

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In the 18th century and the 19th century England, women are taught by the society to be materialistic. They automatically wish to own characteristics of genteel women such as being polite, having a proper manner, having many skills in music, being able to write and speak French, dancing, and then last but not least, being rich (Rowe). For women of high-class society, it will be easier for them to be genteel women. All they have to do is training their skills so then they can turn themselves into genteel women.

Moll Flanders in Moll Flanders and Rebecca Sharp in Vanity Fair are examples of low-class women who try hard to be genteel women. They master all the skills of genteel women but they are born poor and there is nothing they can do about that. They do not have parents to arrange their marriage so they have to find themselves rich husbands to be secure and rich to survive and also to be highly respected. Moll Flanders, the one who is willing to change her bad characteristics, ends up in a happy life, while Becky who does not want to change

her bad characteristics ends up alone and surrounded by her debts which she cannot pay.

Moll Flanders was written by a famous 18th century English writer, Daniel Defoe, who dedicated his life to English literature in contributing his excellent works. The interesting thing that can be found in this novel is the way Defoe tells the story to the readers. He writes about a bad woman, named Moll Flanders, who is a whore, a liar, and a thief. However, interestingly, at the end of the story Moll Flanders can still acquire the readers' sympathy on her ("Daniel Defoe").

Vanity Fair was well written by William Makepeace Thackeray, a best selling writer in satirizing the society of the 19th century England. He began as a satirist and a parodist with some stories that actually have the same theme, which is about someone sneaking for a higher position in the society (social climber). Rebecca Sharp in Vanity Fair becomes very famous as Thackeray himself becomes well-known as a great satirist ("William Makepeace Thackeray").

From both novels, Moll Flanders and Vanity Fair, I find a tight bond that can be seen from the portrayal of the female major characters. Moll Flanders and Rebecca Sharp have nearly identical characteristics at first. They have the same ambition that makes them do anything to reach it. However, interestingly, they make different decisions at the end of the story. The different attitudes in their making decisions help me reveal the theme for both novels. Therefore, in my major thesis, I am going to analyse the theme through the portrayal of the female major characters in Moll Flanders and Vanity Fair using formalism. The theme is the "central idea or the central insight" (Perrine 102) of the story. "To derive the

theme of a story, we must ask what its central *purpose* is: what view of life it supports or what insight into life it reveals” (102).

Based on the facts, I find that the two female major characters serve as a good and a bad model of women through their characteristics. Character itself means, “A verbal representation of a human being as presented to us by authors through the depiction of actions, conversations, descriptions, reactions, inner thoughts and reflections, and also through the authors’ own interpretive commentary” (Roberts 66). Here, Moll Flanders is a dynamic character, who “recognizes, change with, or adjust to circumstances.” (70). On the other hand, Becky Sharp is a static character, which means she “do[es] not grow” and “remain[s] the same because of lack of knowledge or insight” (70).

Statement of the Problem

The problems I am going to discuss are:

1. What are the themes of the novels?
2. How do the portrayals of characters help reveal the themes?

Purpose of the Study

Based on the problems stated above, the purposes of the study are:

1. To show what the themes of the novels are.
2. To show how the portrayals of characters can help reveal the themes.

Method of Research

In writing the thesis, I used the method of library research. I began the study by reading the primary texts which are Moll Flanders and Vanity Fair. I then read several reference books and articles in the Internet that are relevant to the topic to support my analysis for additional information. The information and the knowledge that I have gathered were then used to analyse the text. Finally, I drew a conclusion from the research I have made.

Organization of the Thesis

I divided the thesis into four chapters, followed by the Bibliography and the Appendices. In Chapter One, I present the Introduction consisting of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. In Chapter Two, I analyse the theme through portrayal of the female character in Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders. In Chapter Three, I analyze the theme through portrayal of the female character in William Makepeace Thackeray's Vanity Fair. Chapter Four is the Conclusion. Finally, the thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, consisting of the Biography of the authors and Synopsis of the novels.