Daniel Defoe

Moll Flanders

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MOLL FLANDERS

DANIEL DEFOE (1660–1731) was born in London, the third child of James Foe, a tallow chandler, and his wife Alice. He attended Charles Morton's dissenting academy in Newington Green before establishing himself as a hosier and general merchant in Cornhill, and married Mary Tuffley in 1684. A year later he joined the Duke of Monmouth's disastrous rebellion against James II, and was lucky to escape the 'Bloody Assizes' following Monmouth's defeat at Sedgemoor. Persistent overinvestment precipitated his bankruptcy in 1692, after which he turned to writing.

Defoe's first great success came with his satirical poem *The True-Born Englishman* (1701). *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702), an audacious parody of High Anglican extremism, brought him a charge of seditious libel and he was briefly imprisoned. Defoe was employed by successive ministries as a polemicist until about 1717, and continued to write prolifically thereafter in a range of fields including politics, economics, and religion.

Between 1719 and 1724, Defoe produced the pioneering fictional narratives on which his reputation has come to rest. Tbe first part of *Robinson Crusoe* was published on 25 April 1719, with a sequel in August. A third part, *Serious Reflections*, followed in 1720, in which year *Memoirs of a Cavalier* and *Captain Singleton* were also published. *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, and *A Journal of the Plague Year* appeared in 1722 and *Roxana* in 1724, to be followed by further major works of non-fiction, including *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724–6) and *The Complete English Tradesman* (1725–7). Defoe died following a stroke on 24 April 1731 while in hiding from a persistent creditor. He is buried in Bunhill Fields.

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DANIEL DEFOE

Moll Flanders

Text edited by
G. A. STARR and LINDA BREE

With an Introduction and Notes by
LINDA BREE

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INTRODUCTION

Daniel Defoe was in his sixties, with a long, varied, and largely unsuccessful career behind him when *Moll Flanders* was first published. A businessman who had failed more than once, a literary hack and occasional government spy who had been jailed for sedition, he was generally regarded as of little intellectual or creative importance: the most influential political satirist of the age, Jonathan Swift, notoriously dismissed him as 'the Fellow that was *pillor[y]'d*, I have forgot his Name . . . so grave, sententious, dogmatical a Rogue that there is no enduring him'.[1] For more than twenty years Defoe had been writing a stream of books and pamphlets, blending fact and fiction in various ways on a huge range of topics, political, religious, and moral. Most of them were issued anonymously, and many of them adopted particular voices, often for ironic purposes which were occasionally misunderstood. One of his most famous—or notorious—pamphlets, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702), so cleverly mimicked High Church bigotry that it was taken as genuine, caused a political storm, and landed its author in prison. In 1720, less controversially, a pamphlet that may have been his was issued in the voices of 'Dorothy Distaff, Abigail Spinning-Wheel, Eleanor Reel, &c.', defending the home industry of spinning against foreign imports.[2]

As a writer for hire Defoe was alert to popular trends in literature, which were changing fast in the early years of the eighteenth century. Long prose romances, peopled by mythical or type-characters, were being superseded by shorter narratives, which might, like Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688), mix entertainment with consideration of social issues, or might refer in veiled terms to contemporary people, situations, and scandals, as some of Eliza Haywood's and Delarivier Manley's tales did. In 1719 Defoe took the established genre of the travel narrative and transformed it into an account of human endurance and enterprise following a dramatic shipwreck: *The*

[1] *A Letter from a Member of the House of Commons in Ireland to a Member of the House of Commons in England, concerning the Sacramental Test* (1709), p. 6. Defoe is identified in a marginal note to the pamphlet reproduced in Swift's *Works* (1735).

[2] *The Female Manufacturers Complaint: Being The Humble Petition of Dorothy Distaff, Abigail Spinning-Wheel, Eleanor Reel, &c. Spinsters, to the Lady Rebecca Woolpack* (1720).

Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, published anonymously, proved an immediate popular success, and must have suggested to Defoe that there was potential in other full-length fictional-autobiographical narratives.

But an account of travel to exotic places was not the only popular genre at this time. There was a huge vogue for biographical and autobiographical accounts of criminals, particularly in London. This was no doubt prompted by the prevalence—or at least, the increasing fear—of crime in the rapidly growing metropolis, where rich and poor lived in uncomfortably close proximity. Accounts of criminal behaviour, often deriving from legal evidence reprinted in newspaper reports of trials, appeared in collections such as Alexander Smith's *History of the Lives of the most noted Highway-Men, Foot-Pads, House-breakers, Shop-Lifts and Cheats of Both Sexes* (first published 1714 and frequently reprinted in expanded versions). The life stories of individual criminals were issued in pamphlet form, many often printed in great haste as the 'final confessions' of convicted felons about to be hanged, for circulation among the crowds watching their executions as a public spectacle at Tyburn. Other publications offered more considered accounts of criminals of the past: enduring interest in the seventeenth-century fraudster and thief Mary Carleton, for example, prompted several full-length accounts of her criminal career many years after her death, at least one of which purported to be in her own voice.[3] It was inevitably unclear how much of these narratives was genuine confession and how much was invention, but that was part of their entertainment value: readers looked for the moral lesson of wrongdoers brought to justice, but at the same time had the pleasure of reading the details of their crimes, and the more lurid these were, the better.

Moll's Story

In 1721 Defoe created his own version of the criminal biography.[4] Following the conventions of the day there was a long title page

[3] Anon., *The Life and Character of Mrs. Mary Moders, alias Mary Stedman, alias Mary Carleton, alias Mary . . ., the Famous German Princess* (1678).

[4] It should be pointed out that *Moll Flanders*, like most of Defoe's work, was published anonymously, and he never acknowledged authorship during his lifetime; the introduction to *The History of Lætitia Atkins* (1776) identifies Defoe as the author of

account, operating somewhat like a modern overture in giving an inviting summary of what was to come. There followed a preface from the 'editor' of the papers from which the story was to be drawn, and the narrative baton was then handed over to 'the famous Moll Flanders' to recount her own 'history and misfortunes'.

Rarely can a prominent fictional character have been presented to the reader with such a mixture of fanfare and evasion. If readers had dutifully read the Preface before venturing into the narrative proper they would have discovered that the editor was discounting the 'history' in advance, claiming to have toned down, in a significant way, the manuscript as he received it—'particularly she is made to tell her own Tale in modester Words', so that 'all the Levity, and Looseness that was in it' has been purged (p. 4)—while those going straight to Moll's own story would find themselves engaging with a powerful narrative voice which from the outset declares an intention to offer disclosure on the one hand, and censorship on the other:

> My True Name is so well known in the Records, or Registers at *Newgate*, and in the *Old-Baily*, and there are some things of such Consequence still depending there, relating to my particular Conduct, that it is not to be expected I should set my Name, or the Account of my Family to this Work . . . It is enough to tell you, that . . . some of my worst Comrades . . . knew me by the Name of *Moll Flanders.* (p. 7)

'The famous Moll Flanders', it seems, isn't really 'Moll Flanders' at all. Moll's reasoning here is sound: she could still be tried for many of the crimes she is about to describe, and so she must naturally hide behind a cloak of anonymity (though we might later come to wonder how it is that her true name is so well known at Newgate when no one else seems to have any idea of it). At the same time, however, she neatly wrongfoots the reader who at this period would naturally expect that the history of a life would begin (as Robinson Crusoe's, for example, does) with an account of family background. 'It is enough to tell you . . .' is a clear signal that Moll, while taking the initiative to recount her story, will be keeping control of just how much she allows her reader to know.

This simultaneous impulse to confession and withholding, together with the fact that her narrative receives no counterpoint from any

Moll Flanders, and the attribution has since been generally accepted, though it still remains unproven.

other view (except for the brief preface, which is itself a piece of unsubstantiated assertion), renders Moll's account both authoritative and never completely convincing. At most points in the narrative Moll seems to be being very honest with the reader, explaining intimate details of her thought processes even when she shows herself at a disadvantage—'This was my Man, but I was to try him to the bottom, and indeed in that consisted my Safety; for if he baulk'd, I knew I was undone, as surely as he was undone if he took me' (p. 66)—but readers can never quite relax into the certainty that they are being told the 'whole truth'. Moll seems to express genuine regret for the fraud she is about to practise on the clerk who has travelled to Brickill to marry her:

> Then it occurr'd to me what 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! poor Gentleman! *said I* . . . (pp. 152–3)

Moll's compunction seems real, if momentary, and brutally honest (though with an unmistakable hint of bravado) in her account of her career—until she refers to the 'thirteen Men' she has lain with. Thirteen? The reader has been told of six up to this point in the narrative. Is this a slip on Moll's part, or a boast, or a deliberate tease about things she has not told us? Is Moll getting carried away with her own rhetoric? Is she so careless about the experience that she only remembers she has slept with some vague number of men? Is she lying—to herself? to us? Is this the editor's muddle? Or is Defoe himself making a mistake, being careless, or pointing up the editor's comment that Moll's narrative can't be trusted?

There are other occasions like this during the course of Moll's narrative, which make the process of reading it an oddly schizophrenic one. On one level we are carried away with the verisimilitude of Moll's account, and small points of detail are insignificant. On another level however, the story depends entirely on the reader's belief in Moll, as a real human being with real experiences and emotions, existing within a real environment with streets and coach routes that can be traced on a map. If that trust is shaken, we may make allowances and carry on; or

we may stop making allowances and stop believing in the world Moll has created, in which case the reading experience loses much of its point. In fact, the strength of Moll's narrative voice carries us through, as she persuades us that her personality overall is believable, even to some extent consistent in all its inconsistencies. The drive that makes her a successful thief is quite recognizable as the drive that makes her a successful planter in Virginia. The ruthlessness that makes her ready to abandon her children is the same ruthlessness that enables her to survive financial and emotional disaster, and bounce back.

The very way she tells her story further strengthens its air of veracity. Her tale is a single, continuous account. This occurs partly for the practical reason that chapter-divisions had not yet become established as conventional ways of dividing a narrative, but it exactly suits the story of an active, vigorous, managing (not to say manipulative) person over a long period of continuous existence, where one experience follows another and the narrative drives relentlessly forward, initially towards the crisis of Newgate and afterwards to safety and security. Once having begun to recount her History, it seems that Moll hardly stops for breath. Conscious of her audience and the drama of her situation, she conveys her emotions with immediacy and eloquence: on recognizing her Lancashire husband on the very day she is about to marry her London clerk,

> I thought I should have sunk into the Ground, my Blood run Chill in my Veins, and I trembl'd as if I had been in a cold Fit of an Ague: I say there was no room to question the Truth of it, I knew his Cloaths, I knew his Horse, and I knew his Face. (p. 155)

The all-importance of Moll herself to the effectiveness of her narrative has troubled many critics, because it gets to the heart of a persistent question as to whether *Moll*—and, for that matter, Defoe's fictions in general—can be regarded as novels in the way we have come to understand them through their development in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Certainly Ian Watt, in his landmark account of the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century, found *Moll* wanting, partly because of its dependence on character in the absence of a plot integrating cause and effect.[5] The parameters

[5] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957; repr. London: The Hogarth Press, 1987), p. 104.

which became established as 'normal' for fiction in the eighteenth century, and within an understanding of which Watt is writing, owe a surprising amount to classical commentators on literature. It was Aristotle who argued that literary presentation required the artistic shaping that plots provide; and in terms of making plots he argued that the single-person narrative was the most difficult around which to create a unified whole, precisely because of the restrictions imposed by a single viewpoint.[6]

Moll's story can in fact be seen to have a very general overarching structure, from corruption to crime, to the hell that is Newgate prison, to repentance, hard work, and prosperity. And there is some symmetry in the narrative. As a child she said she wanted to be a gentlewoman; she ends the novel in circumstances which are undeniably genteel (and without ever having had to go into the service of others, as she most feared). As a young woman she wanted to marry a gentleman; she finishes in something approximating that state, through her settled, if not quite legal, union with an ex-highwayman, quite content that her energy and competence compensate for his genteel inadequacies including his resistance to hard work and inability to make his own decisions. The first half of the novel concerns a series of episodes which, it could be argued, constitute a cumulative moral degradation: the loss of her virginity to the Elder Brother, her quasi-incestuous marriage to Robin, her bigamous marriage followed by her discovery that this 'husband' is her brother, and so on. In the second half of the novel we have her career of crime—though since she becomes liable to hanging from the very first time she steals, and since one of her very last crimes is the (rather comic) failure of an opportunistic attempt to steal a horse, it is hard to discern much progression there.

Overall, however, the strong linear nature of the narrative is undeniable. The strength of the novel, as has often been pointed out, is in vividly realized individual episodes, separated by rather flat, bridging sections of narrative, as Moll's life progresses to its predetermined conclusion. The typical features of the looping of a plot to link cause and effect, past and future, are almost entirely absent. Less than thirty years later, in *Tom Jones*, Henry Fielding created a fictional tour de

[6] Aristotle, 'On the Art of Poetry', chs. 8 and 9, in *Aristotle / Horace / Longinus: Classical Literary Criticism,* trans. and introd. T. S. Dorsch (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), pp. 42–5.

force in getting a large cast of characters together, from different strands of a highly complex plot, at the inn at Upton. The high degree of narrative shaping—marked by remarkable and repeated displays of coincidence—which was required for this to happen, plays a negligible part in Moll's story. The single-focus effect is exaggerated by Moll's own essential solitariness: of the various people who come and go during the course of her life, only two have anything approaching a continuous presence. Moll's Governess stands by her, for good or ill, for years, but even she drifts away when Moll leaves for America. Only Jemy reappears (twice) in a coincidental way, and significantly on both occasions Moll sees him before he sees her, which enables her to make a decision as to whether she wishes to make contact (the first time she declines the offer, the second time she accepts, seeking him out in Newgate and taking the initiative to grasp at happiness). Moll is never really recalled to her past unless she chooses to revisit it: and even then she is more likely to find out that the people she is interested in are dead (like the Colchester family, or the Redriff widow) or that time has wrought changes that fracture rather than cohere (as with her brother and son in the American colonies). Nemesis is notably absent.

All this of course serves to reinforce the focus of attention on Moll herself, the voice of the narrative and its holding force. But it also says something quite powerful about the experience of life. Indeed, it could be argued that there is a stronger resemblance to the vagaries of life in such narrative terms than in one shaped by the aesthetically satisfying but artificial connections required by the kind of strong plot we have come to expect in fiction.

A Cautionary Tale?

At a time when religious teaching suggested that imaginative literature was of very doubtful moral value in itself, most writers defended it by claiming a purpose of moral instruction. Time and again eighteenth-century writers declare—with varying degrees of conviction—that their work combines the useful and the entertaining, following Horace's famous dictum that 'The man who has managed to blend profit with delight wins everyone's approbation.'[7] For many writers

[7] Horace, 'The Art of Poetry', 337–65, in *Classical Literary Criticism*, trans. and introd. Dorsch, p. 91.

this was more than lip-service. It was important to Defoe—formed as he was in the tradition of Protestant dissent—and his readers that Moll's tale should offer a moral lesson as well as an entertaining story.

Moll herself of course is a moralist, although a somewhat complacent one. She has a good line in proverbs and aphorisms, sometimes drawn from others, sometimes self-coined: 'as Fame and Fools make an Assembly' (p. 51) or 'to sink under Trouble is to double the Weight' (p. 158). And she frequently expresses strong moral views about the behaviour of others, particularly the 'harden'd Wretches' with whom she finds herself in Newgate (p. 229), and en route to the transport ship. Her moralizing may not convince, as when she justifies the theft of the necklace from the child in Bartholomew Close by arguing that 'I had given the Parents a just Reproof for their Negligence' (p. 163); conversely, sometimes the sheer force of her narrative makes rather dubious moral positions persuasive, as in her condemnation of the 'two fiery Jades' who give evidence against her (p. 230). Often however, she judges her actions with a reasoned intelligence which, together with a conspicuous lack of sentiment or self-pity, carries conviction. Even while acknowledging the attractions of the Elder Brother to her teenage self she condemns her lack of 'solid Reflection' and declares herself 'a fair *Memento* to all young Women, whose Vanity prevails over their Vertue'. 'Nothing,' she adds candidly, 'was ever so stupid' (p. 22). Practical human failings however—even her own—are not her only concern. When she finally succumbs to 'the last Favour' she judges herself sternly: 'thus I finish'd my own Destruction at once, for from this Day, being forsaken of my Vertue, and my Modesty, I had nothing of Value left to recommend me, either to God's Blessing, or Man's Assistance' (p. 25). Here religious teaching reinforces practical common sense in a double blow, which would have made a stronger impression on her original audience, imbued with religious sensibilities in a way we may find hard to recover today.

In religious terms, of course, Moll's story is a simple one of sin, repentance, and redemption; but, as in her original 'fall', the spiritual and the material walk side by side throughout her narrative, with the material consistently complicating the simplicity of the religious fable. Indeed the latter is comprehensively undercut by the fact that Moll's repentance (in Newgate and under threat of the noose) seems relatively perfunctory, while her redemption manifests itself in a

startling level of worldly success—not to mention the fact that both her peace of mind and her material prosperity remain assured in the face of the Preface's comment that in extreme old age Moll was 'not so extraordinary a Penitent, as she was at first' (p. 6).

The complex mix of spiritual and material, the moral exemplum and the entertaining tale, is further exemplified by the part played by the devil in causing Moll's actions. In some ways it may seem convenient for Moll to displace her guilt on to a supernatural force, whether interior or exterior, but the level to which the devil is blamed for tempting innocence to sin raises genuinely uncomfortable questions about personal responsibility in the 'real' world. The devil is described as 'an unwearied Tempter' inviting Moll to wickedness, even in her affair with the Elder Brother (p. 23); later, when she finally turns to criminal activity, 'the Devil who I said laid the Snare, as readily prompted me, as if he had spoke . . . take the Bundle; be quick; do it this Moment' (p. 160).

But the devil here is in league with strong impulses which have very material origins. Moll has already invoked the famous Old Testament prayer, '*Give me not Poverty, least I steal*' and she is eloquent about the plight of those—including herself—in financial extremity: 'Poverty presses, the Soul is made Desperate by Distress, and what can be done?' (p. 160). She may later steal for pleasure or out of habit or compulsion, when there is no further material need for criminal behaviour; but that takes little away from the power of her moral stance here. People were starving with horrible frequency in early eighteenth-century London, and very little was being done about it: Moll challenges the reader—on religious, moral, and social grounds—to condemn her in her battle for survival.

And this seems to be Defoe's strategy throughout as far as morality and religion are concerned: the power of Moll's voice enables the moral stance to shift, for the moral impact of one scene to be undercut or contradicted by another, but for individual episodes to carry considerable moral power.

A Woman's Lot

After *Moll Flanders* appeared Defoe wrote several other autobiographical fictions, two of which offered variations on Moll's theme. The first, *The History and Remarkable Life of the truly Honourable*

Col. Jacque, commonly call'd Col. Jack (1722), described the adventures of another penniless orphan tempted to crime, but with the drive to achieve material and moral security, and in many respects a male counterpart of Moll. As a young man, Jack has more opportunities to succeed, for example in gaining an education, and apprenticeship to a (legitimate) skill, both of which are outside Moll's reach. But he is also vulnerable to physical threats in a way Moll is not.

There is very little physical violence in *Moll Flanders*, despite the looming presence of the hangman's noose, the cause of fear and dread among those liable to be arrested for the very wide range of crimes carrying the death penalty. Surprisingly perhaps, in light of what we know about eighteenth-century society, and manipulative relationships throughout history, Moll is never physically abused. Her career involves activities regarded as sinful and/or criminal under the legal system, but her crimes are mostly those involving property, about which many people feel at least slightly ambivalent as long as they are not the victims. Just as the highwayman was a rather attractive figure of transgression at the time (in Newgate Moll and the other prisoners rush to see the 'brave topping Gentlemen' who have been arrested after 'gallant Resistance' (p. 233); within a decade, the play *The Beggar's Opera* would romanticize the highwayman still further), so theft and fraud are, in Moll's narrative, relatively excusable. It is perhaps for this reason that for many readers the most disturbing episode in the novel is that in which Moll confesses an urge to commit physical harm—and to the most vulnerable of beings, a small child:

> the Child had a little Necklace on of Gold Beads, and I had my Eye upon that, and in the dark of the Alley I stoop'd, pretending to mend the Child's Clog that was loose, and took off her Necklace and the Child never felt it, and so led the Child on again: Here, I say, the Devil put me upon killing the Child in the dark Alley, that it might not Cry; but the very thought frighted me so that I was ready to drop down, but I turn'd the Child about and bad it go back again, for that was not its way home . . . (p. 162)

This episode is most commonly quoted because of the subsequent description of Moll's route home through the maze of City streets which follows the theft; this is also the one point where the novel hovers very uncomfortably on the brink of disaster. Moll's account of her instincts here sounds terrifyingly credible, and it is possible that the eighteenth-century reader might have placed more credence than

we are likely to do on the devil's responsibility for prompting human beings to sin, but had Moll killed the child—whether or not through instincts for self-preservation—there would have been no way back to the reader's sympathy. The taboo would have been breached whether the murderer had been a man or a woman, but killing a child has particular resonance when a woman's sensibility is involved.

This episode provides an intriguing link with Defoe's fiction of 1724, the official title of which is *The Fortunate Mistress: Or, A History of the Life and Vast Variety of Fortunes of Mademoiselle de Beleau, afterwards call'd the Countess de Wintselsheim, in Germany*, but which is usually known by one of the names of its heroine, *Roxana*. Roxana's narrative, like Moll's, ends with the reappearance of a lost child—in Roxana's case her daughter Susan, whose tenacity to learn the truth about her birth is at least as strong as that of her mother to withhold it. Roxana is at a loss what to do; there is a strong suspicion, in the strange disturbing end to her story, that her maid Amy has murdered the girl. In any case everything has unravelled and gone wrong.

Moll's story is never derailed in this way; its equivocations are of a different kind. It is a truism that an autobiographical account cannot end with the death of the protagonist, unless a third person intervenes at the crucial point. There are two such interventions in *Moll Flanders*: the summary of the narrative provided on the title page promises that the story ended when Moll 'at last grew *Rich*, liv'd *Honest*, and died a *Penitent*'. The Preface gives a less generous account: '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 abhorence of her former Life' (p. 6). But Moll's own personal story ends in quiet triumph, back in England with Jemy, 'where we resolve to spend the Remainder of our Years in sincere Penitence, for the wicked Lives we have lived' (p. 285).

There are other instructive comparisons between *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders*. Like *Moll*, *Roxana* offers a narrative of a woman trying to negotiate success in a world which very much limits woman's scope for action. Roxana begins her adult life as a virtuous married woman, but once reduced to widowhood and poverty she takes charge of her destiny by dispensing sexual favours, and in inverse relationship to the usual trajectory of the fallen woman in fiction she becomes favoured mistress first to a merchant, then to a prince, and finally to a king. Her assets are her physical beauty and her sexual allure, which never fail

her; she is canny enough to make an immense fortune, but she also revels in the luxurious display that high-class whoredom bestows. Unsurprisingly, she becomes wholly absorbed in the minutiae of her appearance and its effects. While Moll comments only in passing, albeit with some regret, that she only felt the need to resort to 'Paint' once well into her fifties (p. 197), Roxana, at a much younger age, makes an elaborate presentation to a lover of a handkerchief and water so he can prove that her flawless complexion is her own.[8]

Set against this, Moll's career seems less a by-product of her feminine identity than a more hard-headed deployment of her assets, which—luckily for her—include being 'well Bred, Handsome, Witty, Modest and agreeable' (p. 64). She regards feminine vanity as one of the chief causes of the loss of her virginity to the Elder Brother in Colchester, and comments from time to time about her pleasure in her good looks, but these always seem subordinate to other calculations, and her life is far from dominated by sexual considerations.

She is equally pragmatic about marriage. As a young woman she realizes that 'the market is against our sex just now'—that is, the prevailing culture gives men all the power in choosing a bride, and they are unlikely to choose a woman without enough money to help them in their own worldly ambitions: in that respect Robin, the Younger Brother, is an exception to the rule. Later Moll talks of the pleasure of being a good wife in a settled environment, and there is no reason to doubt this, though in a criminal autobiography it is perhaps not surprising that the periods in her life when she experienced domestic stability are quickly passed over. Meanwhile, through a series of liaisons with men to whom she is more or less not married, she exercises her rational judgement about possibilities. In her youth she argued that 'a Woman should never be kept for a Mistress, that had Money to keep her self' (p. 51), and though she compromises these beliefs later in accepting 'keeping' from her Bath lover, and regrets the fact that her London baronet will not 'keep' her, at the same time she is taking care to maintain her own financial independence, and in particular avoids the usual sexual dynamic of male power and female dependence. Throughout her career Moll is occasionally tempted by sexual desire—just as she was more than ready to be seduced by the Elder Brother, so she is more than willing for her Bath lover to lie with her,

[8] Defoe, *Roxana* (1724), pp. 85–6.

and she clearly feels genuine passion for Jemy—but (if we can believe her narrative notwithstanding those 'thirteen men') she never betrays one sexual partner with another, and she never becomes a common whore. At the same time, none of her husbands and lovers make her do anything she has not chosen to do herself, and she is the dominant partner in her last and most satisfactory heterosexual relationship, with Jemy.

Her skills are not, in fact, particularly those of her gender. Rather it is that she is a competent person: she is good at almost anything she turns her hand to, resourceful and hard-headed, independent and enterprising—a businesswoman in fact. She knows precisely what her assets are, and how to maintain and increase them. When, in the most abject situation as a convicted felon, she sees the chance of a reprieve and the option of transportation, she organizes the trip for herself and Jemy under the most favourable conditions, pays for most of the goods she and Jemy take with them, puts the plantation on a sound prosperous footing, reconciles with her son, gets her inheritance, and makes sure that she and Jemy are financially secure for the rest of their lives.

Time and Place

Given the range of writings he was involved with in the early 1720s, Defoe must have written *Moll Flanders* at speed. It is therefore hardly surprising that the novel contains many inaccuracies. Some basic errors in the narrative were corrected in the second edition: the signature on Moll's Lancashire husband's first letter is changed to 'J. E.' from 'A. E.', since his name is very shortly to be revealed as Jemy. References to the amount of money Jemy took with him to America, and to the number of convicts Moll accompanied to the ship, are made consistent. One larger correction strongly suggests that Defoe was making at least part of the story up as he went along: in the first edition, after stealing the drunken London baronet's possessions in the coach in the Strand, Moll 'gave my Gentleman and the Coach the slip both together, and never heard more of them' (p. 188). In fact within a very few paragraphs her re-encounter with the baronet is in train, so the second edition duly omits the last part of the sentence.

But changes to this kind of detail remind readers just how specific this narrative is, and how important circumstantial detail is to its

overall impression of verisimilitude. It has often been noted of Defoe that the real strength of his narratives lies in build-up of a detail which either is, or at least gives the impression of being, authentic. In this sense Defoe's general specificity matches Moll's own close observation and attention to detail as a necessary element in her self-preservation as a thief: she needs to be able to calculate exactly what clothes to wear for each attempt at theft, what to be carrying as defence in case she is caught, what her route is in escaping from the child in Bartholomew Close or the King's parade in the Mall. Defoe's familiarity with the topography of London—a teeming city more than ten times bigger than any other settlement in England, and where a large proportion of the literate population either lived or visited—pays dividends. We can plot Moll's movements on an early eighteenth-century map; but we don't really need to, because we are absolutely certain, from the way she describes her route, that she is giving an accurate account.

This knowledge extends to the wider topography of England. Defoe's monumental description of the major rural and urban, historical and contemporary, features of the British Isles, the *Tour thro' the whole Island of Great Britain*, was not published until 1724–6, but it drew on his extensive travels over many decades and the fruits of these journeys are apparent in descriptions of Moll's forays to the north-west and the south-east of England. As far as we know Defoe never visited the American colonies, and a recent study suggests that he was guilty of some inaccuracies in his descriptions of Maryland and Virginia,[9] but only at a minor level: in the main Moll's account of the life there gives the same convincing impression as her days in London.

The narrative is less secure when it comes to time. Clearly it is necessary, in a narrative of a long life, for the early years to take place far enough in the past to allow the narrative to reach the present in a timely way, but nevertheless it is startling to see Moll signing off, at the end of her narrative, with the date, 1683. As far as we know, there is no particular significance to that date (Defoe was then a young man, just becoming established as a merchant), and nothing has been made of the particular events that might have intervened in Moll's story: the Civil War leading to the execution of Charles I as she was coming up to 40, the restoration of Charles II around the time she and Jemy

[9] Dennis Todd, *Defoe's America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

cheated each other into marriage. However, somewhat surprisingly, Moll's own timeline broadly works out, beginning with her birth in 1613 and proceeding for seven decades. Moll's is a long life, and there is a poignancy in the listing of her experiences, succeeding each other and being lost, or half-lost, in the memory. Thirteen children come and (mostly) go; marriages and pseudo-marriages occur, seem to promise security, but then fail; people are important and then are not; opportunities offer, risks loom, death is an ever-present threat for those of any age. Every few years, in a life as unpredictable as Moll's, she has no choice but to reinvent herself and begin again. Many early readers, while baulking at the underworld aspect of Moll's experiences, would surely have recognized a similarity, in her career, to the rootless nature of life for anyone without the secure underpinning of a prosperous family. As the eighteenth century advanced, many fictions seemed to become ever more closely focused on the marriage choices of very young adults. This was an important topic for a society dependent on wealth through inheritance and the alliance of family wealth. But the consequent neglect of imaginative engagement with the longer-term experiences of life was a real loss.

Moll's Afterlife

Moll Flanders was published in January 1722, and proved both immediately and enduringly popular, prompting a second edition within a year and further editions through the eighteenth century. In addition to this—perhaps aided by the fact that Moll's narrative is her own, with no authoritative author behind her—the charismatic figure of Moll Flanders almost immediately took on a life of her own. Soon, *The Life and Actions of Moll Flanders*[10] offered a 200-page abridgement, and eight- and twenty-four-page chapbook versions publicized the main points of the story in large print and adorned with woodcuts of the major episodes. In the light of this, together with the obvious link to the criminal autobiography genre, it is not surprising that the tale became associated with entertainment for the lower orders: 'Down in the kitchen, honest Dick and Doll | Are studying Colonel

[10] The work is undated; the British Library dates its copy tentatively as 1723 but this may be a little early; the printer T. Read seems to have been active from the mid-1720s to 1751.

Jack and Flanders Moll' wrote a contributor to *The Flying Post* in 1729.[11] (This kind of study among the lower orders was not much encouraged: a broadside version of 'Moll Flanders' is visible behind the already-neglected loom of Hogarth's idle apprentice.[12])

Some of these abridgements followed Defoe's narrative fairly closely, sometimes doing little more than summarizing his prose; but others strayed a long way from the original, occasionally creating muddle as they did so. One, towards the end of the century, while detailing on the title page the full extent of Moll's sexual and criminal career, contains in its actual text no mention of her Bath lover or her Lancashire husband, and disposes of her criminal activities in three paragraphs.[13] Most of the abridgements, however, while reducing the story to a few pages, take the opposite course and exaggerate Moll's crimes, itemizing them gleefully on the title page: '17 Times a Whore . . . 11 Times in Bridewell, 9 Times in New Prison . . . 25 Times in Newgate, 15 Times whipt at the Cart's Arse . . .'.[14]

The abridgements, keen to emphasize the moral message as well as the story, are clearly uncomfortable with the idea that we never know Moll's real identity. These versions attempt to pin Moll down, not just by giving her a visual image through the woodcut portraits, but by offering various back-stories: *Fortune's Fickle Distribution*, which recounts the careers of her governess and highwayman husband as well as her own, confidently identifies Moll as daughter to Irish highwayman James Fitzpatrick and his thief-wife Mary Flanders; *The Life and Actions of Moll Flanders* gives Moll's real name as Elizabeth Atkins, an identity further developed in *The History of Lætitia Atkins, Vulgarly called Moll Flanders*, issued in 1776 with the claim that it represented Defoe's own second thoughts about Moll's story, but deriving very closely from the *Life and Actions*.[15] All the various

[11] *The Flying Post; or Weekly Medley*, 1 Mar. 1729.

[12] William Hogarth, *Industry and Idleness* series of prints (1747), print 1, 'The Fellow 'Prentices at their Looms'.

[13] *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* printed by T. Sabine, undated, *c.*1790.

[14] Extracted from the title sheet of both the 8-page and 24-page chapbook versions, 'Printed and Sold in Aldermary Churchyard', *c.*1750.

[15] *Fortune's Fickle Distribution; In Three Parts. Containing First, The Life and Death of Moll Flanders . . . The Life of Jane Hackabout, her Governess . . . The Life of James Mac-Faul, Moll Flanders's Lancashire Husband* (1759 edn.); *The History of Lætitia Atkins, Vulgarly Called Moll Flanders, Published by Mr. Daniel Defoe* (1776).

versions stress Moll's end-of-life penitence as a way of emphasizing the moral nature of her story, often extending the narrative to cover her death. Mostly they simply embellish the idea of Moll's eventual prosperity, with the *Life and Actions* and *Lætitia Atkins* giving her a very elaborate will disposing of her fortune to family and an extensive array of servants. *Fortune's Fickle Distribution*, however, chooses to point the moral the other way: in this version Moll, left a widow, becomes victim at last to the schemes of another female crook, who in the guise of a man marries her and steals all her money so that she 'died with mere Want and Grief, and was buried at the Expence of the Parish'.[16]

All this time the novel itself continued to be reprinted at regular intervals and, after its formal identification as part of Defoe's oeuvre in George Chalmers's 1790 biography of Defoe, became a narrative that critics interested in Defoe would have to take some account of. Critical favour, however, was a long time coming. While *Robinson Crusoe* had since its first publication been regarded as a classic of modern prose fiction, *Moll Flanders* continued to be regarded with some disdain. Chalmers himself had set the tone. For him, Defoe's only important work of fiction was *Robinson Crusoe* (and in fact, the first version of the biography, appended to an edition of Defoe's pamphlet about the union between England and Scotland, omitted to mention any of the other fictions, leading critics to complain that he seemed not to know about them). Writing of *Moll*, alongside *Colonel Jack* and *Roxana*, Chalmers commented 'I am not convinced, that the world has been made much wiser, or better, by the perusal of these lives: they may have diverted the lower orders . . . But they do not exhibit many scenes which are welcome to cultivated minds.'[17] This view is echoed by the Romantics, who clearly did not find Moll congenial to their tastes: Walter Scott's lengthy account of Defoe's works lets Moll, with Colonel Jack and Roxana, 'pass by, as we would persons, howsoever otherwise interesting, who may not be in character and manners entirely fit for good society'; Charles Lamb thought that Moll's story, 'though seriously told, and abounding in just reflections . . . cannot be recommended for indiscriminate perusal.

[16] *Fortune's Fickle Distribution*, p. 55.
[17] George Chalmers, *The Life of Daniel De Foe* (1790), pp. 5, 59.

The scenes it unfolds are such as must be always unwelcome to a refined and well-cultivated mind.'[18]

Moll's fortunes did not much improve as the nineteenth century advanced. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the Victorians were troubled by the nature of Defoe's representation of women—one critic complained that they were 'without grace, without purity, without dignity, they are even without passion . . . they are wholly destitute of sentiment and of the charm of poetry'. But the importance of appealing to the cultivating mind was finally beginning to be overtaken by other criteria, and the same critic went on to admit that 'they act and speak like living beings . . . They interest us, because of the one touch of nature, and as specimens of our common humanity.'[19]

It is this aspect of Moll Flanders that has continued to appeal to twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers, less troubled than their ancestors by the need to find either sentiment or moral and religious lessons in their fictions. Although late twentieth-century feminist interpreters have found new interests in Moll's story through the lens of the particular concerns of women, in fact Moll conforms less to the idea of woman as victim of patriarchy than to that of humanity facing opportunity, challenge, and temptation, and—against overwhelming odds—achieving peace of mind and worldly success through a mixture of luck, resourcefulness, hard work, a thick skin, and a rather generous interpretation of poetic justice. In that, she speaks quite as eloquently and effectively today as she did to her first audience.

[18] *The Miscellaneous Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.* (Edinburgh, 1834), vol. 4, pp. 248–81, reprod. in Pat Rogers (ed.), *Daniel Defoe: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1972), p. 68; Walter Wilson, *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Daniel De Foe* (3 vols., 1830), reprod. in Rogers (ed.), *Defoe: Critical Heritage*, p. 93.

[19] From unsigned review article, *Cornhill Magazine*, 23 (Mar. 1871), pp. 310–20, reprod. in Rogers (ed.), *Defoe: Critical Heritage*, p. 201.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

THE date of 1721 on the title page of *Moll Flanders* is misleading. Possibly a 1721 publication had been intended, and either Defoe or the printers encountered delays during the publication process, but for whatever reason publication did not take place until January 1722. On 26 January the *Daily Post* carried an advertisement to announce that '*To morrow will be publish'd* The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the famous Moll Flanders, &c. . . .' and the following day the *Evening Post* announced that the volume had been published 'this Day'. Although, following the usual practice of the time, later advertisements continued to claim that *Moll Flanders* had been published 'this Day' it seems likely that therefore the novel was issued on 27 January 1722. It was printed for, and sold by, London booksellers W. Chetwood and T. Edling (a misprint for Edlin), and its price was five shillings. A second edition, 'corrected', was advertised for publication in October 1722, as printed for and sold by Chetwood and Edlin, together with W. Mears, J. Brotherton, C. King, and J. Stags (a misprint for Stagg), though only 'John Brotherton' is listed as printer on the title page.[1] A third edition, also 'corrected', was advertised for publication in December 1722 under the auspices of the same group.[2] There were no further editions of *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders* before Defoe's death in 1731, although there were several pirated versions of varying lengths and similarity to the original.

The third edition is, in fact, the second edition text with a new title page added; but the second edition does indeed contain many 'corrections', as well as other changes, from the first edition. Most notably the text is shortened by a significant 10,000 words, helping to compress the first edition's 424 pages into 366 of the same size in the second edition. It is a matter of speculation whether Defoe had any hand in the second edition changes. No manuscript for *Moll Flanders* has survived, and nothing is known about the circumstances of writing and publication of the work. However, one comment on Defoe's writing practices in general might shed light on his likely role in the

[1] *Daily Post*, Wednesday 31 Oct. 1722.
[2] *Daily Post*, Friday 21 Dec. 1722.

changes to *Moll*. Seven years after Defoe's death the anonymous editor(s) of a new edition of his *Complete English Tradesman* (writing to justify the extensive adjustments made to the original) commented on Defoe's writings:

> generally speaking, they are too verbose and circumlocutory; insomuch, that it has been well observed of them, That to have a complete Work come out of his hands, it was necessary to give him so much *per* Sheet to write it in his own way; and half as much afterwards to lop off its excrescences, or abstract it . . .
>
> We do not say this, to reflect upon the abilities of this ingenious gentleman: 'Tis well known, that as he was obliged to make a trade of writing, and rated his labours according to the number of sheets which composed the book he undertook, so he suffer'd himself to run into this luxuriancy, very probably, more in compliance with his circumstances, than according to his judgment.[3]

In the case of *Moll Flanders*, whether the printer paid Defoe to cut his earlier work for the new edition, or whether the printer did the cutting himself, is unclear. The cuts are almost entirely matters of detailed drafting. No complete paragraphs are removed, and no changes are made that materially alter the plot or characterization.

For example, here is Moll's reaction when she is told by one of the prison keepers what little chance she has of escaping hanging:

> This was a stab into the very Vitals of one under such a Burthen as I was oppress'd with before, and I cou'd not speak to him a Word good or bad, for a great while, but at last I burst out into Tears, and said to him, Lord! Mr. —— What must I do? Do, *says he*, send for the Ordinary send for a Minister, and talk with him . . .
>
> first edition, pp. 282–3

> This was a Stab into the very Vitals of one under such a Burden, and I could not speak a Word good or bad, for a great while; at last I burst out into Tears, and said to him, O Sir, What must I do? Do, *says he*, send for a Minister, and talk with him . . .
>
> second edition (1722), p. 299

The second edition changes in general reduce Moll's repetitions, circumlocutions, and intensifying words and phrases, streamlining her

[3] Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman* (1738 edn., rev. and re-ordered), pp. x–xi.

narrative to some extent, but also rendering her voice and personality slightly less colourful; mildly blasphemous language (such as 'Lord!' in the example above) is omitted. However, changes are inconsistently applied, with many examples of repetitions, circumlocutions, and intensifiers remaining untouched; and many give signs of hasty work, obscuring rather than clarifying the sense, as in the removal of the phrase 'deluded by this Madam the Procuress' which makes nonsense of the rest of the sentence (p. 126). On very rare occasions a word or two is added to the text, as when Moll comments with horror that the prisoners 'Brutishly huzza'd' rather than simply 'huzza'd' as they watched their condemned comrades leave for Tyburn (p. 243).

Any reader of early eighteenth-century texts is aware that words can be spelt a variety of ways, and it is impossible to draw a clear boundary between error and variant spelling. The second edition corrects some spelling errors, introduces others, and generally often spells words differently. A number of larger inconsistencies in the text are removed: in the second edition Moll no longer comments of her London baronet and his coach that she 'never heard more of them' (p. 188), when in fact her adventures with the baronet are far from completed; Jemy no longer signs his first letter to Moll 'A.E.'. One major problem about the text, however, remains unsolved: towards the end, in the first edition, a section concerning the involvement in and arrangement for Jemy over transportation (pp. 259–61) seems to be repeated in two alternative ways, suggesting that Defoe had had second thoughts about it but had then omitted to cross out the version he had rejected; those preparing the second edition clearly realized that something was amiss here, but responded by merely moving two paragraphs, which does not solve the problem. This is perhaps an indication that Defoe himself was not involved.

My copytext is the first edition. I have removed the long 's' throughout, and have adjusted 'whether' to 'whither' and 'then' to 'than' since early eighteenth-century convention is confusing in that respect. Otherwise I have left the original, very idiosyncratic, spelling and punctuation untouched except where the sense is so obscured that it is reasonable to assume the original is an error. I have undertaken a complete collation of the first two editions but have not reproduced the full results here; those interested in examining an extensive list of variants should go to the Oxford English Novels version of the

novel.[4] I have adopted a second edition reading only when this seems an obvious and straightforward correction to an error in the first edition. I have commented, in the notes, on any difference between the editions which seems to me to have a significant impact on the sense of the text.

I mentioned the vagaries of spelling of eighteenth-century words. Many words have also changed their meaning since Defoe's time, or had an older meaning alongside one more familiar to us; the Glossary at the end of this volume collects such words together, and I hope readers will find it useful.

[4] Daniel Defoe, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders &c.*, ed. G. A. Starr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

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A CHRONOLOGY OF DANIEL DEFOE

	Life and works	*Historical events*
1660	Autumn: Daniel Defoe, son of James Foe, a prosperous tallow chandler, born in St Giles, Cripplegate.	Restoration of the Stuart monarchy with the arrival and coronation of Charles II in London.
1662	Samuel Annesley ejected from his living at St Giles, Cripplegate. The Foes follow him out of the Anglican church, becoming Nonconformists or Dissenters.	Act of Uniformity requires the use of all rites and ceremonies from the Book of Common Prayer in Anglican services.
1665	The Foes probably leave London during the outbreak of plague.	Start of the second Anglo-Dutch War. Plague in London kills 68,000.
1668	Defoe's mother, Ann Foe, dies some time between 1668 and 1671.	England, Sweden, and the United Provinces form the Triple Alliance against France.
1670		Charles agrees Treaty of Dover with Louis XIV, promising to restore England to Catholicism in return for subsidies.
1672	Defoe probably attends boarding school of James Fisher, an Independent clergyman, in Dorking, Surrey, at about this time.	Charles II issues Declaration of Indulgence, permitting licensed worship by Dissenters.
1673		First Test Act excludes Catholics and Dissenters from public office.
1674	Defoe enters Charles Morton's academy in Newington Green, where he trains for the Presbyterian ministry.	Parliament proposes to place new limitations on future Catholic rulers. Third Anglo-Dutch war ends with the Treaty of Westminster.
1678		Onset of the Exclusion Crisis: allegations of a Jesuit plot to kill Charles II and replace him with his Catholic brother, James, precipitate sustained attempts to exclude James from the succession.

	Life and works	*Historical events*
1681	Defoe decides against the ministry and becomes a wholesale hosier.	Parliament passes second Exclusion Bill against James.
1683	Defoe established as a hosier, living in Cornhill.	Rye House Plot to assassinate Charles II.
1684	Defoe marries Mary Tuffley, with a dowry of £3,700; the marriage produces six daughters and two sons.	Pope Innocent XI forms a Holy League to evict the Turks from Europe.
1685	Defoe is among the Monmouth rebels routed at the Battle of Sedgemoor in Somerset, but escapes the subsequent 'Bloody Assizes'.	Accession of James II. Rebellion raised by James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, bastard son of Charles II, defeated at Sedgemoor. Louis XIV revokes Edict of Nantes, ending toleration for Protestants in France.
1687	Defoe becomes a liveryman of the Butchers' Company. His name appears in the General Pardon issued for Monmouth rebels.	James II issues his first Declaration of Indulgence, suspending laws against Catholics and Dissenters.
1688	Defoe publishes his first pamphlet, *A Letter to a Dissenter from His Friend at the Hague*, alleging the insincerity of James II's offer of religious toleration.	Second Declaration of Indulgence. William of Orange lands at Torbay, precipitating 'Glorious Revolution' and flight of James to France. England joins War of the League of Augsburg against France.
1689	Defoe joins a 'Royal Regiment of Volunteer Horse', led by Monmouth's son, in parade honouring William III at the Lord Mayor's Show.	Parliament offers crown to William and passes Bill of Rights, limiting power of the monarchy. James II lands in Ireland. Toleration Act grants Dissenters rights of religious assembly, but not civil equality.
1690	Throughout this period, Defoe invests in shipping and an import/export business trading in tobacco, timber, wines and spirits, and hosiery.	James II decisively defeated by William III at the Battle of the Boyne, near Drogheda, Ireland.
1692	Defoe goes bankrupt for £17,000, and is committed to the Fleet and later the King's Bench Prison.	Massacre at Glencoe against the MacDonald clan, who had delayed pledging allegiance to William III.
1694	Establishes brick and tile factory at Tilbury, Essex. House of Lords rejects Bill to relieve named merchants (including Defoe) of part of their outstanding debt.	William makes a succession of political appointments, creating 'Whig Junto'. Bank of England established.

	Life and works	*Historical events*
1695	Defoe becomes an accountant to the commissioners of the window tax. He now styles himself 'De Foe'.	Window tax imposed in England. Licensing Act lapses, suspending formal censorship of the press.
1697	Defoe publishes first major work, *An Essay upon Projects*.	Treaty of Ryswick ends War of the League of Augsburg. Louis XIV recognizes William III as king of England.
1698	*Lex Talionis; or, An Enquiry into the most Proper Ways to Prevent the Persecution of the Protestants in France*.	Launch of Darien scheme, an unsuccessful attempt by Scotland to establish a colony on the isthmus of Panama.
1701	Defoe becomes a household name with publication of *The True-Born Englishman*, a verse satire defending William III.	James II dies in exile. Louis XIV declares his grandson king of Spain, invades the Spanish Netherlands, and recognizes James II's son as James III.
1702	*The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, a satire on the extremism of High Church Tories such as the preacher Henry Sacheverell, leads to issue of a warrant for Defoe's arrest.	Death of William III and accession of Queen Anne. Outbreak of War of Spanish Succession, fought by a European coalition, including England, to prevent the Bourbon dynasty inheriting the Spanish throne.
1703	Defoe imprisoned and pilloried for his authorship of *The Shortest Way*, released after intervention by Robert Harley, Speaker of the House of Commons and Secretary of State, but now financially ruined.	Southern England battered by the great storm of 26–7 November.
1704	Harley recruits Defoe as a political agent. Defoe publishes *The Storm* and launches the *Review*, a periodical on politics, trade, and religion (1704–13).	Whigs secure electoral victories, bringing the Whig Junto to power. British Forces capture Gibraltar and defeat the French at the Battle of Blenheim.
1706	Defoe publishes *Jure Divino*, a verse satire on arbitrary rule. Second bankruptcy. Sent to Scotland to advance the interests of political union with England, and publishes vigorously in this cause until 1710.	English, Dutch, and German troops defeat the French at the Battle of Ramillies. French fleet destroyed in Toulon.

	Life and works	*Historical events*
1707	Defoe is closely involved in political manoeuvres and negotiations leading to the Union.	Act of Union between England and Scotland creates the unitary state of Great Britain.
1708	Defoe reports to London on elections in Scotland, and serves the new ministry under Sidney Godolphin until 1710.	Attempted Jacobite landing at the Firth of Forth. General election brings in a moderate Whig and Tory administration.
1709	Publishes *The History of the Union of Great Britain*.	Copyright Act establishes limited protection of literary property.
1710	Defoe returns to Scotland to calm fears over High Church Tory extremism in England. He serves Robert Harley's ministry 1710–14.	Impeachment trial of Sacheverell. Whigs lose their majority in parliament. Harley becomes Chancellor of the Exchequer and starts secret peace talks with France.
1711	Defoe makes his final visit to Scotland. Publishes *An Essay on the History of Parties*, reviewing past legislation against Dissenters and attacking the Bill against Occasional Conformity.	South Sea Company established. Occasional Conformity Act prevents Dissenters and Catholics from taking occasional Anglican communion to qualify for public office.
1713	Defoe suffers further arrests for debt and, following publication of *Reasons against the Succession of the House of Hanover* and two other ironic tracts, seditious libel; successfully petitions Queen Anne for pardon.	Treaty of Utrecht ends War of the Spanish Succession. Britain secures the Asiento, the monopoly on trading slaves to Spanish America. General election results in a massive Tory victory.
1714	Defoe writes in defence of his patron, Harley, against charges of high treason.	Schism Act requires all teachers to conform to Church of England. Death of Anne and accession of George I, inaugurating Whig political supremacy until 1760.
1715	Defoe's career as a hired party writer drawing to a close. Publishes volume i of *The Family Instructor*, his first conduct manual, and a partly autobiographical text, *An Appeal to Honour and Justice*.	Major Jacobite rebellion in Scotland. With Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, Robert Harley is impeached for treason. Bolingbroke flees to France.
1716	Defoe edits *Mercurius Politicus* (1716–20), a moderate Tory monthly journal.	Upsurge in piracy on the eastern seaboard of North America at about this time.