

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

TEXT 1 (PP. 104-6)

For the first time in her life, Moll is in charge of her own fortunes. Having lost her first love and been married for five years to his brother – a good husband, but one for whom she had no feeling – she is now an attractive young widow, her children provided for and herself in possession of a small fortune of twelve hundred pounds. She enjoys life and society with her friend, a linen draper's sister, is courted by many 'very considerable Tradesmen' but makes her own choice of a new husband:

Well, at last I found this amphibious Creature, this *Landwater-thing* call'd, a *Gentleman-Tradesman*; and as a just Plague upon my Folly, I was catch'd in the very Snare, which *as I might say*, I laid for my self; *I say laid for my self*, for I was not Trepan'd I confess, but I betray'd my self.

This was a *Draper* too, for tho' my Comrade would have brought me to a Bargain with her Brother, yet when it came to the Point, it was it seems for a Mistress, not a Wife, and I kept true to this Notion, that a Woman should never be kept for a Mistress, that had Money to keep her self.

Thus my Pride, not my Principle, my Money, not my Virtue, kept me Honest; tho' as it prov'd, I found I had much better have been Sold by my *She Comrade* to her Brother, than have Sold my self as I did to a Tradesman that was Rake, Gentleman, Shop keeper, and Beggar all together.

But I was hurried on (by my Fancy to a Gentleman) to Ruin my self in the grossest Manner that ever Woman did; for my new Husband coming to a lump of Money at once, fell into such a profusion of Expence, that all I had, and all he had before, if he had any thing worth mentioning, would not have held it out above one Year.

He was very fond of me for about a quarter of a Year, and what I got by that, **was**, that I had the pleasure of seeing a great deal of my Money spent upon my self, **and** as I may say, had some of the spending it too: Come my dear, *says he to me one Day*, Shall we go and take a turn into the Country for about a Week? Ay, my

Dear, *says I*, Whither would you go? I care not whither *says he*, but I have a mind to look like Quality for a Week; we'll go to OXFORD *says he*: How *says I*, shall we go, I am no Horse Woman, and 'tis too far for a Coach; too far *says he*, no Place is too far for a Coach and Six: If I carry you out, you shall Travel like a Dutchess; hum *says I*, my Dear 'tis a Frolick, but if you have a mind to it I don't care. Well the time was appointed, we had a rich Coach, very good Horses, a Coachman, Postilion, and two Footmen in very good Liveries; a Gentleman on Horseback, and a Page with a Feather in his Hat upon another Horse; The

Servants all call'd him my Lord, and the Inn-Keepers you may be sure did the like, and I was *her Honour*, the Countess; and thus we Travel'd to OXFORD, and a very pleasant Journey we had; for, give him his due, not a Beggar alive knew better how to be a Lord than my Husband: We saw all the Rareties at OXFORD, talk'd with two or three Fellows of Colleges, about putting out a young Nephew, that was left to his Lordship's Care, to the University, and of their being his Tutors; we diverted our selves with bantering several other poor Scholars, with hopes of being at least his Lordship's Chaplains and putting on a Scarf; and thus having liv'd like Quality indeed, as to Expence, we went away for *Northampton*, and in a word, in about twelve Days ramble came Home again, to the Tune of about 93 *l*. Expence.

Vanity is the perfection of a Fop; my Husband had this Excellence, that he valued nothing of Expence, and as his History you may be sure, has very little weight in it; 'tis enough to tell you, that in about two Years and a Quarter he Broke, and was not so happy to get over into the *Mint*, but got into a *Spunging-House*, being Arrested in an Action too heavy for him to give Bail to, so he sent for me to come to him.

TEXT 2 (PP. 257-8)

Moll's fear of poverty has driven her to her first crime, the theft of a bundle belonging to a customer at an apothecary's shop. Frightened and repentant for 'three or four days', she soon feels the 'wicked Impulse' again to 'go out and seek for what might happen':

I went out now by Day-light, and wandred about I knew not whither, and in search of I knew not what, when the Devil put a Snare in my way of a dreadful Nature indeed, and such a one as I have never had before or since; going thro' *Aldersgate-street* there was a pretty little Child had been at a Dancing-School, and was going home, all alone, and my Prompter, like a true Devil, set me upon this innocent Creature; I talk'd to it, and it prattl'd to me again, and I took it by the Hand and led it a long till I came to a pav'd Alley that goes into *Bartholomew Close*, and I led it in there; the Child said that was not its way home; I said, yes, my Dear it is, I'll show you the way home; 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 bade it go back again, for that was not its way home; the Child said so she would, and I went thro' into *Bartholomew Close*, and then turn'd round to another Passage that goes into *Long-lane*, so away into *Charterhouse-Yard* and out into *St. John's-street*, then crossing into *Smithfield*, went down *Chick-lane* and into *Field-lane* to *Holbourn-bridge*, when mixing with the Crowd of People usually passing there, it was not possible to have been found out; and thus I enterpriz'd my second Sally into the World.

The thoughts of this Booty put out all the thoughts of the first, and the Reflections I had made wore quickly off; Poverty, as I have said, harden'd my Heart, and my own Necessities made me regardless of any thing: The last Affair left no great Concern upon me, for as I did the poor Child no harm, I only said to my self, I had given the Parents a just Reproof for their Negligence in leaving the poor little Lamb to come home by it self, and it would teach them to take more Care of it another time.

This String of Beads was worth about Twelve or Fourteen Pounds; I suppose it might have been formerly the Mother's, for it was too big for the Child's wear, but that, perhaps, the Vanity of the Mother to have her Child look Fine at the Dancing School, had made her let the Child wear it; and no doubt the Child had a Maid sent to take care of it, but she, like a careless Jade, was taken up perhaps with some Fellow that had met her by the way, and so the poor Baby wandred till it fell into my Hands.

However, I did the Child no harm; I did not so much as fright it, for I had a great many tender Thoughts about me yet, and did nothing but what, as I may say, meer Necessity drove me to.

TEXT 3 (PP. 325-7)

Moll's successful, even triumphant career as a thief has made her prosperous. But she is unable to give up her criminal ways and the following extract marks the beginning of the inevitable decline in her fortunes:

I was now in good Circumstances indeed, if I could have known my time for leaving off, and my Governess often said I was the richest of the Trade in *England*, and so I believe I was; for I had 700 *l.* by me in Money, besides Cloaths, Rings, some Plate, and two gold Watches, and all of them stol'n, for I had innumerable Jobbs besides these I have mention'd; O! had I even now had the Grace of Repentance, I had still leisure to have look'd back upon my Follies, and have made

some Reparation; but the satisfaction I was to make for the publick Mischiefs I had done, was yet left behind; and I could not forbear going Abroad again, as *I call'd it now*, any more than I could when my Extremity really drove me out for Bread.

It was not long after the affair with the *Mercer* was made up, that I went out in an Equipage quite different from any I had ever appear'd in before; I dress'd myself like a Beggar Woman, in the coarsest and most despicable Rags I could get, and I walk'd about peering, and peeping into every Door and Window I came near; and indeed I was in such a Plight now, that I knew as ill how to behave in as ever I did in any; I naturally abhor'd Dirt and Rags; I had been bred up Tite and Cleanly, and could be no other, what ever Condition I was in; so that this was the most uneasy Disguise to me that ever I put on. I said presently to myself that this would

not do, for this was a Dress that every body was shy, and afraid of; and I thought every body look'd at me, as if they were afraid I should come near them, lest I should take something from them, or afraid to come near me, lest they should get something from me: I wandered about all the Evening the first time I went out, and made nothing of it, but came home again wet, draggl'd and tired; However I went out again, the next Night, and then I met with a little Adventure, which had like to have cost me dear; as I was standing near a Tavern Door, there comes a Gentleman on Horse back, and lights at the Door, and wanting to go into the Tavern, he calls one of the Drawers to hold his Horse; he stay'd pretty long in the Tavern, and the Drawer heard his Master call, and thought he would be angry with him; seeing me stand by him, he call'd to me, here Woman, *says he*, hold this Horse a while, till I go in, if the Gentleman comes, he'll give you something; *yes says I*, and takes the Horse and walks off with him very soberly, and carry'd him to my Governess.

This had been a Booty to those that had understood it; but never was poor Thief more at a loss to know what to do with any thing that was stolen; for when I came home, my Governess was quite confounded, and what to do with the Creature, we neither of us knew; to send him to a Stable was doing nothing, for it was certain that publick Notice would be given in the *Gazette*, and the Horse describ'd, so that we durst not go to fetch it again.

All the remedy we had for this unlucky Adventure was to go and set up the Horse at an Inn, and sent a Note by a Porter to the Tavern, that the Gentleman's Horse that was lost such a time, was left at such an Inn, and that he might be had there; that the poor Woman that held him, having led him about the Street, not being able to lead him back again, had left him there; we might have waited till the owner had publish'd, and offer'd a Reward, but we did not care to venture the receiving the Reward.

So this was a Robbery and no Robbery, for little was lost by it, and nothing was got by it, and I was quite Sick of going out in a Beggar's dress, it did not answer at all, and besides I thought it was Ominous and Threatning.