

Money and rank in moll flanders and gulliver's travels



The themes of money and rank are clearly present in both Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. In both works, the quest for money and a high rank is depicted as a driving force behind human actions and the necessity of money is seen as a cause for deception. However, the works' protagonists hold entirely different opinions of money and rank. Moll equates money and rank with what is good and important, whereas Gulliver, as is evident in his discussions with his Houy master, notes the negative side of money and rank and equates them with sickness, considering them a contributing factor to negative aspects of English society. One main similarity between the two works is that both authors depict the want of money and rank and the perceived power that accompanies them as a driving force behind human actions. Defoe interlaces money and rank into almost every aspect of Moll's turbulent life and shows how the quest for money is the drive behind many of Moll's actions and decisions. For a general example, Moll spends much of her life in a quest to find a suitable husband that will provide for her financially. Therefore, a wish for a better financial position in life pushes her to enter into relationships with many men. A more specific example is Moll's entrance into a relationship with the banker in order to secure some wealth. After the marriage Moll notes, " I took Possession at once of a House well furnish'd and a Husband in very good Circumstances" (Defoe 250). This quotation shows the emphasis Moll places on the power of wealth, and reveals her true reason for marrying the banker. In the same way that Defoe illustrates the idea of money and rank as a drive for human actions, Swift outlines this drive through Gulliver's discussion on wealth and rank in England with his Houy master. Gulliver outlines the fact that the perceived power that accompanies wealth and rank

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is at the forefront of English minds: When a yahoo had got a great store of [money] he was able to purchase whatever he had a mind to, the finest clothing, greatest tracks of land..., and have his choice of the most beautiful females. Therefore since money alone was able to perform these feats, our yahoos thought they could never have enough of it to spend or save (Swift 2419). This obsession with money leads to the gap between the classes and the constant struggle of the lower class to obtain a livelihood, while the upper class puts poorer individuals to work in order to maintain their high status. Gulliver notes, “ The rich man enjoyed the fruit of the poor man’s labor, and the latter were a thousand to one in proportion to the former” (Swift 2419). The lower class subjects itself to hard labor in an attempt to get money, while members of the upper class do all they can to maintain their status. In the same way that both Defoe and Swift include the theme of money and rank as a driving force in human action, so too do the authors illustrate necessity of money as a cause for deception. In Defoe’s work, Moll is the absolute queen of deception in order to obtain money, which she can not seemingly obtain in any other way. Moll continuously plays the part of a woman of wealthier status in order to reel in a potential husband. She even goes so far as to disappear with a friend in the country for an extended amount of time, only to reappear as a new woman with a fictional wealthy reputation based on her appearance and manners. In this manner Moll plans to “ deceive the deceiver” and catch a husband through deception (Defoe 123). In her use of deception, she marries her brother unknowingly, and later she uses deception to obtain a marriage to Jemy. Just as Defoe illustrates the necessity of money as cause of deception, Swift demonstrates the same idea through Gulliver’s conversations. Gulliver explains that “ Hence it follows of <https://assignbuster.com/money-and-rank-in-moll-flanders-and-gullivers-travels/>

necessity, that vast numbers of our people are compelled to seek their livelihood by...robbing, stealing, cheating...forging, lying...and the like occupations" (Swift 2420). These actions, which are all forms of deception, are caused by the need for money. Though Defoe and Swift illustrate similar ideas regarding money and rank, the protagonists of each work view wealth in entirely opposing ways. Moll equates money with that which is good and important, whereas Gulliver points out only the negative side of wealth. The reader becomes acquainted with Moll's view of money as a symbol of good when she begins equating love with the money Robert gives her in exchange for sexual favors. Another example occurs near the end of the novel after Moll becomes a penitent. Though she moves to America grounded in her newfound religion, this simply is not enough to seal her happiness. She still seeks joy through money by beginning a relationship with her son in America simply to obtain some of his family's wealth. To Moll, wealth is the final piece of the puzzle that will cement her happiness. In contrast, Swift's protagonist, Gulliver associates negative aspects of the English society with money. In general, his whole conversation with his Houy master regarding money takes a negative tone. More specifically, he relates wealth in the form of overabundance of food to sickness, " I told him we fed on a thousand things which operated contrary to each other; that we ate when we were not hungry, and drank without the provocation of thirst...which disposed us to sloth, inflamed our bodies, and precipitated or prevented digestion" (2421). The ability to indulge in such a fashion is a result of wealth. Swift also depicts the suffering associated with the various classes: "...The bulk of our people was forced to live miserably, by laboring everyday for small wages to make a few live plentifully" (2419). Whereas Moll associates money and wealth with <https://assignbuster.com/money-and-rank-in-moll-flanders-and-gullivers-travels/>

love, security, and happiness, Gulliver associates wealth with miserable living.