

RESEARCH ARTICLE



ISSN

INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

POST COLONIALISM AND ECOFEMINISM IN DANIEL DEFOE'S *MOLL FLANDERS*

MAHNAZ POORSHAHIDI

PhD Student, Idaho State University and Teaching Assistant

Email: [m.poorshahidi.caspian@gmail.com](mailto:m.poorshahidi.caspian@gmail.com)



MAHNAZ POORSHAHIDI

Article info

Article Received:23/06/2023

Article Accepted:04/08/2023

Published online:12/08/2023

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.11.3.126](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.11.3.126)

Abstract

This article is a critical analysis of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* in the light of post colonialism and ecofeminism. As we read the novel, we can notice the discourse of power manifested in the colonial discourse and all means of colonial discourse including racism, gender discrimination, social and economic differences. All are related to male-dominant society. Within the discourse of colonialism, women and poor class people, are considered "the other" whose fate is decided by city authorities, the colonizer who is the superior. On the other hand, according to ecofeminists, nature has always been misused and exploited by male power. So, it is associated with femininity. However, I believe that nature should not be necessarily physical environment. Femininity is associated with nature, so women are Nature which is initially pure and intact, but later exploited by male power. This is the same to Moll. She has been misused by the patriarchal society which considers her as inferior. Defoe tried to fight for the equality between men and women and depicted this challenge in his novel. *Moll Flanders* is a realistic depiction of women's life in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. However, when Moll attained self-awareness, and tried to overcome all the barriers that had been imposed on her for centuries. I tried to have a new approach to *Moll Flanders* and apply ecofeminism along with post colonialism to the novel. I believe both terms are interconnected and inseparable. The novel has been read in the light of colonialism and post colonialism, but ecofeminism has not been applied to the novel which is a novel and new approach.

Keywords: postcolonialism, ecofeminism, gender discrimination, power, Nature.

*Moll Flanders* is considered by some critics as Defoe's masterpiece. Compared with his contemporary writers, Defoe was very ahead of his time by creating a female character like Moll through whom he protects women's rights in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century England. The success of the novel may lie in the fact that it embodies the general atmosphere and view of the time, marked by the growing patriotism, colonialism, trade and expansion of power which strengthened the idea of

superiority for some, and "otherness" for others. Defoe who belonged to the capitalists and spent some time in Newgate Prison, has successfully represented the spirit and culture dominant in his society.

*Moll Flanders* is the story of a woman who was born in Newgate prison because her mother was a thief. Since she was born, she lost her parents and was brought up in an orphanage. Due to economic

pressure and strain, she married five times and even served as a mistress. As a woman with no education and fortune, she had no way out but to be a thief like her mother. At last, she was expelled to Virginia and followed the life she had always dreamed of.

In 18<sup>th</sup> century, England was a patriarchal and male dominant society. For women the only way to get a decent social status was marriage. However, being impacted by the Enlightenment, Defoe believed in equality between men and women. Moll Flanders was the outcome of this view. The novel depicts that Moll stands for all the women who lived in that era, who were oppressed by their own families as well as the male-centered society.

However, much has been written about Daniel Defoe and his works specially Moll Flanders which has been reviewed and analyzed from colonial, feminist and misogynist perspective, but no one has looked at it from postcolonial and ecofeminist perspectives. We can apparently perceive Defoe's overriding concern for women, their welfare and social position in his works, specially Moll Flanders.

He criticizes the social norms and patriarchal values which overshadowed women's education and social position. In Moll Flanders, he portrays how Moll "breaks the stereotypical mould and flaunts the rules" (7) dictated by authorities who expect her how to live.

In this essay, I will refer to colonial, postcolonial and ecofeminist theories, and analyze their impact and representation in Moll Flanders. The aim of this paper is to analyze how Defoe tries to depict and advocate women's position in 18<sup>th</sup> century society of England, and evaluate the degree to which Defoe's work can be considered a postcolonial and ecofeminist novel.

In order to do this, initially, I will elaborate ecofeminism and see how it has been depicted in Moll Flanders. Next, I will expound postcolonial theory and see how Defoe has tried to illustrate it in his novel. Simultaneously, I will look at how women, regardless of their social class, and even children are treated by patriarchal values and practices. Most importantly, throughout my reading of Moll

Flanders, I will present what I consider to be a new interpretation of Defoe's work by having an ecofeminist reading of it considering 18<sup>th</sup> century industrial revolution and innovations in technology and their negative consequences on women as well as nature.

### Ecofeminism in Moll Flanders

The hierarchical system dominant in our societies results in and generates oppression. This dualistic attitude has obviously divided the world into two groups: the dominant (the oppressor) and the subordinate (the oppressed). This outlook justifies the exploitation of both women and nature and misbehavior held towards them. Ecofeminism is about the "interconnectedness" between women and nature. Ecofeminism is a framework which looks at feminism and ecology simultaneously. We can see a reflection of these dominant social narratives in literature in which both nature and women are either pristine or a destructive force. Daniel Defoe is one of those authors who has tried to recognize the interconnectedness of both women and nature which is surprising to the modern reader.

Ecofeminists assert that if women act against nature, it will destroy them. Moll symbolizes nature which is pristine, beautiful, simple, talented and fertile. However, her downfall was the result of her vanity, pride and vain. Since she believed herself to be beautiful, it was not difficult for her to believe that through her beauty, she could seduce men. In the same way that mankind has exploited and colonized all the land on the earth, men also exploited and colonized women in 18<sup>th</sup> century society. Women used to believe that a man had done her a favor by marrying her.

Alicia H.Puelo defines ecofeminism as "the meeting between feminism and ecology" (15). Over the past years, ecofeminism has been on the rise specially among young women. It does not imply that only women strive to protect and preserve nature which can represent their own body, or identity. There are also men who devote their time and life to protect nature, animals and women. Although the term has been coined recently, Defoe who tried to fight for the equality between men and women, depicted this issue perfectly well in his

"Moll Flanders". Moll was abused by the older brother for her simplicity and beauty. She insisted on marrying him, but he only considered his own fate and fortune and tried to convince her otherwise. As mentioned earlier, if women act against nature, nature will destroy them. We can easily perceive this implication in Moll's sexual relation with the older brother who touched her beauty and then left her as the wife of his own brother. The one who loved her and willingly married her, and missed his family wealth, was Robert. Regardless of her social class, economic status and family background, he married her. He stands for men who have devoted their life and time to make equality in the world, specially the male-dominated, wealth-centered Eighteenth Century Society of England. The time on which men had the power to control others, and wealth was the main factor in deciding whom to marry. Even upper class-women repressed women of the lower-class.

So, when Moll gained self-awareness at some point in her life, she tried to overcome all the barriers that had been imposed on her for centuries. She even persuaded other women (for example a friend) to take their revenge on men who had imposed and incurred all those imparities and oppressions. As Alicial H. Puelo writes, "the emphasis on the identity of women as a mother linked to the Earth that we find in some forms of ecofeminism can involve a regression with respect to the feminist principle of motherhood as a free personal choice" (15). They call for equality and self-empowerment which means women's sexual and reproductive rights. This is what Defoe is trying to promote in his novels. Moll and all the other women, regardless of their social status, had no power and control over their bodies. They played the role of sex objects and whether married or not, delivered babies over whose birth they had no power to decide. The patriarchal society has always refused women's right to decide on their own bodies. The same as ecofeminists, Moll believes that women must be recognized as subjects and choose the life and husband they want, not to be chosen by them because of their wealth. We must attain enlightenment and gain awareness that women and our planet are the same. In the same way that destroying the Earth will lead to our destruction,

oppressing and possessing women as a slave is excessively irrational and will lead to our own destruction. This is the case when Moll took her revenge on men. Since her childhood, Moll endeavored for equality and tried to follow life of a gentlewoman rather than respecting and following the dominant customs and leading the life the authorities were going to determine for her. The British culture and customs were unfair to women especially poverty-stricken women. They were the most ignored in the 18<sup>th</sup> century culture. This was the issue against which Moll tried to resist and not to give up even in her childhood. When she got older, she realized that to have a decent life and husband, she had to have fortune. When there is no wealth to survive, women turn to the path of immorality and follow an indecent life. So, Defoe gave voice to the idea that by destroying women, we may destroy the future of mankind. By giving voice to Moll, Defoe aimed to depict that it is time to demand, teach, and share attitudes, roles and virtue. It is time to seek equality, liberty and sovereignty for women over their bodies and lives.

Defoe portrays a female protagonist as a revolutionary character "who breaks the norms as definitions of the masculine world. In ecofeminists' perspective, women and the environment are interconnected and domination of women and degradation of the environment are the outcome of capitalists and patriarchal attitudes" (10). As the name suggests ecofeminism examines the connections between women and nature. Prior to ecofeminists, feminists believed in equality between genders and revaluing the patriarchal practices and structure of society. To this, ecofeminists have added the relation and connection between women and nature. They believe the way women are treated by male-centered societies is the same that nature is treated by them. They argue that human life is dependent on nature (women). However, by construction and industrial practices, we are losing the nature which has given birth to us.

Industrial Revolution started in 18<sup>th</sup> century England, the time when steam power, industrial factories, machineries and new modes of agriculture were launched. The time which was the starting point of pollution, soil degradation and increase in

the amount of poverty especially in poor class people. So many people, including poor women, started to suffer from the consequences of these projects. As Gourish Chandra Mondal writes “categorizing women and subjugated peoples with the environment allows for the recognition of social and environmental injustices from a unique and often forgotten perspective, which in turn allows solidarity and solace” (13). Defoe vividly tried to depict the negative impacts of the industrial revolution and economic growth on both women and children as well as poor class men in his works. As ecofeminists agreed that male power is accountable for all the destructions imposed on nature, it is also responsible for the downfall and misfortunes suffered by women. Defoe implied that women can be associated with nature. They symbolize birth, care and love. He endeavored to envisage that destruction of nature and women can lead to destruction of human race. We can interpret Moll as the voice of ecofeminists who tried to stand against all these cruelties imposed on women. She was born in prison and had no control over her own birth. In the same way that she had no control over the children she gave birth to. Up to the age of 15, she was brought up by a nurse who taught her needlework. She aimed to earn money through it and have a moral life of a gentle woman. However, after the death of her nurse, she was adopted by a wealthy family and seduced by the oldest son. He seduced her and spoiled her virginity by promising to marry her. Nonetheless, he grew tired of her and Robert, the youngest brother, married her despite his family’s disapproval. After his death, her two children went to his family and Moll was left alone with a little fortune. From then on, she married several times and gave birth to many children who either died or were left alone. We can clearly see how women were abused by male power, either for their beauty or their wealth. The time she tried to move against stream and take revenge on them, symbolizes nature’s revenge on us. Defoe implies that women and nature are not separate and our fate and life is dependent on them. “Not only women but also children are vulnerable to these destructive forces” (13) since they have no power over their own birth. According to ecofeminists,

women and nature as well as children are stressed by male power and our lives are interconnected and interdependent. So no one is superior or separate.

We can claim that by criticizing social values and male force dominant in the society, Defoe was implying that before 18<sup>th</sup> century and industrialization, humans had more respect to nature, environment and their surrounding world, thereby having a positive approach and treatment toward women who symbolized nature. However, with the commencement of 18<sup>th</sup> century and emergence of industrial revolution, not only were women manipulated by the male force, but also the environment and its surrounding nature were not safe.

When we read the novel, we encounter the first-person captivating narrative of a woman who tries to survive in the cruel and brutal society of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, she reunites with her Lancashire husband in Newgate Prison and plans to start farming for the rest of her life. So, she comes to self-actualization and with her husband endeavors to work on her plantation and in this way follow a decent life of a gentlewoman. So, instead of leading her indecent and immoral life for materialistic purposes and monetary gain, she reconciles with her true self and her mother Nature which is the reflection of her rebellious action toward colonialism. She is actually protecting nature and herself with her decision. Her reconciliation with nature and finding peace in nature shows that for her nature was home. “There was no distinction between nature and the self” (13). However, in patriarchal structure land is not associated with mother. So, for centuries, they have been exploiting the land and subordinating it for their own desires.

Actually, all those men with whom she had some affair, either legally or illegally, were so irresponsible toward their wives, children or mistresses. The only issue they cared about were sexual desire and economic status. So, these represent the cruel, brutal and somehow coward attitudes and standards of male-centered society which abused women for its own benefits.

Moll’s reunion with nature and finding peace in Virginia in her own plantation (the same as her

mother) shows the connection between domination and oppression of women “with the rampant exploitation of nature through masculine methods and attitudes” (17). This novel truly reflects human corruption and exploitation of nature (women).

Introduction of technology and industry means destruction of pastoral rural life, which promotes the greed toward money, wealth and power. It divides people into two social and economic classes: the wealthy, who were affluent and had social, economic and political control of the society, and the poor, who had to strive to have a piece of bread to survive. This system inaugurated by men and the capitalists’ forced women of lower class to take up prostitution and theft out of unemployment. This industrial and technological progress had a binary and dual meaning: creation and destruction. I mean it created more wealth and fortune for the rich and destroyed both nature and poor people. So, we can clearly perceive the connectedness of the earth and all life on it. Humans are dependent on earth for survival. Ecofeminists reject the notion that man’s freedom and happiness depend on his emancipation from nature and his domination on the earth. They treat nature in the same way that they treat women. Even centuries before industrial revolution, colonialism had commenced domination over nature, which included destruction and domination of land and people. The resulting movement was industrialization which was profitable for some and destructive for “the others”.

Defoe gives voice to all women of his time and condemns social disparities that denies women the equal right, job opportunities and social status as men. Although the term ecofeminism was coined in 1974 by Françoise d’Eaubonne, it has its own ancient history and root in the previous centuries. Novels by Daniel Defoe, Jane Austen and even Thomas Hardy are a real and true image and depiction of that.

#### **Postcolonialism in Moll Flanders**

According to professor Ato Quayson Post colonialism is defined as “the engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects” (16). It encompasses issues such as slavery, migration, suppression and resistance, racial and

gender differences. Edward Said’s Orientalism has been a contributing factor in shaping postcolonialism. Said believes that the west considers the east as “The Other”, in the same way that women were looked upon in 18<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, men were superior to women, both socially and economically. Based on postcolonial theories, Moll was the victim of the male-centered society. The society pushed her to follow immoral things. She wanted to get rid of poverty and have life of a gentlewoman. In 18<sup>th</sup> century, money was the main factor in determining people’s marriage, status and even their fate, especially that of women. Those days, men chose to marry a woman who had a fortune. Although Moll was born clever, she had no education and wealth. “As for Moll, being a woman was a misfortune, and being a woman in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a double misfortune” (19). Even when she married her second husband, he abused her and wasted her small fortune. After that, she was enlightened and realized that in order to survive, she had to hide her real self and identity. In that patriarchal society, she tolerated great pressure. “Where there is oppression, there is resistance” (19). All these forces, pressure and oppressions germinated her and gradually she decided to control her life and go to the land she dreamed of.

Since her childhood, she tried to resist against the patriarchal forces and follow her own life. She did not want to be a housemaid. Even women from upper class families belittled Moll and people from poor backgrounds. So she was not only pressurized by men, but also by women from rich families. However, Moll tried to do her best to follow the life of a gentlewoman and gain a proper status in the society. We can see signs of resistance in her character. She had no tendency to be enslaved by rich families or men. She fought against social and gender discriminations. However, the society taught her to cheat others to survive. In a colonial society, people are not equal. This is the case for men and women. “In the patriarchal society, men and women were unequal, not only in the marital life, but also in social life” (9). Men could choose the one they married and inquired about their property and economic condition. On the contrary, women were subordinate to them and did not have such right. So



Moll rebelled against this situation by cheating them and taking her revenge on them. The revenge represents her wisdom and implies her resistance against the traditional customs dominant in the 18<sup>th</sup> century England.

Moll Flanders reacts against the colonial attitude held towards women of her time. "She denounces the harm male-dominant society does to women. Her words and reactions give voice to those who cannot speak or are silent. She attacks women's double-colonization" (Dalit/ Black Women 18). In Moll Flanders, women from poor economic background are depicted as subaltern and secondary to men like the older brother who "represents the colonizer, who is a wealthy, affluent and learned person" (18) and considers Moll and her type just as sex objects. Since Moll was blindly in love with him and enticed by his charisma, she accepts all his fake words and supremacy, and he exploits her. Initially, he imposes his false desires upon Moll and acts as her God. Moll appears submissive and uncivilized to him.

These scenes vividly manifest postcolonialism which "critically examines the relation between the colonizer and the colonized ( Moll and women of her time) from the earliest days of colonization and exploration" (2). When Moll starts her journey toward self-hood and is enlightened, she gradually learns to assert herself over men. She rebels against the society in which women are considered as "others". "We find it easy to believe that what Defoe depicts in fictions is the actuality of Britain's activities" (2). In his essay Mcinelly states that "Defoe's debt to the colonial context takes place at the level of representing anticipations and premonitions of colonialism. Any influence he had on the colonial mentality, is much more precisely that [; it is] a mentality [rather] than a practice undertaken by actual agents in history. And the contribution of the colonial context to the history of the novels' similar vein" (12). British National identity was shaped by economic success they achieved during 18<sup>th</sup> century. In Defoe's time which is the representation of the time Moll lived, wealth was associated with peace. Moll Flanders vividly depicts the elements of colonial discourse: "racism and otherness". The other colonized is envisaged as

the inferior and the colonizer as the superior. Not only women from the poor background had no right to receive education, or have a decent life, but also, interestingly, women with great fortune were valued by men only for the money they possessed. So both women regardless of their social level were "the other", the only difference was that wealthy women could benefit from a decent and good life. We can easily notice that the colonizer introduces the hierarchical structure of the society based on race, gender and class division. This disparity paves the way for discrimination between the superior (men/wealthy women) and the inferior (poor women/wealthy women). J.A.Downie writes: "I would argue Robinson Crusoe, and Captain Singleton, as well as Moll Flanders and Captain Jack involve imperialistic propaganda to promote his schemes for trade and colonization. That they do not nakedly state a thesis in favor of empire is a mark of subtlety with which Defoe approaches the subject, not an argument against such an interpretation of his novels" (8). Defoe depicts that even women with great deal of money did not have the social and economic power as men. Hamzah Ali Al-Harshan writes, "Individualism, colonization of supposed inferior countries, the imposition of imperial culture, these were deemed to be the attributes and capabilities of men, not women" (1). Even though the main character in the novel appears to be a woman, "Moll", all the other women have marginal role in the novel, even Moll herself is of no social value or status. Finally at the end of novel, we can see that Moll tries to find a way to be at home in the world, in the male-oriented world. The British, and more specifically, British men considered themselves as superior and we can perceive that the colonized world had a great impact on British consciousness. "Clearly, colonial space and the colonized Other are referred to as the structure of the most British novels of that era", writes Ali Al-Harshan (1).

In the novel , we can see Moll's attempt for survival, her survival story from childhood to old age, she tries to survive in a world of power, wealth and success. Since her childhood, she had no options rather than working as a maid, getting married and committing crime (theft and prostitution). In her old

age, she was caught as a thief, sent to Newgate Prison and then to Virginia.

Moll aimed to follow her own wild dreams and have a decent life of a gentlewoman, while the male-dominant and capitalist society was not enough understanding and prevented her from not being "the other". Defoe considered all these treatments as aggression toward women which turns them into commodity for sale. In Defoe's work, Moll dreams of freedom and independence in a patriarchal society which has no place for her. Although by being a mistress, selling her body, and later being a thief, she gains a great fortune, it does not provide her with security, freedom or independence. She has no place in a male-centered, capitalist society whose values come from a decent birth and economic status. Moll leads a miserable life in a patriarchal society in which she has no protection. As a result, all her transgressions for survival are inevitable. Moll depicts the vulnerable situation of women in 18<sup>th</sup> century British Society. They struggle against poverty to have a rich life. Defoe was an advocate of women's right. In his "An Essay Upon Projects" he claimed, "Capacities Of Women Are Supposed To Be Great And Their Senses Quicker Than Those Of The Men" (5). Since in 18<sup>th</sup> century, women had limited job opportunities, the only way to have a good life was marriage, otherwise they had to turn to theft or prostitution. Moll's immoral life for survival reflects the flaws of the whole society. Moll was simultaneously a victim and a criminal. She was the victim of the male-centered society in which "necessity leads her to temptation. In this society. Women are frail, weak, passive and victims of the lures of poverty" (3).

Moll is the victim of economic necessity. She begins life in extreme poverty and after several failed marriages, turns to thievery and prostitution just out of desperation and unemployment. Her first encounter with money happens when the older brother seduces her and promises to marry her. When he sees her desperation and condition, every time he offers her more money with promise of marriage. All these scenes are representing the features and language of the colonizer who owns power, status and money. The latter was the means of happiness and prosperity in 18<sup>th</sup> century England.

He even adds that if she becomes pregnant, he will take care of her and her baby. It clearly shows that women were powerless even over their own bodies and the child who was going to be born and follow the life she was given since her birth.

When she was a little girl, she believed she could be a gentlewoman through her needlework. But when she got older, she realized that only through prostitution and thievery she could pretend to be a gentlewoman. So, the term "gentlewoman" is ironic and reflects the conflicts and disparities imposed on women, specifically women like Moll.

Defoe divides the English society into seven major groups: "the great, the rich, the middle sort, laborers, farmers, the poor and the miserable" (6). Moll stands for the miserable who were colonized, repressed and oppressed by the other groups. She was born as a desolate girl, abused and victimized by men and even women from rich families. She represents all the women of 18<sup>th</sup> century British society, who lived in a hostile urban world in which social position and wealth were essential for survival. The society in which women, especially poor women, were treated as "The Other".

However, she breaks the norms and rebels against social discriminations dominant at the time. "She struggles to climb up the social ladder to belong to the middle class" (10) and changes her status. Moll serves as a pseudonym for all the women who manage to survive in pursuit of economic and social security and fight against the aggressive commercialism and discrimination. The concept of being a woman in a patriarchal society is difficult, and it gets more challenging when women are discriminated by their own gender, women from upper class whose concept of social status is capitalistic and materialistic. Moll criticizes the suffering of women since her childhood when she tries to follow the life of gentlewoman. However, the society turns her to a beggar and even worse, a prostitute. In the capitalist and colonial society of England, living conditions were easy for some but not all with the economic growth, the status of merchants increased and they received more respect. Also, political power was controlled by rich landowners. Life was more convenient for the upper

class. In that society, patriarchal values were dominant. Men were superior to women. If women did not marry, they had to work under any conditions. But if a woman was married to a rich man, she could live in luxury and comfort. The upper class women gave orders to women of lower status as their boss. As Tim Lambert indicates: "working class women worked as servants in the large households for their survival, but the upper class women who were married, were not idle either. They had to organize and supervise the servants" (11). By writing *Moll Flanders*, Defoe makes people aware of the harsh situation of women in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century society.

Interestingly, double-colonization of women is clearly presented through the character of Moll and the atmosphere dominant in the novel. Firstly, we can vividly perceive class distinctions in the society. The upper class was fond of money and luxury, and had a happy and comfortable life. On the other hand, the working class people tried to survive in harsh conditions. Sometimes they had no money and could not fulfill their basic needs. Additionally, there were class distinctions among women of different social classes. She was not only colonized by the condition her own parents had imposed on her, but also by both men and women in her own society. She realized that she could gain respect only by having fortune and marrying an upper class man. In this way, she could be called a "gentlewoman". Since her childhood, she tried to be a gentlewoman. She defined a gentle woman a woman who could be rich, beautiful and live in luxury. So she tried to resist against all the norms of male dominant society. Her marriage to the younger brother, depicts her revolution against a society in which "marriage was dictated by the patriarchal nature of family relationships with an emphasis on the subordination of women because of the male dominated society" (4).

By her first marriage, she broke all the social norms since she was an orphan and had no family and wealth. Social status meant a lot in that period. The older brother robbed her virtue and refused to marry her for his own social status and wealth. So she was the victim of social distinctions. By marrying the younger brother, she took revenge on the family

and upper class people. After her husband's death, she was left with a small fortune. She married for the second time, however, this time the "gentleman-tradesman" married her for her fortune, spent all her money and left her destitute. The colonial and capitalistic attitude is vividly represented by Defoe. Even wealthy women were repressed by the materialistic atmosphere of their society. They could marry only if they were wealthy. However, they could be abused by their own husband and then be left alone.

By creating *Moll Flanders*, Defoe is actually construing that women should never be submissive to men and what the society and the authorities have decided for them. He tries to show that women have to be independent which may lead to a settled life and marriage. When Moll is adopted by the rich family, we see that she is seduced and kissed several times by the older brother. They come from two different layers of society, one is maid and the other one is employer. By presenting this scene numerous times, Defoe is implying that she was inclined to be deceived since marrying a wealthy man was her only way to escape her hardships and poverty. "So this scene is repeated a copious times and represents that women, especially poor women, had no choice but to have a wealthy husband to get rid of their misfortune. Additionally, Moll is the narrator of the story which represents devaluing the standards valued by men (14). Although she searched for a good husband with a good social position, this shows her rebellious action and character against male dominant society of 18<sup>th</sup> century. "By doing so, she is actually announcing that she has the power to make them fall in love with her and marry her. So this is a dualistic depiction of Moll and all the women at that time" (14). By the term "dualistic" I mean that she is simultaneously breaking the social norms of patriarchal society and showing her power over men, and the fact that to get rid of the fate decided for her, she has to cling to social conditions and seek for a husband who can guarantee her future.

### **Conclusion**

Clearly, Defoe was a postcolonial and ecofeminist writer who encouraged women to reject the norms and standards of male-centered society.



He called on women to rebel and resist against all these discrepancies and struggle for equal rights. As it is difficult to assess the impact of Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders on environment, it is possible to read it as one of the first attempts which tried to introduce postcolonialism along with ecofeminism. Defoe depicts human life dependent on nature and women. As a postcolonial and ecofeminist writer, he criticizes all rules and misbehavior of 18<sup>th</sup> century society toward women and nature. He implicitly encourages women to participate in political, social and environmental campaigns, stand on their own feet and fight for equal rights. He advocated the education of women and was aware how unfair the laws were to women. While his contemporary authors were misogynists, he tried to defend women. The novel uncovers the insatiable thirst for wealth, power and social status which still stand to this time, the aggressive treatment of both women and nature which has continued so far.

#### References

- [1]. Al-Harshan Hamzeh Ali. (2021) "A Postcolonial Re-Reading of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe." *Journal of World Englishes and Educational Practices*, 3(12): c, page 21-28
- [2]. Ambesange Praveen. "Postcolonialism: Edward Said Gayatri Spivak." *Research Journal of Recent Sciences*. Vol. 5(8), (2016): pp 47-50.
- [3]. Arfi Ikram. "Re-visiting the Text and Context of Female Self-Representation in Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders and Roxana." University of Carthage. Tunisia, 2015.
- [4]. Brabcova Alice. Marriage in Seventeenth-Century England: The Woman's Stay. Thesis. University of West Bohemia, plzen, 1999: (n.d.):21-24. Print.
- [5]. Defoe Daniel. "An Essay Upon Projects." London. Menston: The Scholar Press, 1969, P. 284.
- [6]. ----- . The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders. London: Penguin Group,1989.
- [7]. Delgado Falcon Gaudi. "Misogyny in the Representation of Women in the Eighteenth Century Novel: Roxana, The Fortunate Mistress by Daniel Defoe." [https://www.academia.edu/29307296/Misogyny\\_in\\_the\\_Representation\\_of\\_Women\\_in\\_the\\_Eighteenth\\_Century\\_Novel\\_Roxana\\_The\\_Fortunate\\_Mistress\\_by\\_Daniel\\_Defoe](https://www.academia.edu/29307296/Misogyny_in_the_Representation_of_Women_in_the_Eighteenth_Century_Novel_Roxana_The_Fortunate_Mistress_by_Daniel_Defoe)
- [8]. Downie, J.A. Defoe, Imperialism and Travel Books Reconsidered. Yearbook of English Studies, 1983.
- [9]. Erikson, R.A. (1986) *Mother Midnight: Birth, Sex Fate in Eighteenth-Century Fiction*. New York: AMS Press Inc
- [10]. İnan, D. (2021). A Geocritical Reading of Daniel Defoe's 'Moll Flanders'. *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, (46), 124-129
- [11]. Lambert, Tim. LOCAL HISTORIES: Tim's History of British Towns, Cities and So Much More "Women in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century" 14 March 2021, web: <https://localhistories.org/women-in-the-17th-century/>
- [12]. Mcinelly, Brett. (2003). Expanding empires, expanding selves: Colonialism, the novel, and Robinson Crusoe. *Studies in The Novel*. 35. 1-21.
- [13]. Mondal, Gourish & Majumder, Palash. (2019). Ecofeminism: Encouraging Interconnectedness with Our Environment in Modern Society. *American Journal of Educational Research*. 7. 482-484. 10.12691/education-7-7-7.
- [14]. Pradipta Himawan. "Patriarchal values restrictions and defoe's ideal opposition during the restoration era in defoe's "the fortunes and misfortunes of the famous Moll Flanders". Page 1-6; web: [https://www.academia.edu/7479433/Patriarchal\\_Values\\_Restrictions\\_and\\_Defoes\\_Ideal\\_Opposition\\_in\\_Moll\\_Flanders](https://www.academia.edu/7479433/Patriarchal_Values_Restrictions_and_Defoes_Ideal_Opposition_in_Moll_Flanders)
- [15]. Puleo, Alicia H.. "What is ecofeminism?" (2017) page 27-34. Web:

[https://www.iemed.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/What-is-Ecofeminism\\_.pdf](https://www.iemed.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/What-is-Ecofeminism_.pdf)

- [16]. Quayson Ato. What Is Postcolonialism in Literature? The British Academy, 2 JAN 2020, web:  
<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/what-is-postcolonial-literature/>
- [17]. Udhruti Sarkar, Literature And Environment: The Importance Of Ecofeminist Fiction In Environmental Protection, Jan 17, 2022  
web:<https://feminisminindia.com/2022/01/17/importance-of-ecofeminist-fiction-in-environmental-protection/>
- [18]. Spivak Gayatri. Can the Subaltern Speak? Reprinted in Williams and Christman (eds), Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.
- [19]. Xi LIU, Wen-ying (2015) The Feminist Thoughts of Moll Flanders in Moll Flanders, *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*. Volume 5, Number 3, (Serial Number 40) 177-180

---

Author biography: I am **Mahnaz Poorshahidi**. I graduated in English Literature both for my BA and MA with the average score of 18.78 (GPA 4). I am admitted to Idaho State University as a PhD student in English and Teaching of English. I am mainly interested in applying Postcolonialism, Feminism, Ecofeminism, Gender Studies and Religious Studies to 18<sup>th</sup> century novels, specially Daniel Defoe's novels. I have been working as an English teacher and university lecturer in different English Schools and universities since 2004.