



The Role of Women of Society in the Novel “Moll Flanders” By Daniel Defoe

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to illustrate the struggles faced by women in 18th-century England using the persona of Molly Flanders from Daniel Defoe's realistic novel "Moll Flanders." In this era, being a woman had so many important limitations. Many social and economic issues existed, such as the gap between the upper and working classes, a capitalistic and materialistic mindset, and a broken marriage structure. Many authors of this time period discussed these topics to raise people's awareness of the problems facing women. One of them is Daniel Defoe, a novelist and critic who bemoans the suffering of women as a result of these oppressive circumstances.

Key words: Class distinction, marriage, capitalistic and materialistic understanding, patriarchal, society.

Some people experienced difficult living conditions in late-17th-century England, while others did not. It is claimed that trade in England improved during the 17th century and played a significant influence in the nation's economy. This change led to an increase in the merchant status. The merchants gained more respect as the society watched these advances. Rich landowners also possessed significant political influence and authority. There were classes named upper and working class in those years, and they made up the majority of the population. The trade allowed upper class males to live more comfortably because they were not required to perform the job themselves, as claimed by Tim Lambert in "Daily Living in 17th Century England." At the same time, it was challenging for women to survive in 17th-century England. The society in England was dominated by patriarchal norms. Males were always better than women in everything. Women in this society had two options for ensuring their survival: they either get married or live and work alone. A woman was required to work regardless of her marital status. But, if a woman was married to a wealthy man, her primary priority was to survive. The only duty of the women in the upper classes was to command the servants. For instance, as Tim Lambert points out, lower class women in the 17th century worked as maids in the vast homes in order to survive, but married upper class women were also active. According to Lambert's "Life for Women in the 1600s," they had to manage and arrange the servants. Novelist and critic Daniel Defoe created a book titled Moll Flanders. It was first printed in 1722, according to Wikipedia ("Moll Flanders"). In order to raise awareness of the oppressive conditions faced by women in 17th-century England society, Defoe authored the book.

The main heroine of Daniel Defoe's book Moll Flanders spends her entire life trying to become wealthy and prestigious. While it is obvious that Moll fulfills her ambition to be a lady, her identity changes frequently during the book. Every person and encounter she has raises doubts about her lifestyle and choices, and people frequently argue that Defoe's title character depicts a lady who is

distinct from other women in the conventional norms of eighteenth-century England. Men ruled everything in this civilization because they were regarded as being more capable than women in daily life. Women only had any power in society through their male partners, and marriage was the only institution that allowed them to do so. I contend that Defoe uses Moll's character to celebrate a change in the traditional role women played in society by creating her to be a rebel against the society norm. I base this claim on a comparison between the illustration of Defoe's Moll and Michèle Crampe-description Casnabet's of women roles during the Eighteenth Century in *A History of Women in the West- Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*. By doing this, he develops a story about a nebulous character who struggles to determine whether she is adhering to social conventions or creating a role model for women to live by.

The female status of 17th and 18th century English society is accurately depicted and challenged in Daniel Defoe's novel *Moll Flanders* through issues including class distinction, marriage, and capitalistic and materialistic understanding.

The issue of class distinction for women is accurately depicted in *Moll Flanders*. First off, there were social class distinctions during this time period. The wealthy and affluent upper class lived very happy and comfortable lives. They were in charge of hiring themselves. The working class, however, did not have the same luck as the others. They attempted to endure the difficult circumstances of life. They occasionally lacked money, which prevented them from meeting their essential demands. The main character of *Moll Flanders*, Moll, was one of them. Daniel Defoe talked about it in the following passage from the book: In the provision they made for me, it was my good luck to be put to nurse, as they call it, to a woman who was indeed poor but had been in better circumstances, and who got a little livelihood by taking such as I was supposed to be, and keeping them with all necessities, until they were at a certain age, in which it might be assumed they might go to service or bread. Because of her mother's quilty, Moll was an orphan who was born in a prison. To live in better circumstances, she was transferred to a good but underpaid nurse. The author recalled that Moll began her existence in the lowest class and that people might be aware of her in these lines.

Women at that time could only be regarded if they were married to upper class men. because wealth and money exposed their true selves. A woman would be referred to as a "gentlewoman" in society if she was married to an upperclass man. Living with the nurse was Moll. She explained to Moll that since she was by herself, she had to work to make ends meet. Back then, serving others was a respectable occupation. Nonetheless, Moll preferred to be a wealthy lady rather than a nurse.

Being a working-class person was difficult, but being a woman in a society where men predominated was even more difficult. In addition, I noticed that the men had no qualms about setting off and going "fortune hunting," as they put it, although they truly had neither the wealth nor the merit to demand it. I also noticed that they carried it with them.

Men and women made up half of the population of the human species at that time, but according to Crampe-Casnabet, they were not treated equally. The fact that it wasn't reciprocal and that men were never described as the other half of the species made her claim that this was "in fact ambiguous. Women were a "half" without a "other half," according to a subtle Kramer 2 sophism: "The female half existed solely in connection to the masculine half, which was its foundation and defining reference." Strangely, Defoe creates Moll to be a character who fulfills the stereotypical position of a man in society. She sees men as the "other half" that women can govern as they want and believes that she is superior to everyone. Moll is portrayed as being able to influence her own position in society through deception, marriage, and the effort to maintain social standing, yet she is always seen succumbing to male tyranny. Because men were overly portrayed as being superior to women, Crampe-Casnabet believed that it was impossible to view men and women as two halves that equal one whole. Her use of the term "subtle sophism" could also be used to describe Defoe's creation of Moll as a copy of a woman already existing in society. In a subtle sense, it's possible that Defoe developed his persona to tell the tale of an actual woman. Moll, in the opinion of Maximillian Novak, "was imaginatively created from many female criminals of the time, particularly two known by the names of Moll." Defoe would have had several opportunity to speak with these two women since he was seeing his friend, the publisher Mist, in Newgate at the same time they were there.

Defoe talks about the second issue facing women in the book. It is a marriage-related issue. Moll had to work to survive because she was orphaned. She wanted to be a lady, nevertheless, at the same time. She believed that the term "gentlewoman" implied that a woman might be wealthy, attractive, and capable of living in luxury. Her desire could only be fulfilled through marriage.

She relocated to a woman's home after staying with the nurse, where she fell in love with the older son. And after he turned her down, the younger son proposed to her, which she accepted. Because she, along with the older boy, did not want to leave the house. According to David Blewett, Defoe uses Moll as the poor example of his marriage morals and refers to Moll's actions as "matrimonial whoredom"¹ Despite her feelings for the older son, she accepted to wed his younger sibling, saying, "I never was in bed with my husband but I wished myself in his brother's arms... In other words, I had daily affairs and incest with him out of my desires."² As a result, the concept of marriage was distorted.

Moll was also undeniably in love with money, and she gave up all for it. When she first fell in love with the older brother, they flirted and kissed and before they even started dating, he handed her some money.

It's conceivable that Defoe based his fictional characters on these two real-life crooks. I think he used the typical behaviors of women at this time to create Moll, a much different character from what women were expected to be like at the period.

Knowing a woman with many aliases was not uncommon. This reinforces Novak's contention that Moll draws on the experiences of real women to shape her person. This is also true with Moll, who is referred to in the text as Moll Flanders, Mrs. Betty, Mrs. Flanders, and the Gentlewomen, indicating that she too had numerous aliases. She is referred to as the renowned Moll Flanders in Newgate. One can see a comparison to Moll Flanders while looking at documents from the Old Bailey, London's main criminal court. These succinct summaries of actual trials that took place during this time period were produced not only for officials but also for the the real "Man of Credit" for Moll is Daniel Defoe. By designing Moll to be a rebel against social norms, he utilizes her as a vehicle to highlight a shift in the traditional role women played in society. Through her, he is able to demonstrate both positive and negative views of women in eighteenth-century England. Moll is a weak, lonely woman who needs a man to sustain her on one side, and she needs the "other half" to maintain her social standing and reputation in society.

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