section of her biography of Defoe for this edition, but also, from the very beginning, provided excellent advice on textual and contextual matters. Ian Bell, Max Novak, and John Richetti gave good counsel and (as Moll would phrase it) kept money in my pocket by making publishers' fees considerably dwindle or completely disappear. Scott Simpkins and Hans Turley were equally bountiful in granting the permissions they controlled. Ellen Pollak alerted me to a revised version of her essay and was instrumental in securing permission to reprint it. Jonathan Arac, Alison Conway, Claudia L. Johnson, George Justice, Linda Zionkowski, and Lisa Zunshine intervened at crucial points. I am grateful to many people at the Marquette University Library, especially the indefatigable Christopher Daniel, who, by ordering microfilms and photocopies of primary sources, greatly expedited my research; similar thanks are due to Carla Zecher and her assistants at the Newberry Library. I am also indebted to the staffs of the British Library and the University of Chicago Library for their assistance. Finally, as always, I owe my most heartfelt gratitude to my wife, Lisa, and my son, Albert Harley, for their love, support, and bemused tolerance of my obsession with all things Moll.

Contents

Preface	vii
The Text of <i>Moll Flanders</i>	
Facsimile title page (1722)	i
The Preface	3
The History and Misfortunes Of the Famous <i>Moll Flanders</i> , &c.	9
A TEXTUAL PROBLEM IN <i>MOLL FLANDERS</i>	269
Contexts	273
Daniel Defoe • [Benefits of Transportation]	275
Anonymous • [Moll's Final Years in Ireland]	277
Anonymous • The Life of James Mac-Faul, Husband to Moll Flanders, &c.	281
Francis Kirkman • [The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled]	290
Alexander Smith • [The Golden Farmer, a Murderer and Highway-man]	297
• [Whitney, a Highway-man]	302
• [Moll Raby, a House-breaker]	310
• [Anne Holland, a Pick-pocket]	313
• [Capt. James Hind, Murderer and Highway-man]	317
• [Moll Cutpurse, a Pick-Pocket and Highwaywoman]	320
[Virginia Laws on Servants]	328
[Maryland Laws on Servants, Slaves, and Runaways]	331
Criticism	335
Juliet McMaster • The Equation of Love and Money in <i>Moll Flanders</i>	337
Everett Zimmerman • <i>Moll Flanders</i> : Parodies of Respectability	349
Maximillian E. Novak • "Unweary'd Traveller" and "Indifferent Monitor": Openness and Complexity in <i>Moll Flanders</i>	369
Henry Knight Miller • Some Reflections on Defoe's <i>Moll Flanders</i> and the Romance Tradition	391

Ian A. Bell • <i>Moll Flanders</i> , Crime and Comfort	403
Carol Kay • <i>Moll Flanders</i> : Political Woman	437
Paula R. Backscheider • The Crime Wave and <i>Moll Flanders</i>	460
John Rietz • Criminal Ms-Representation: <i>Moll Flanders</i> and Female Criminal Biography	472
Ann Louise Kibbie • [The Birth of Capital in Defoe's <i>Moll Flanders</i>]	484
John Richetti • [Freedom and Necessity, Improvisation and Fate in <i>Moll Flanders</i>]	491
Ellen Pollak • <i>Moll Flanders</i> , Incest, and the Structure of Exchange	497
Daniel Defoe: A Chronology	519
Selected Bibliography	523

THE
FORTUNES
AND
MISFORTUNES

Of the FAMOUS
Moll Flanders, &c.

Who was Born in NEWGATE, and during a Life of continu'd Variety for Threescore Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve Year a *Whore*, five times a *Wife* (whereof once to her own Brother) Twelve Year a *Thief*, Eight Year a Transported *Felon* in *Virginia*, at last grew *Rich*, liv'd *Honest*, and died a *Penitent*.

Written from her own MEMORANDUMS.

LONDON: Printed for, and Sold by W. CHETWOOD, at *Cato's-Head*, in *Russel-street*, *Covent-Garden*; and T. EDLING, at the *Prince's-Arms*, over-against *Exerter-Change* in the *Strand*. MDDCXXI.

THE PREFACE.

THE World is so taken up of late with Novels and Romances, that it will be hard for a private History¹ to be taken for Genuine, where the Names and other Circumstances of the Person are concealed, and on this Account we must be content to leave the Reader to pass his own Opinion upon the ensuing Sheets, and take it just as he pleases.

THE Author is here suppos'd to be writing her own History, and in the very beginning of her Account, she gives the Reasons why she thinks fit to conceal her true Name, after which there is no Occasion to say any more about that.

It is true, that the original of this Story is put into new Words, and the Stile of the famous Lady we here speak of is a little alter'd, particularly she is made to tell her own Tale in modester Words than she told it at first; the Copy which came first to Hand, having been written in Language more like one still in *Newgate*,² than one grown Penitent and Humble, as she afterwards pretends³ to be.

THE Pen employ'd in finishing her Story, and making it what you now see it to be, has had no little difficulty to put it into a Dress fit to be seen, and to make it speak Language fit to be read: When a Woman debauch'd from her Youth, nay, even being the Off-spring of Debauchery and Vice, comes to give an Account of all her vicious Practises, and even to descend to the particular Occasions and Circumstances, by which she first became wicked; and of all the progression of Crime which she run through in threescore Year, an

1. Echoing a commonplace of the period, Defoe argues for the historical authenticity of his work; in the preface to *Roxana* (1724), for example, he claims that, since "*the Foundation of This is laid in Truth of Fact . . . the Work is not a Story, but a History.*" He thus distinguishes his "private History" from such fictional narratives as Eliza Haywood's lubricious *Love in Excess* (1719), also published by William Chetwood (the publisher of *Moll Flanders*) and identified as "a novel" on its title page, and from such scandalous romances or "secret histories" as Delariviere Manley's politically charged *The New Atalantis* (1709).
2. London's most famous (and infamous) prison for serious offenders. Defoe was imprisoned there in 1703 (May–November) on the charge of publishing a "seditious pamphlet," *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702).
3. Asserts or alleges, not necessarily with intent to deceive.

Author must be hard put to it to wrap it up so clean, as not to give room, especially for vitious Readers to turn it to his Disadvantage.

ALL possible Care however has been taken to give no leud⁴ Ideas, no immodest Turns in the new dressing up this Story, no not to the worst parts of her Expressions; to this Purpose some of the vicious part of her Life, which cou'd not be modestly told, is quite left out, and several other Parts are very much shortn'd; what is left 'tis hop'd will not offend the chastest Reader, or the modestest Hearer: and as the best use is made even of the worst Story, the Moral 'tis hop'd will keep the Reader serious, even where the Story might incline him to be otherwise: To give the History of a wicked Life repented of, necessarily requires that the wick'd Part should be made as wicked, as the real History of it will bear; to illustrate and give a Beauty to the Penitent part, which is certainly the best and brightest, if related with equal Spirit and Life.

It is suggested there cannot be the same Life, the same Brightness and Beauty, in relating the penitent Part, as is in the criminal Part: If there is any Truth in that Suggestion, I must be allow'd to say, 'tis because there is not the same taste and relish in the Reading, and indeed it is too true that the difference lyes not in the real worth of the Subject; so much as in the Gust⁵ and Palate of the Reader.

BUT as this Work is chiefly recommended to those who know how to Read it, and how to make the good Uses of it, which the Story all along recommends to them; so it is to be hop'd that such Readers will be much more pleas'd with the Moral, than the Fable, with the Application,⁶ than with the Relation; and with the End of the Writer, than with the Life of the Person written of.

THERE is in this Story abundance of delightful Incidents, and all of them usefully apply'd. There is an agreeable turn Artfully given them in the relating, that naturally Instructs the Reader, either one way, or other. The first part of her leud Life with the young Gentleman at *Colchester*, has so many happy Turns given it to expose the Crime, and warn all whose Circumstances are adapted to it, of the ruinous End of such things, and the foolish Thoughtless and abhorr'd Conduct of both the Parties, that it abundantly atones for all the lively Discription she gives of her Folly and Wickedness.

THE Repentance of her Lover at the *Bath*, and how brought by the just alarm of his fit of Sickness to abandon her; the just Caution given there against even the lawful Intimacies of the dearest Friends, and how unable they are to preserve the most solemn Resolutions

4. Lewd.

5. Individual taste, liking, or inclination.

6. Practical lesson derived from a general statement. As appears below, Defoe is borrowing the word from homiletics, to signify the "religious Uses" to which a preacher "applies" a "doctrine" after "opening" (i.e., interpreting) a biblical text.

of Vertue without divine Assistance; these are Parts, which to a just Discernment will appear to have more real Beauty in them, than all the amorous Chain of Story, which introduces it.

IN a Word, as the whole Relation is carefully garbl'd⁷ of all the Levity, and Looseness that was in it: So it is all applied, and with the utmost care to vertuous and religious Uses. None can without being guilty of manifest Injustice, cast any Reproach upon it, or upon our Design in publishing it.

THE Advocates for the Stage, have in all Ages made this the great Argument to persuade People that their Plays are useful, and that they ought to be allow'd in the most civiliz'd, and in the most religious Government; Namely, That they are applied to vertuous Purposes, and that by the most lively Representations, they fail not to recommend Vertue and generous Principles, and to discourage and expose all sorts of Vice and Corruption of Manners; and were it true that they did so, and that they constantly adhered to that Rule, as the Test of their acting on the *Theatre*, much might be said in their Favour.

THROUGHOUT the infinite variety of this Book, this Fundamental⁸ is most strictly adhered to; there is not a wicked Action in any Part of it, but is first or last rendered Unhappy and Unfortunate: There is not a superlative Villain brought upon the Stage, but either he is brought to an unhappy End, or brought to be a Penitent: There is not an ill thing mention'd, but it is condemn'd, even in the Relation, nor a vertuous just Thing, but it carries its Praise along with it: What can more exactly answer the Rule laid down, to recommend, even those Representations of things which have so many other just Objections lying against them? Namely, of Example, of bad Company, obscene Language, and the like.

UPON this Foundation this Book is recommended to the Reader, as a Work from every part of which something may be learned, and some just and religious Inference is drawn, by which the Reader will have something of Instruction, if he pleases to make use of it.

ALL the Exploits of this Lady of Fame, in her Depredations upon Mankind stand as so many warnings to honest People to beware of them, intimating to them by what Methods innocent People are drawn in, plunder'd and robb'd, and by Consequence how to avoid them. Her robbing a little innocent Child, dress'd fine by the vanity of the Mother, to go to the Dancing-School, is a good Memento to such People hereafter; as is likewise her picking the Gold-Watch from the young Ladies side in the *Park*.

HER getting a parcel from a hair-brained Wench at the Coaches

7. Cleansed.

8. I.e., fundamental principle.

in *St. John-street*; her Booty made at the Fire, and again at *Harwich*; all give us excellent Warnings in such Cases to be more present to ourselves in sudden Surprizes of every Sort.

HER application to a sober Life, and industrious Management at last in *Virginia*, with her Transported Spouse, is a Story fruitful of Instruction, to all the unfortunate Creatures who are oblig'd to seek their Re-establishment abroad; whether by the Misery of Transportation,⁹ or other Disaster; letting them know, that Diligence and Application have their due Encouragement, even in the remotest Parts of the World, and that no Case can be so low, so despicable, or so empty of Prospect, but that an unwearied Industry will go a great way to deliver us from it, will in time raise the meanest Creature to appear again in the World, and give him a new Cast¹ for his Life.

THESE are a few of the serious Inferences which we are led by the Hand to in this Book, and these are fully sufficient to Justifie any Man in recommending it to the World, and much more to Justifie the Publication of it.

THERE are two of the most beautiful Parts still behind,² which this Story gives some idea of, and lets us into the Parts of them, but they are either of them too long to be brought into the same Volume; and indeed are, *as I may call them* whole Volumes of themselves, (*viz.*) I. The Life of her Governess, as she calls her, who had run thro', it seems in a few Years all the eminent degrees of a Gentlewoman, a Whore, and a Bawd; a Midwife, and a Midwife-keeper, as *they are call'd*, a Pawn-broker, a Child-taker, a Receiver of Thieves, and of Thieves purchase, that is to say, of stolen Goods; and in a Word, her self a Thief, a Breeder up of Thieves, and the like, and yet at last a Penitent.

THE second is the Life of her Transported Husband, a Highway-man; who it seems liv'd a twelve Years Life of successful Villany upon the Road, and even at last came off so well, as to be a Voluntier Transport, not a Convict; and in whose Life there is an incredible Variety.

BUT as I have said, these are things too long to bring in here, so neither can I make a Promise of their coming out by themselves.³

WE cannot say indeed, that this History is carried on quite to the End of the Life of this famous *Moll Flanders*, as she calls her self,

9. Since the middle of the seventeenth century, to relieve prison overcrowding and sometimes in lieu of execution, convicted criminals were transported to the English colonies in America to work off their sentences under conditions often resembling slavery.

1. Roll of the dice, chance. *Appear again in the World*: Make a fresh start in society.

2. Yet to come.

3. Always alert to future marketing possibilities, Defoe here sets up expectations for sequels or spinoffs. Although several such publications appeared, none can be attributed to him. For example, *Fortune's Fickle Distribution* (1730) offers the reader, in three parts, a condensed version of the life and death of Moll Flanders; the life of Jane Hackabout, her governess; and the life of James Mac-Faul, her Lancashire husband.

for no Body can write their own Life to the full End of it, unless they can write it after they are dead; but her Husband's Life being written by a third Hand, gives a full Account of them both, how long they liv'd together in that Country, and how they came both to *England* again, after about eight Year, in which time they were grown very Rich, and where she liv'd it seems, to be very old; but was not so extraordinary a Penitent, as she was at first; it seems only that indeed she always spoke with abhorrence of her former Life, and of every Part of it.

IN her last Scene at *Maryland*, and *Virginia*, many pleasant things happen'd, which makes that part of her Life very agreeable, but they are not told with the same Elegancy as those accounted for by herself; so it is still to the more Advantage that we break off here.