

I. Representations of Moll's Expectations and Struggles in Defoe's *Moll*

Flanders

This research is an analytical inquiry into Daniel Defoe's novel, *Moll Flanders* to explore the ironic representation of working class people in relevance to the British society of 1720s. Though this novel was written in 1722, it depicts the industrialized material society and lifestyle of the then British society to explore the brutality of the ruling class people against the working class people. Moll Flanders, a female agent attempts to defend Mayor who forces Moll to go for work when she is eight. Portrayal of Moll Flanders as the defender of a ruler on the one hand seems to be highlighting the working class people and on the other, Moll Flanders' failure and her involvement in sexual life and robbery show the ironic gun fire of the rulers towards the working class people. Mayor's family members posit themselves as in favor of Moll Flanders by pretending to have sympathy and love regarding her as an orphan but their intention is not on the behalf of her as they seduce her time and again.

This project focuses on Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, a story of ironically represented woman in the Eighteenth Century England. Defoe presents the protagonist, Moll as a morally degraded and subordinated woman who falls in pretended love with Mayor's elder son and marries with younger one. This projects the reality of Eighteenth Century England where there is the gap between the upper class society and the lower class society. As the Mayor's elder son compels Moll to marry with his own brother by betraying him and giving Moll some property, the audiences can analyze how selfish the upper class people were and how needy the working class people were. To mock at the activities of working people and to ridicule the supremacy of upper class people, Defoe presents Moll, working class

people and other upper class people involving in polygamy and flesh hunger respectively.

Moll's love affair and marriage with many males, her involvement in robbery, crime and pity things, her incestuous relation, valorization of money over harmonious relation is presented to mock at and underestimate the females in the then society. The aristocratic norms and values of the then England are ridiculed through Moll's activities to make money and her ultimate failure. The utilitarian mentality of Eighteenth Century society has been critiqued ironically through the characters like Moll, Jemy, Bank Clerk, Bath, Governess, Captain, Widow and many others. The interest in materiality is well exposed when Moll agrees to marry with the widow's brother who is very rich. It is even clear from the acceptance of Moll by her husband/brother hearing from Bath that she bears a lot of fortune and ultimately divorces her knowing the reality.

Daniel Defoe is the well-known writer of the Eighteenth century England. He produced several adventure narratives prolifically. Issues of trade, slavery, hypocrisy and effects of the transforming society on gender relation are some of the prominent themes in his novels. Despite the abstract narrative pattern of his novels, there are historical elements in his novels. The contemporary currents of his time are reflected in almost all the works of Defoe. Defoe's power as a literary writer is that he is able to give mythical dimension to his novels. The choice of the first person point of view suits his process of narrativization. Defoe's narrator opens Moll Flanders as the person who has edited Moll's first-person story of her life. He implores the novel's readers to learn something from his story of a woman drawn to crime and to pay attention less to the fabulous tales of misdeeds and felonies and more to the moral of the story.

Ellan Pollakis the prominent critic of Daniel Defoe. He argues that Defoe presents Moll Flanders as a literary character who seeks a stable life through immoral and incestuous relation. Pollak writes:

Moll's marriage to her brother violets not one but two interlocking codes of difference: it violets the rules that prohibit sexual union between the offspring of a common parent; and, by virtue of the fact that it is transacted at the point in Moll's career when she attempts to take the reins of sexual power into her own hands, it also violates those rules that constitute her socially as a woman. (4)

Pollak wants to imply that in Moll Flanders, the protagonist passes through those situations which are immoral, more surprising and unimaginable. Readers could not help asking questions to themselves as to if those events occur in the real life of an individual. Moll Flanders incorporates plenty of coincidences over which the protagonist hardly has control and command. As claimed by Pollak, the novel is a storehouse of coincidences.

Lois A. Chaber is another equally well-known critic of Daniel Defoe. He concentrates on the moral material and capitalistic mentality of the protagonist. The character portrayal of Defoe is especially interesting to Chaber delivers briefly the following view with respect to Defoe's nuance of portraying character portrayal:

Some of society's crimes against women in the novel merely intensify traditional constrains. Moll's constant hiding of money from husbands or lovers has been attributed to her innate criminality or slyly characterized as middle-class pettiness, a "secret economy of personal prudence" (Martin, p. 370), whereas in fact it forms an ironically

fragile bulwark against the legalized theft of woman's property right.

(216)

Chaber holds the belief that Moll is the most memorable character. The situations which she passes are deplorable and miserable though she is oriented to stable and successful life. Instead of treating Moll as the promiscuous character, readers are tempted to extend a grain of her sympathy to her. This is the power of Defoe to represent a promiscuous woman in such a way that readers could not help viewing her conditions as the outcomes of her encounter with invincible forces of life. The real power of Defoe is reflected in the powerful portrayal of Moll.

Howard L. Koonce says that the protagonist was grown up in the religious environment i.e. Christianity. She is conscious about religious laws and natural laws. In the course of time she has resolution to be an absurd, preposterous logical triumph, in which her sense of morality has been completely absorbed into her sense of destiny. Koonce further says:

In Moll's consciousness, however, her story has all the structure of traditional Christian experience. Her life is to her a kind of journey to salvation, the history of a woman who lost what she calls her virtue and her modesty and so, as she says, "had nothing of value left to recommend me, either to God's blessing or man's assistance." (384)

It is, according to Koonce, Moll is satisfied that she has become a completely changed character, that she has worked out a resolution of the conflict within her, her warring impulses come to rest together in a landed state of penitence. Failures hardly deter her from the path of her struggles and efforts. Only the chance of success drives her ahead. What strikes readers most are that she hopes against hope. She is adamant in

her pursuit. Her power to rise above the rigid moral concern is another driving force behind her success.

Thomas Grant Olsen maintains that the inclusion of the element of incest is morally shocking and offending element. Readers having moral scruples could not help getting shocked and lacerated by Defoe's inclusion of incest element. It is puzzling to know why Defoe includes this element in the novel. Thomas Grant Olsen discloses his view about this aspect of digression within the narrative:

Because incest produces the inability to properly distinguish relations, the resulting confusion disrupts traditional system of order and signification, making them unreadable. In other words, the relationship of kinship and, ostensibly, of love between brother, sister, mother, and children are in direct conflict with the relationship of felling between husband, wife, mother-in-law, and children. (477)

Olsen argues the inclusion of incest into the narrative structure serves the purpose of highlighting how morally degraded life Moll lived. The depthless moral promiscuity of Moll is displayed by including the element of incest. Without showing the moral fall of the character, it is almost indispensable to show the dramatic increase in the prosperity and status of Moll. So, Daniel's inclusion of incest element into the narrative structure is somehow justifiable.

Maureen Waller detects the significance of freedom in the life of an individual. Moll moves from one man to the other. Like a rolling stone, she moves constantly. Though she is a rolling stone, she gathers a number of mosses. It is not her greed for material comfort but her passion for freedom that makes her move from one place to the other and from one man to the other. Waller reveals the following remarks in this regard:

In other words, Moll's history simultaneously dramatizes social inevitability and the personal freedom that operates to modify its effects. Carried along by circumstances and institutions, she exploits natural gifts that enable her to attract the attention of her adoptive family in the first place. Like all Defoe's heroes, self-made to some extent, she learns by imitation and enquiry. In a sense, this opening set of events predicts the pattern of the rest of the book. Over and over, in increasingly difficult situations, Moll shows how she ultimately transformed limiting, nearly disastrous circumstances into opportunities. (164)

Waller is of the opinion that Moll has the power to transform disastrous situations into reality. She has an enduring passion for stability in life. But she knows that without facing instabilities, it is pretty difficult to bring stable order in life. That is why, she moves like a rolling moss. Moll is not the child of luck. Through hard work she achieves finally substantial level of financial prosperity and firm stability in her life. Her unexpressed faith in the value of freedom drives her to achieve praiseworthy level of success in life.

Henry N. Rogers III views Defoe's *Moll Flanders* from the viewpoint of guilt and sin. He calls into question the subtly reinforced moral integrity of Moll. Rogers III, however, admits that Moll is not totally detached from her past, no matter how passionately she hankers after success. Rogers III makes the following observations about this side of Moll:

As a penitent and an objective narrator, Moll is committed to a straightforward relation of her past sins. As has been seen, she does so without reservations in many cases. Yet she has often been accused of

attempting to excuse her crimes on the grounds of necessity, even as she views them from her later perspective. Let them remember that a time of distress is a time of dreadful temptation, and all the strength to resist is taken away; poverty presses, the soul is made desperate by distress, and what can be done? (121)

It is doubtful if Moll is a conscience-stricken girl or not. Occasionally, she acts as though she is driven by a prick of conscience. But economic concern and other factors of pragmatic significance are of overriding concern for her. Overall, she is torn between the prick of conscience and burden to boost economic wellbeing.

Without terminating the hangover of her guilty past, she initiates other pursuits. That is why she looms as an enigma, despite the clear purpose of her struggles.

MaximillianE. Novak looks into the comic aspects of various themes and issues that are inextricably joined one another. Novak makes the following claim regarding complex thematic nexus of the novel:

A large part of *Moll Flanders* is devoted to the comedy of sex, love and marriage, and Defoe's sympathies remain divided. He thought that the women were worse off than the men, for they cannot buy a husband if they do not have money, and once they marry, they are at the mercy their husbands. Defoe's only solution was to advise women to become as capable as men to educate themselves for survival in a masculine world. Moll's rather masculine nature does not appear until her disillusionment. (201)

Novak intends to imply that women should not lag behind in struggling to achieve economic gains. Without economic independence, women will have to face various forms of antagonisms and hostilities from the males. Others issues hardly carry as

much values in the lives of women in the male dominated society. Moll happens to demonstrate masculine traits in the preliminary phase of her life. But as she begins to age, her masculine traits and attributes dwindle down gradually.

Penelope Fielding is a feminist critic. She is highly appreciative of the spirit of Moll. Moll's undying passion for success in the rigid male dominated world is appealing and alluring to Moll. Fielding remarks thus:

One of the most striking aspects about Moll Flanders as a character is the way that in spite of being a female at a time when patriarchy was a force to be reckoned with, she demonstrates considerable intelligence and independence and is determined to do anything in order to achieve her goals in life. There is something to be admired in the way that she shunned traditional roles that were forced upon women to live her life as she wanted, even though this leads her to commit extremely questionable actions and to act immorally. (76)

As claimed by Fielding, it is Moll's ability to come out on top no matter what fate throws at her. She prefers to be reliant only on herself. And although she certainly does use men in order to gain security, she does not do this if she cannot be self-reliant. She deliberately uses gender and her identity as a woman to get what she wants even in hazardous situation. Without isolating herself from the male dominated society, she succeeds in accomplishing what she hankers after with her heart and soul.

Roberta Johnson notices the theme of man's inhumanity to woman. He argues that this is the most appealing theme of this novel. The humanistic side of this novel is further illustrated by this sort of theme. Concerning this sort of the thematic aspect of the novel, Roberta makes the following viewpoint:

The theme of man's inhumanity to woman is a theme which makes the reader think about how we torture each other because of our need for power in our lives. It is true as seen in this novel that there are essentially evil individuals who are impossible to redeem and that the evil they do affects all people around them. Moll is such a character. She enjoys hurting others physically, emotionally, and psychologically. If there is a Hell, she is bound for it. (67)

Johnson is acutely conscious of the vague reality that has appeared in Britain after it is politically and culturally torn due to slavery, punitive system of punishment and oppressive practices. The reasons may vary for why people commit such sins, but in the end, it is all about needing some sort of power in our lives. Moll is essentially good. But the evil she does as a child follows her into her adulthood. She must find a way to expiate those sins for her sake.

Irony is a literary technique and rhetoric device that has been used for many years in speech, art and everyday life. Although irony has been used for a long time, there has not been an exact definition of the word itself. Irony is a figure of speech which is a contradiction or incongruity between what is expected and what actually occurs. Most of the definitions of irony however seem to suggest that irony involve a contrast between appearance and actual reality. It is a discrepancy between what is anticipated to be true and what is actually true.

Wayne W. Booth writes "for this reason, irony is an extraordinarily good road into the whole art of interpretation" (43). Irony can be seen from two different viewpoints: interpreter's view point and ironist's view point. From the point of view of the interpreter, irony is an interpretive and intentional move; it is the making of meaning in addition to and different from what is stated in relation to both what is

said and what is unsaid. Similarly, from the view point of ironist, it is the intentional and implicit transmission of the information rather than the explicit information: said one. The irony happens in the space between said and unsaid; explicit and implicit respectively. Both the said and unsaid interact to produce the real ironic meaning but not single meaning. Booth notes “Both irony and ambiguity are ‘pluralistic’ ways of speaking, evasion of committed speech” (48).

Irony has often been called by Northrop Frye as the “intellectual tear-gas that breaks the nerves and paralyzes the muscles of everyone in its vicinity, an acid that will corrode healthy as well as decayed tissues” (14). Irony is said to irritate for Kundera “because it denies us our certainties by unmasking the world as an ambiguity” (14). But it can also mock, attack and ridicule; it can exclude, embarrass and humiliate. The irony can be both exclusive and relative: sometimes irony functions to exclude and finalize. Similarly, it also functions to relate and relativize the oppositions.

Verbal irony is the use of words to mean something different from what a person actually says. The main feature of verbal irony that sets it apart from the other different types of irony is that it is used by a speaker intentionally. It occurs in a conversation where a person aims to be understood as meaning something different to what his or her words literally mean. The expression of one’s meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect. Irony refers to a state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what one expects and is often wryly amusing as a result. Dramatic irony involves a literary technique, originally used in Greek tragedy, by which the full significance of a character’s words or actions is clear to the audience or reader although unknown to the character.

The phenomenon of irony existed before it was named. First recorded in Plato's *Republic* and applied to Socrates by one of his victims, *eironia* seems to have meant something similar to "a smooth, low-down way of taking people in" (Muecke 14). However, even among the ancient Greeks, the meaning of *eironia* was inconsistent. To Demosthenes an *eiron* was one who evaded his responsibilities as a citizen by pretending unfitness, while to Theophrastus, an *eiron* pointed to someone both evasive and noncommittal. The famous Roman orator, Cicero, was the first to give *ironia* a denotation beyond the Greek perspective of it as a mode of behavior.

A tiny portion of literature has been produced to analyze the concept of irony. Likewise, within the literature of irony, situational irony has not been granted much attention. Although it is similarly a complex and commonplace phenomenon as verbal irony, it has received nowhere near the same amount of attention from scholars. Most of the available resources regarding irony are still deeply entrenched within a literary framework and approach. Only three attempts in recent literature have been made to give cognitively plausible accounts of situational irony.

Exceptions to the general trend of focusing on verbal irony are "three separate treatments of irony proposed by Littman and Mey, Lucariello, and Shelley that deal exclusively with situational irony. In their work, Littman and Mey attempt to define situational irony in a way that would allow for even a computer program to recognize and generate it" (Colebrook 131). However, this reasoning overlooks the importance of perspective in situational irony. Since situational irony is not created but observed, the perspective of the observer is crucial to building an ironical consciousness of the situation. How one perceives the situation is dependent on conditions such as whether the person was simply told of the situation.

Although all these critics have raised different issues in their analysis and interpretation, none of them have focused on the politics of irony, how it contributes to the illuminations of prominent themes and how it ultimately renders protagonist's quest successful. The factors and situations that led to the inception of protagonist's arduous struggle for security, freedom and material wealth are full of ironical twists and turn. The vantage point of irony is used to probe the process in which Moll struggles to reach her long cherished dream and destination. For this purpose, the researcher has chosen the text, *Moll Flanders*. Notions of irony offer a new window to look at this issue in this text. In this regard, the issue raised by the researcher is distinct and researchable. Thus, the topic claims for originality and uniqueness. This is how the proposed topic and issue depart from those views of critics and reviewers.

This thesis has three chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis, and quotes different critics view regarding to the text. In the same chapter, the researcher shows the departure also. In the second chapter, the researcher discusses about theory of irony and makes an analysis of the text by applying various notions of irony. The last chapter contains the conclusive findings of the research.

II. Irony in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*

Moll is self-conscious when she comes to know that a man comes to marry her after divorcing his wife who betrays him a lot. Moll talks to herself and says that how ironical this man's effort is. He comes to ask for the happiness with a woman who is not substantially different from his faithless wife. Moll pretends to give solace and satisfaction to this man. She produces the impression that she is just the opposite of his faithless wife. But the real fact is that Moll is no less and no more than his wife. She is exactly a carbon copy of that man's adulterous wife. The following self-talk of Moll illustrates how ironically self-conscious she is:

Then it occur'd to me that an abominable Creature am I! and how is this innocent Gentleman going to be abus'd by me! How little does he think, that having Divorc'd a Whore, he is throwing himself into the Arms of another! That he is going to Marry one that has lain with two Brothers, and has had three Children by her own brother! one that was born in *Newgate*, whose Mother was a Whore, and is now a transported Thief; one that has lain with thirteen Men, and has had a Child since he saw me! (176)

Outwardly Moll tells to gentleman that she is sincere enough to be his loyal and faithful wife. But the reality is drastically different. She is a promiscuous woman who is fond of changing men in her pursuit of happiness. It can be argued that this man's search for happy marriage is also doomed to fail. By casting aside his faithless wife, he is turning towards another equally faithless woman who is Moll. But Moll is inwardly aware of her plight. However ignominious and promiscuous Moll might be, she at least makes up her mind to be a dutiful, affectionate and faithful wife to that man. Whether she succeeds in this direction or not, it is unclear. But she is at least

willing to accept change, however immoral she might be. Moll's awareness of her inner foibles and her perception of changing situations in her life has contributed to the disclosure of ironic disparities.

The researcher makes use of the theory of irony. Irony is a source of possibility and potentiality, an inventive or productive complication that one negotiates. As Miller writes, "The difficulty in analyzing the narrative line is the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of mastering the unconquerable, the trope that is no trope. Irony is not simply the sense of discrepancy within a particular context but a pervasive inconsistency or incongruity" (45). Incongruity stems from the divided mark and the resultant permanent impossibility of closure. Miller delivers the following view with respect to the role and function of irony:

It is a force/weakness that operates deep within the logical structure of the split mark which renders clear categories, particularly of intention, wholly unstable. Irony is the expression of the beyond, within; the beyond of language within language, the beyond of grammar within grammar, the beyond of ethics within ethics. It is, in other words, the excess generated by the divided mark and the connections of the textual web that the non-thetic and the non-propositional do not attempt to mask or suppress. (76)

Irony as the jocular or facetious is usually read as a form of (deliberate) ambiguity whose semantic opposition is such that its disjunctions give rise to laughter. One problem with irony is that the intention of the ironist must be made clear, that is, people must realize that someone means the opposite of what he or she says. So it is a dangerous method of generating humor. Irony in this reading is simply a deliberate,

wry commentary on the difference between expectation and outcome – an anacoluthic interruption of syntax or situation.

The subsequently unfolding events in Moll's life produce ironic edge. The younger brother falls in love with Moll. Eventually she marries him. This experience that leaves her forever disillusioned with love. After the death of her husband five years later, Moll marries a gentleman-tradesman. This tradesman goes into debt and leaves the country. She expects that this gentleman could put her life in the state of extreme prosperity. But to her utter dismay, he turns out to be a pauper. This choice of Moll is tainted with ironic trace. The following extract cited from the text is illustrative of ironic implication of Moll's choice:

Well, at last I found amphibious Creature, this *Landwater-thing call'd, a Gentleman- Tradesman*; and as a just Plague upon my Folly, I was catch'd in the very Snare, which *as I might say*, I laid for my self;[...] This was a *Draper* too, for tho' my Comrade would have brought me to Bargain with her Brother, yet when it came to the Point, it was it seems for a Mistress, not a Wife, and I kept true to this Notion, that a Woman should never be kept for a Mistress, that had Money to keep her self. (54)

Moll's pride and pretension of being able to survive on her own terms it is a source of irony. Soon after the assertion of her pride of being able to depend on her own, situations push her to the path of dependency. Moll supports herself for two years, until she is reduced to poverty and, in desperation, turns to a life of crime. Growing accustomed to thievery, she becomes a master criminal until she is caught and imprisoned at Newgate. In Newgate, she finds her Lancashire husband. They both

avoid the death sentence, Moll because she is penitent of her former life. After being transported to America, where Moll accumulates a fortune and lives to an old age.

Irony understood as skepticism or nihilism which is deliberate, black commentary on the impossibility of any congruence between expectation and outcome. Irony is neither laughter nor tears but a force of weakness potentially productive of both. It shares the effect of everyday amnesia that Simon Critchley sees in the humorous, but is “neither essentially frivolous nor essentially bleak. Irony is the hyphenation of extremes, the movement of conjunction and disjunction between marks, and as such cannot be thought of as a single pole or point” (41). The irony is not the single position he posits but the double attitude/movement itself. The counter-movements of irony name the unconquerable excess that the mark produces.

Off-hand description is ironically juxtaposed with the moral claims of the preface. Moll publicizes the bleak fate of children of criminals. Moll’s claim sounds ironical in this regard. Moll herself was very lucky to be taken in. The parish was under no obligation to take care of penniless children who were not born there. Indeed the parish officers tried to find the gypsies in order to send Moll back to them, even though they were unrelated to her. She did not like them. Legally, they could have sent the toddler out to starve. She was saved only by their compassion. The following extract shows how Moll’s decision to cast off her dirty past in the hope of secure and bright future sounds ironical:

But the Case was otherwise here; my Mother was convicted of Felony for a certain petty Theft, scarce worth naming, (*viz.*) Having an opportunity of borrowing three Pieces of fine *Holland*, of a certain Draper in *Cheapside*: The Circumstances are too long to repeat, and I

have heard them related to many Ways, that I can scarce be certain which is the right Account. (2)

Fate compels her to rely on the whim of others. But she has the swaggering sense of assertiveness. This is intensely ironical. During Moll's period of innocence she is utterly dependent on the whimsical charity of the powerful. She is lucky to be a charming child, thus gaining favor. It is better not to wonder about the fates of the ugly and charmless pauper children. Moll's natural wish is for security. Simple virtue and labor cannot give this to her. Without any system to protect them, they are thrown into the world with no training in any trade.

It is Socrates who is most commonly associated with irony, an irony of disguise or self-disapproval. Socratic irony is typically connected to pedagogy, as Socrates' form of questioning involved a feigned ignorance which caused his interlocutors to stumble over the inconsistencies of their own arguments, and therefore, ideally, to recognize their lack of knowledge. Despite the complexity of Socrates' arguments, Socratic irony is most often read as a basic inversion of meaning that was neither harmful nor intended to deceive, but deployed to confuse the interlocutor in order to awaken him.

Socrates' irony is also thought of, however, as the first instance of an ironic life. As George Sedgwick writes: "Imagine understatement expanded into the principle of a whole life and you have grasped, in the large, a notion of the most famous and noble of all the ironies – the irony of Socrates"(77). The ironical deviation of verbal meanings is described as a pleasurable form of humor. Irony is not simply the direct inversion of meaning, but the act of saying one thing and meaning another. Thus while it can be used, for example, to condemn via overblown tributes, the intended meaning is not merely the opposite of what was expressed.

Although Moll's seduction is recounted in an almost off-hand manner, it is quite exceptional. Moll Flanders does not immediately change from an innocent maiden to a debauched and wicked harlot. The effect that sex does have on Moll is to deepen her feelings for her lover. Before, she does not seem to care for him very much out of the ordinary, and afterwards she is genuinely in love. Moll's first lover, Elder Brother of Robin, promises her many things. Moll is naive to accept his promise. But he creates those situations in which she is forced to marry the brother of her first lover. Her assumptions and expectations, which arise from her innocence, generate ironic effect. The following lines reveal the way in which irony arises:

Can you Transfer my Affection? Can you bid me cease loving you, and bid me love him? is it my Power think you to make such a change at Demand? No Sir, *said I*, depend upon it 'tis impossible, and whatever the Change of your Side may be, I will ever be True; and I had much rather, since it is come that unhappy Length, be your Whore than your Brother's Wife. (33)

Moll passes over uneventful periods very quickly. The five years of her marriage take less than a page to describe. Moll's lack of attachment to her children is rather striking. It appears that children are only an unwanted charge for an attractive widow with no steady income. She is, however, careful to find homes for them. To Moll's embarrassment, the younger brother fell in love with her, and openly proposed honorable marriage.

Colebrook says, "If classical definitions of irony are used, readers can begin to get a sense of irony's problematic and contested nature"(15). The simplest and most stable forms of irony rely on the audience or hearer recognizing that what the speaker

says cannot be what she means. And this is because in order to speak at all, listeners have to share conventions and assumptions. Colebrook remarks:

A word does not have a meaning independent of its social exchange. It is true that a word is being used ironically when it seems out of place or unconventional. Recognizing irony, therefore, foregrounds the social, conventional and political aspects of language: that language is not just a logical system but relies on assumed norms and values. Dramatic, cosmic and tragic irony are ways of thinking about the relation between human intent and contrary outcomes. (14)

This sense of irony is related to verbal irony in that both share a notion of a meaning or intent beyond what we manifestly say or intend. In dramatic and cosmic irony this other meaning is plot or destiny. In verbal irony the other meaning is either what the speaker intends or what the hearer understands. Cosmic irony generates concerns which pervade across history.

Moll could not stand the idea of being a whore to one brother, and a wife to the other. She makes efforts to shirk this sort of impending fate. But she falls into the same ditch where she wants to run away for her life. Such a condition is full of ironic twists and turns. The young man's love made his family suspicious of Moll. They began to plan her departure. She asked her lover's advice. And to her horror, he counseled her to marry his brother, rather than to stop the confusion by revealing their engagement.

Moll was horrified. She loved him and had believed his promises. He pointed out that he might not inherit for another thirty years. In addition, he said that "By my Faith Madam 'tis in vain to mince the Matter, or tellany more Lyes about it; Iam in Earnest, as much as a Man is that's going tobe Hang'd. If Mrs*Betty*I would say she

Lov'd me, and that she would Marry me ...”(39). Her continued resistance to Robin's advances made his mother look on her more favorably. At last she consented to the marriage. Frightened by the prospect of being "turned out to the wide world as a cast-off Whore..." (87). Moll finally agreed to marry Robin. Robin's brother got him drunk on his wedding night so he wouldn't notice that Moll wasn't a virgin.

The notion that London marriages are based on money rather than love is apparently not surprising enough in itself. This notion and Moll's expectation generate ironic expectation. Moll's reaction to it certainly does. Rather than bemoan the immorality of mercenary marriages, she reasonably investigates techniques. These techniques are supposed to improve women's positions within the corrupt system. She and her female friends are all notably women on their own. The stereotype of young girls being married to young men according to the arrangements made by their powerful parents does not hold. High mortality led to large populations of widows who needed to marry again in order to establish themselves comfortably. The following citation reflects on how Moll is increasingly aware of ironic sense of pride faced by the people with Puritan morality:

I had however, a great deal of Satisfaction in having spoken my Mind to him with Freedom, and with such an honest Plainness, as I have related; and tho' it did not at all Work way, I desir'd, *that is to say*, to oblige the Person to me the more, yet it took from him all possibility of quitting me but by a down right breach of Honour, and giving up all the Faith of a Gentleman to me, which he had so often engaged by, never to abandon me, but to make me his Wife as soon as he came to his Estate. (43)

There is ironic gap between Moll's gossip and public scandal about her. Moll's use of gossip and scandal is designed to reduce the captain's credit. He has a history of treating women badly. In the other direction, the fake courtship that the young lady increases her own credit by making her appearance more desirable. Moll's broader ideas suggest a kind of united front of women. If all women together refuse to marry men who treat them badly, a rude lover would not be able to simply abandon his fiancée. These women would be doing the equivalent of refusing to work for less than a minimum amount. The supply of women wanting to be married is greater than the demand for wives.

Irony produces and implies aesthetic distance. The stylistic implications and complications of this distance also lead beyond irony. To quote Colebrook again, "If it is the case that an author or speaker can be other than what they manifestly say, it is also the case that complex forms of irony can make the recognition and existence of this distanced authorial position impossible to determine" (16). It may be the case that the text resists a clearly elevated or distanced position from the discourse it expresses. What is implied, not said or other than the narration, is not some clearly perceived ironic position. Colebrook says, "Modern style moves well beyond the clear location of irony and earlier uses of what is now identified as free-indirect discourse" (159).

Stable or simple cases of verbal irony tend to prove how shared and clearly recognizable our social norms and assumptions are. If irony is taken as primarily stable conception, social and political life appears to be primarily reciprocal, common and operating from a basis of agreement. As claimed by Colebrook "Complex, undecidable or insecure ironies would then be regarded as special and marginal cases that deviated from the common ground of human understanding. Stable irony involves a process of obviously contradicting the conventions of context" (68). In this

way, it signals an opposite meaning. Stable irony would be the ground from which less obvious or distinct cases might be explained. The norm would be a language of shared recognition and conventional exchange. This norm is often reinforced by the fact that it would not be difficult for everyone to know when someone is being ironic.

The newly married captain's lady invited Moll to stay with her and her husband. This gained Moll many admirers, and she picked out her man. He, believing that she was rich, made all sorts of protestations of devotion. Such devotion implies that he did not care if she were poor. They flirtatiously wrote the following exchange on a pane of glass with a diamond ring:

There were other Papers roll'd up, and ask'd 'him, what they were?

Why, Ay, *says he*, that's the Question I wanted to have you ask me; so he unrolls them, and takes out a little Chagreen Case, and gives me out of it a very fine Diamond Ring; I could not refuse it, if I mind to do so, for he put it upon my Fingers; so I made him a Curtsy, and accepted it; then he takes out another Ring, and this *says he*, is for another occasion, so he puts that in his Pocket. (175)

This man too is not free from facing ironical situations. There is gap between what he anticipates from his marriage with Moll and what Moll is really capable of offering. After a prolonged degree of romantic courtship and overtures, the man married her. He continues to believe her to be rich, although she jokingly said she was poor. Then she seriously reduces his expectations of her wealth so that he was happy to get anything at all. They then moves to his plantations in Virginia surviving an eventful voyage. Thereafter she moves in with his mother and sister there.

Moll's sweet utterance is ironical. She manages to deceive him without ever publicly lying. She wants to cheat so that it impossible for him to accuse her of the

deception. Moll shows that she is willing to take substantial risks. She repeatedly tells him that she is poor. She relies entirely on his tendency to take men's words more seriously than those of women. He had been told that she was rich. Moll shows a great deal of cleverness in breaking the news of her true poverty after the wedding: after first making him worry that she had nothing at all.

There are highly emotional reactions of the various people involved to the news of Moll and her husband's incestuous relationship. Such a relation covers a whole range of outlooks on sexual sin. Incest is a very terrible thing to her. She becomes genuinely sick at the thought of intercourse with her husband/brother. It does not seem to appear to her in the light of a sin. The reaction of her husband falls more into the ground of conventional morality. Their mother seem to be more motivated by regard for conventions than anything else: she would actually prefer to have her children continue cohabiting. Thus Moll is motivated by a sort of instinctive natural morality.

Although people often associate Moll Flanders with prostitution, she is never a streetwalker. In fact she is rarely even a mistress. This is only the second time that she is in a sexual relationship without marriage. It is surely one of the most unconventional affairs ever to be depicted in literature. Moll provides emotional support and consolation for her lover. Moll says, "Thus my Pride, not my Principle, my Money, not my Virtue, kept me Honest; tho' as it prov'd, I found I had much better have been Sold by my *She Comrade* to her Brother, than have Sold my self as I did to a Tradesman that was Rake, Gentleman, Shop keeper, and Beggar..." (55). Moll needs money to survive, not respect. A genuine attachment would not be dissolved by a fright.

From the earliest definitions of irony a distinction was made between a verbal and local irony. This distinction is clearly visible; yet it is delimited. An extended figure of irony pervades an entire speech, text or personality. It is the first form of simple, stable and clearly recognizable irony that formed the basis of definitions and theories of irony from classical times to the eighteenth century. Samuel Johnson defines irony as a mode of speech in which the meaning is clearly contrary to the words. Johnson adds:

Recently, however, greater stress has been placed on irony that is undecidable. Additional stress is also placed on modes of irony that challenge just how shared, common and stable our conventions and assumptions are. The extension of irony from being a local trope within an otherwise literal language to characterize life and language in general has also served clearly conservative political tendencies. (180)

These tendencies have closed literature off from its political and cultural forces. At the very least, irony is elitist: to say one thing and mean another, or to say something contrary to what is understood, relies on the possibility that those who are not enlightened or private to the context will be excluded.

Terrified by the prospect of approaching poverty, Moll went out and stole a little bundle left unattended on a stool in a shop. She walked at random for quite a while. Then she returns home and found that the bundle contained some good linen, some silver, and money. She is distressed and felt guilty, but finally went out, a few days later, to steal again. She met a pretty little child wearing her mother's necklace, going home from dancing school by her. Finally she tricks her into a narrow street, where she removed the necklace unseen. The following lines describe how she turns into off track thief:

To prevent my being known, I pull'd off my blue Apron, and wrapt the Bundle in it, which before was made up in a Piece of painted Callico, and very Remarkable; I also wrapt up my Straw-Hat in it, and so put the Bundle upon my Head; and it was very well, that I did thus, for coming thro' the *Blue-Coat Hospital*, who should I meet but the Wench, that had given me the Bundle to hold; it seems she was going with her Mistress, who she had been gone to fetch to the *Barnet Coaches*. (234)

For a while Moll lives with her making her living by sewing, and made arrangements for her youngest son's care. Soon, she was tempted again and stole a silver tankard. She told her governess what she had done. It became clear that her governess was not just a pawnbroker. She introduces Moll to a thief who taught her shoplifting and stealing ladies' gold watches. They work together and do very well.

The history of irony's elitism goes back to its emergence in Greek thought. In antiquity, irony was defined as an art in keeping with an urbane and elevated personality. In addition, it was also recognized as practiced primarily in sites of political power. John Searle makes the following observations regarding to the elitist aspect of irony:

Irony is a means of effective persuasion in speeches and therefore already relies on the established speaking position and force of the orator. As a figure or extended mode of thought, irony allows the speaker to remain above what he says. It also allows those members of his audience who share his urbanity to perceive the true sense of what is really meant. This sense of irony's necessary exclusiveness was reinforced in the twentieth century. (19)

Irony is a form of utterance that postulates a double audience. Efforts are underway to redefine this line of thinking regarding irony. In the twentieth century most of the material on irony in philosophy and literary theory argued that irony reveals and reinforces shared assumptions. Irony is possible when language is used in ways that run against our norms. It thereby brings our norms into focus. Generally people hold the belief that what is meant or what is really being said is so obviously not what is manifestly spoken.

John Searle argues that an ironic speech act does not harbor any hidden or mysterious meaning. Some ineffable truth or enigma is always above human speech. Searle says that “Meaning is not something that lies behind our words; nor is there a sense or truth that precedes human dialogue. On the contrary, language only works with shared conventions” (40). When language is not used conventionally or in ways that we recognize, we can all clearly see what is really being meant.

The experienced thief would bump into a lady from one side. Moll stole her watch from the other. While the other thief and the victim calmed down, Moll would disappear, and her teacher would deflect attention onto other people. The conditions of thieves are portrayed vividly in the following citation:

The Fellow look'd like a condemn'd Thief, and hung back, then look'd at his Master, as if he cou'd help him; and he, like a Fool, encourage'd the Fellow to be rude, and he truly resisted the Constable, and push'd him back with a good force when he went to lay hold on him, at which the Constable knock'd him down, and call'd out for help; and immediately the Shop was fill'd with People, and the Constable seiz'd the Master and the Man, and all his Servants. (240)

Moll's governess finds good projects. She divides the booty with the thieves who carry them out. In one of these, she knows of a good amount of smuggled Flanders lace hidden in a private house. Moll goes to a custom-house officer and told him where it was, on condition that she should get her share of it. Dressed as a man, she works with a young fellow shoplifting. The man is taken. Moll fled to her governess' house and changes into woman's clothes, so that she is pretending to sew and mind a child when the constables come to search. The young man tries to gain favor by revealing his accomplice, but is unable to locate the person he thought is Gabriel Spencer.

Irony, for Booth, “is most often a rhetorical figure or trope within an otherwise stable context of human sense and understanding. Given the choice, readers opt for charity. They assume that the author’s meaning is what they would agree with” (76). They assume that the author is human, benevolent and enlightened. Booth remarks that:

Authorial voice is not the incoherent and self-incriminating voice of the ionized speaker. Irony assumes, rather than disrupts a common ground. Furthermore, irony appears as an evidence of the fundamental coherence of language and literature. This dispute over irony is also a dispute over the status of politics. It does not matter whether politics begins with agreement and recognition or difference and incommensurability. (43)

There are those who see irony as a rhetorical figure that is ultimately recognized because there is something like shared human understanding. On the other hand, there are those who see irony as a way of life. Those who celebrate the destabilizing

force of irony insist that politics is the rejection, contestation or disruption of shared norms.

Once she stole a fine piece of damask and entrusted it to a comrade. Moll was “sorry for the poor woman, who tried to improve her position by saying that a Mrs. Flanders had given her the bundle to carry home”(243). The authorities could not find Moll, since she was careful never to tell anyone her true name. The other woman was transported instead of being hanged. By this time everyone who had known Moll Flanders by that name was either hanged or transported, except for her old governess. The necessary lack of trust which results from leading an immoral or illegal life does not seem to burden her too much.

Another trace of irony is revealed in Moll’s increasing fertility despite her unrestrained immersion in sexual adventure. Moll's meditation on the lack of sensuality of whores is reminiscent of how one medical theory held that prostitutes did not become pregnant because they felt no pleasure. Other authorities said that “too much intercourse prevented conception. Of course, as we have seen with Moll's governess, prostitutes were as fertile as anyone else” (297). This is entirely ironical. Another trick of Moll's was to dress like a poor woman and wait around inns where stage-coaches passed. The following lines further elucidate the point:

I had taken up the Disguise of a Widow’s Dress; it was without any real design in view, but only waiting for any thing that might offer, as I often did: It happen’d that while I was going along the Street in *Covent Garde*, there was a great Cry of stop Thief, stop thief; some Artists had it seems put a risk upon a Shop-keeper, and being pursued, some of them fled one way, and some another; and one of them was, they said,

dress'd up in Widow's Weeds, upon which the Mob gathered about me
... (235)

Moll has no grand illusions about her thievery, and does not consider herself to be a sort of Robin Hood. She is quite wealthy by this time. She is careful to attack vulnerable people like children and inexperienced shop-keepers whenever possible. Of course she tends to steal from the rich rather than the poor. It is better worth her while. She never engages in heroic violence of any nature, but prefers to use her wits. Despite the unheroic nature of her thievery, she is still something of a heroine. She takes on the role of the fabled clever fox. This is consistent with her gender. Women were widely considered to be more clever and quick-witted than men, although they were thought to lack the ability to think deeply and importantly.

Irony is a topic of interest to philosophy not least the philosophy of literature, for several reasons. To begin, it is a many sided concept within which distinctions need to be made and connections sought. Second, since irony involves a kind of simulation, it is necessary to explain both why authors indulge in it and how they manage to communicate through it. There is, third, a recurrent claim to the effect that the world or existence is inherently ironic which requires investigation. Finally, readers need to understand and assess the surprisingly frequent claims that irony is central to serious literature. It is the essence of writing. According to Schlegel, irony bears the following traits:

The typical purposes of ironic devices are ridicule, mockery and the like. But why should people achieve this by using words to convey something different from what they smartly convey. A plausible suggestion is that irony has the same kind of attraction as criticism through mimicry. The ironist echoes the words that someone holding

the opinions mocked actually or might well have used. It is a feature of much of the best irony that it is recognized only by people with the appropriate knowledge, acumen and intimacy with the speaker or writer. (379)

The problem of how an audience catches on to the ironist's intentions is a vexed one. One proposal appeals to the recognition that if the writer intends his or her words literally there would then be a violation of some maxim of proper discourse, such as truth-telling.

The behavior of the prisoners makes less sense if one assumes the existence of a Christian afterlife. There is a real and important break between the worldview of the respectable people and the Clergymen. If the afterlife exists, then sinners have every reason to repent, as Moll does. The fact that so few prisoners do repent indicates that they do not believe in the most essential points of Christianity. The behavior of a prisoner in Newgate, then, appears to be similar to that of an atheist in the world. It is so dangerously careless and uncontrollable that an early modern judge would clearly see the necessity of religion in an orderly society. The following extract illuminates ironic perception of the protagonist:

Well, then, *says I*, it is this; as I told you before in a Heat, that I was not your lawful Wife, and that our Children were not legal Children, so I must let you know now in calmness and in kindness, but with Affection enough that I *am* your own Sister, *and you* my own Brother, and that we are both me Children of our Mother now alive, and in the House, who is convinc'd of the Truth of it, in a manner not to be denied or contradicted. (97)

This is a bit of irony. It is a mild statement about human weakness. During this time Moll did not forget her Lancashire husband, the highwayman. She pretended that she was willing to give evidence against him. She went to visit him. Instead, he recognizes her. He thought at first that she had come for revenge. She reassured him, and told her some of her recent history. It appeared that he had been a highwayman for twelve years before their marriage. The evidence against him was little enough that he could obtain transportation if he wanted. After some negotiations, they managed to be put on the same ship. Moll's governess bought all sorts of supplies and tools useful for running a plantation.

Moll and her husband are clearly given favorable treatment as a result of what people would call bribes today. There appears to be no consciousness of unfairness in their activities. The ship's officers are not called corrupt, though by modern standards their behavior would be considered criminal. Moll's society did not pretend to be equitable where money is concerned. She seems to accept the existence of official corruption without hesitation or doubt. The following lines furnish essential clues in support of the ironical awareness on the part of the protagonist:

A Wife, who having some Money could enable them to hold, as they call it, a good part of a Ship themselves, so to encourage Owners to come in; Or a Wife who if she had not Money, had Friends who were concern'd in Shipping, and so could help to put the young Man into a good Ship, which to them is as good as a portion, and neither of these was my Case; so I look'd like one that was to *lye on Hand*. (61)

Moll did not dare approach her son because she had not told her Lancashire husband about her incestuous marriage. After a year Moll left her husband there and went back to see her brother. She sent him a letter, full of tender comments about her son. He

was glad to see his mother and very affectionate. He gave her gifts and wanted her to live with them. She was very happy but, not being eager to live with her brother anymore, refused, and after several weeks returned to her husband.

While many writers are esteemed precisely because of their mastery of irony, there are many others who would not usually be thought of as ironists, but who are also admired. It comes as a surprise to be told that irony is of the essence of good literature. Yet, since the time of Friedrich Schlegel at least, this is the claim of several literary critics. Since then, “irony has been called the most complete fruit of the artistic understanding. The more the notion of irony is exploited, the more refined definition of irony emerged”(380). The value and function of irony rank with that of art itself. Certain groups of theorists of irony maintain that irony is the sense of art itself. Associated with this sort of view concerning irony is that it is the true test of writing as writing. It is undoubtedly the essence of writing.

The contemporary celebration of irony often fails to take account of this violent paradox at the heart of the relation between speech and context. McGann argues, “the celebration of an irony that would affirm the human spirit necessarily precludes consideration of the force of specific speech acts, and just whose humanity is being generalized”(121). But it is also the case that one cannot return to the locality and immediacy of contexts. By virtue of the fact that texts are read, and are read as past, we have some sense of a meaning that is translatable across contexts. According to McGann, “We cannot avoid the horizon of history in general, or the assumption of a continuity of sense. To read is to assume that the text means something for us. The singularity or immediacy of the past is lost the moment it is seen as past. Irony is brimful of the inherent political tensions” (121).

Moll was able to buy her husband's swords and fine clothing, so he could live like a gentleman. A year later Moll learned that her brother was dead, so she could tell her son safely her past life. She was immensely relieved no longer to have to keep secrets. They were very prosperous, and in eight years had an income of 300 guineas a year. When Moll was seventy and her husband sixty-eight, they returned to England rich and legal, and Moll said that they resolved to spend their remaining comfortable years repenting their sins. Moll keeps many secrets during her life. She says, "... Our relation and to live with him as my Husband, after I knew that he was my Brother ..." (329). Her governess and her Lancashire husband are not told important things about her. Every secret is then told to someone. Her governess knows about her thievery, though her husband and son do not. Her husband and son know about her marriages, although her governess does not. Moll will never be entirely free of secrecy, since even as a rich old woman she will not tell her real name.

Much of this part deals with people who squander their wealth. Moll's second husband appears to be a nice fellow, with the good manners that Moll so approves of. She does not even become particularly bitter at having all her money wasted away on frivolous pleasures. She looks back on the marriage with irony, but without hatred. Indeed, Moll herself enjoys their little masquerades as my lord and the Countess. Moll places a great deal of importance on social status at this time in her life. She prefers to lose her money married to a gallant man who can behave like a lord, than to enrich herself as the wife of a well-to-do. She has a flair for gay romance. The behavior of the debtors she encounters in the Mint has quite a different effect on her. The lyrical description of them suggests that this kind of behavior is a particular interest of Defoe's:

When he has thought and poured on it till he is almost mad, having no principles to support him, nothing within him or above him to comfort him, but finding the same darkness on every side, he fled to the same relief again, viz. to drink it away, debauch it away.(242)

Moll's narrative could exist perfectly well without this interval. It involves almost no action whatsoever. It would appear that Defoe thought it was important to describe how money troubles could lead to blank and utter despair. Moll herself found that there were two sorts of commanders. Marriages were here the consequences of politic schemes for forming interests, and carrying on business. Unfortunately, there were more women wanting to be married than men wanting to marry them.

Indeed, nature itself begins to be defined ironically. A dynamic process of formation can always result in accident, disruption, loss and fragmentation. Such a power for formation can only be given ironically, after the event of having formed. The very power of life can never coincide with or see itself in formation, for it will always require some formed medium upon which it can work and come to realization. 'We' form ourselves through voice and language, and such media are themselves already formed and irreducible to our intent. There is always a fragment of death, loss or mourning in life, always a past medium that can never be rendered fully present. Romantic irony also celebrated the notion of antiquity and the ruin. The ironic self is never a single and self-conscious origin so much as a process of creation that reflects upon the disparity and multiplicity of voices that it brings into being. Irony is widely held as the clear consciousness of eternal agility, of an infinitely teeming chaos.

Whereas in logical discourse a contradiction leads to nothingness, insofar as readers dismiss contradictions, in poetic discourse contradictions are productive and

ironic. They allow any voice to be doubled by the suggestion that what is said is both meant and not meant. Linda Hutcheon says:

This romantic irony becomes much more complex and undecidable in Blake's later prophecies where he produces the figure or character of Satan. On the one hand Satan is heroic: rejecting authority, anything that is other than his will, and anything that would limit his power. On the other hand, Satan's voice is also the ironic mirror of the tyranny he would denounce. In demanding one's freedom the voice of revolution can also produce itself as one more law and the negation of anyone else's freedom. (58)

Irony seems to rely on readers both agreeing about the world and assuming that when people speak, they do not contradict themselves. Romantic irony rejects this principle of non-contradiction: the very principle that supposedly underlies all speech, argument and even disagreement. All argument, assertion and agreement rely on the distinction between what is and what is not. If it were possible for something to be true and false at the same time, readers could not speak with notions of agreement, force or judgment. There are unavoidable situations and relationships that one can tolerate only by transforming them by some courageous act of will and seeing them as pure poetry. It follows that all cultivated people should be capable of being poets.

Moll told her that she must revenge herself, in order to save her reputation and that of women in general. She told her to spread the news that she had found out unsavory things about the captain's history and character. This had the effect of making the captain unpopular with the families of the other girls he wanted to court. Moll's friend also arranged to have a young gentleman, a relative of hers, to visit her

often in a very fine carriage. She spread the news that she was going to marry him.

The following extract elucidates the point:

I had brought him so near to expecting nothing, by what I had said before, that the Money, tho' the Sum was small in it self, was doubly welcome to him; he own'd it was more than he look'd for, and that he did not question by my discourse to him, but my fine Cloths, Gold Watch, and a Diamond Ring or two had been all my Fortune. (77)

Moll was a little worried - although she had not yet begun to wear make-up. She was undeniably no longer very young, and had no friends or advisors. Being a woman without connections, she had little access to the public sphere of business. She wanted very much to get married to a sober, good husband. She pretended she had a fortune of three or four thousand, but nothing showed up until she met a woman from the north. Instead, Moll encounters him in the role of a financial steward.

Moll becomes convinced that the grave gentleman would take care of her money (herself) very well. The question of divorce is also interesting in this part. It doesn't take long to figure out that divorce in Moll's time was not like it is today. It is considered as a last resort. The grave gentleman objects that it would be very tedious and expensive. People could consider themselves to be married or divorced, when in fact the law knew nothing of the matter. This was no doubt a reaction to expensive and unfriendly courts.

Frequently Moll feels regret but it is a hollow regret. It is hollow because it neither leads her to shorten the particular crime she is worrying, nor does it become ready her to offer compensation:

It was true, had things been right, I should not have done it, but now, *it was* my real desire never to see them, or him either, any more; and to

the Charge of unnatural I could easily answer it to myself, while I knew that the whole Relation was Unnatural in the highest degree in the World. (86)

Moll is shown as most compassionate in her relationships with her various lovers and husbands. She seems to truly love the elder brother. And when she marries his brother Robin, poor Robin never learns of the affair. Her second spouse is a rake, but she treats him well and helps him escape from his creditors. She nurses her men when they are sick and loves them when they are well. Her relationship with Jemy seems to be full of love and compassion. Moll is in Newgate, under sentence of death, but when she learns Jemy is there too her remorse and sense of guilt are genuine. In the monologue she says "I was overwhelmed with grief for him; my own case gave me no disturbance compared to this, and I loaded myself with reproaches on his account" (212). Moll is an ambivalent character. She is a criminal — but a sympathetic one. Her life of crime is constantly colored by her good humor, compassion and sense of loyalty.

Moll's repentance is ironical. She constantly entertains the desire to repent. Lacking true moral persuasion, these repentances are, until the end, half-hearted and insincere. She lacks moral strength. Her moral fiber is quickly overcome on several occasions by the slightest pressures or inducements. She will at times seem to be completely enslaved. Her first repentance comes when Robin asks her to marry him:

I was now in a dreadful condition indeed, and now I repented heartily my easiness with the eldest Brother; not from any Reflection of Conscience, but from a view of the Happiness I might have enjoy'd, and had now made impossible; for tho' I had no great Scruples of

Conscience as I have said to struggle with, yet I could not think of being a Whore to one Brother, and a Wife to the other. (24)

Actually, Moll's repentance seems more like regret for having underestimated her chances for a better arrangement. It is evident as the book unfolds that Moll has not been led astray. She has very shrewdly calculated the course of her life. Throughout the story Moll considers or reflects on the path her life is taking. The occasion of Robin's marriage proposal causes Moll to say to the elder brother, "Upon serious consideration, for indeed now I began to consider things very seriously, and never till now I resolved to tell him of it" (175). Again Moll considers what to do when she realizes she is not as bad as the people living in the Mint. She says, "I was not wicked enough for such fellows as these yet. On the contrary, I began to consider here very seriously what I had to do; how things stood with me, and what course I ought to take"(182). When the gentleman at Bath rejects any further contact with Moll, she reports "I cast about innumerable ways for my future state of life, and began to consider very seriously what I should do, but nothing offered"(183). After she is delivered of another baby and receives a letter from her London bank clerk saying he wants to see her again.

Thus it can be asserted that Moll is bound to make those choices which hardly produce intended consequences in her life. The results of her actions always stand hostile to her cherished dream. There is a big ironic disparity between what she does and what occurs to her. This ironical situation paves the way for the evolution of Moll's maturity.

III. Defoe's Concern for Social integrity and Cohesiveness

The core finding of this research is that the female protagonist's search for material well-being is out and out ironical. Her guilt is tainted with ironical trace. After stealing things she turns penitent. But she does not bear any sense of guilt during the time when temptation wells up in her heart. She chooses one line of actions which yields results contrary to her expectation. Defoe uses irony ingeniously in the passages telling us of Moll's thoughts during her various crimes. He often portrays her as moralistic. When she steals the necklace from the child in Aldersgate Street, she feels she is actually doing the child a favor.

Frequently Moll feels remorse but it is a hollow remorse for it neither leads her to curtail the particular crime she is bemoaning, nor does it prompt her to offer restitution. This is shown in her robbery of a woman whose house is on fire. Moll is shown as most compassionate in her relationships with her various lovers and husbands. She seems to truly love the elder brother. And when she marries his brother Robin, poor Robin never learns of the affair. Her second spouse is a rake, but she treats him well and helps him escape from his creditors. She nurses her men when they are sick and loves them when they are well. Her relationship with Jemy seems to be full of love and compassion.

Moll is in Newgate, under sentence of death, but when she learns Jemy is there too her remorse and sense of guilt are genuine. Moll is an ambivalent character. She is a criminal — but a sympathetic one. Her life of crime is constantly colored by her good humor, compassion and sense of loyalty. *Moll Flanders* is designed to improve its readers' morals. *Moll Flanders* is not a moral work. Although Defoe insists that crime is consistently punished and virtue rewarded, this is not the case. Moll begins as a pauper and ends up as a wealthy woman. She achieves such a level of success

entirely as a result of adultery, seduction, and theft. She glories in her beauty and cunning, and enjoys her status as a talented pickpocket. She lives by her sharp wits. She only repents when her life is in danger.

Although she is always a good businesswoman, her success in the new world results from the careful investment of illegally gained wealth. Although Moll's seduction is recounted in an almost off-hand manner, it is quite exceptional. One should realize that Moll passes over uneventful periods very quickly: the five years of her marriage take less than a page to describe. Moll's lack of attachment to her children is rather striking. It appears that children are only an unwanted charge for an attractive widow with no steady income. She is, however, careful to find homes for them.

Coincidence plays a large part in the work. Moll just happens to see an unattended bundle in an apothecary's shop. Then she steals it when she is in low financial circumstances. This begins her life in crime. The governess, once a midwife, has just turned pawnbroker and therefore knows how to turn Moll's thieving into profit for them both. Jemy happens to get arrested when Moll is in Newgate. He happens to be transported to America on the same boat even after their frantic arrangements to expedite this fail.

Moll's vanity and greed are the main focus of the characterization in the novel. Quite early in her life she has an all-consuming desire to become a gentlewoman. This is a fact which was almost impossible for a lower-class woman because of the rigid class lines in England in that period. In a sense this desire throughout her life leads her into one misadventure after another. Moll had the opportunity to be entrusted with a bundle of goods by a servant. As soon as the servant had gone, Moll removed her

apron, wrapped the bundle and her straw hat in the apron, and then put the bundle on her head.

Moll had had such a successful adventure; she was given encouragement by her governess to try this criminal technique on several other occasions in different places. Moll's initial seduction is as much the result of her vanity as the fine words and devious ways of the elder brother. Defoe clearly reveals the difference between Moll's recurrent but passing misgivings about her degeneration, and her real repentance. Her repeated considerations show Moll as essentially untouched emotionally and morally.

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