

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Having discussed Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders and William Makepeace Thackeray's Vanity Fair, I come to a conclusion that the two novels have some similarities and differences, both in the portrayal of the characters and the theme.

The first similarity that can be found in their novels is both Defoe and Thackeray create female major characters that come from a low class family. They are Moll Flanders and Rebecca Sharp. From the beginning of both novels, the characters' social status is presented clearly. It is also obvious that the stories are about "social climbing" in the late 18th and early 19th century England. Moll and Rebecca, who is called Becky, are born in poor families and that is the fact that they have to get along with.

Another similarity is that although Moll and Becky come from poor family, both of them have one similar huge ambition. They want to attain higher positions in the society as genteel women. Both of them are raised with some rules and abilities of genteel women except being rich. They have already built their castle in the air about what they want to be in the future. They recognize the state that they can be secured or in other word, rich, by getting married to wealthy

gentlemen. As Moll and Becky do not have parents who will arrange proper marriages for them, they have to depend only on themselves.

In reaching their ambition, both Moll and Becky also have similar characteristics such as over ambitious and materialistic. These characteristics are in accordance with their desire to reach their huge ambition. They choose to maintain some bad characteristics to gain more wealth in order to complete all of the characteristics of a genteel woman. Besides maintaining bad characteristics, another similarity is that they also arrange some wicked plans that later make them become wicked people.

Defoe and Thackeray describe that Moll's and Becky's bad characteristics finally lead them to bad situations in their life. Both of them happen to receive some consequences from the society. Being arrested and jailed are the consequences for Moll while in Becky's case, her friends, husband, and son leave her one by one because of her bad characteristics.

One big difference lies on the reaction of both characters to the chances offered to them. They actually have similar opportunity to choose whether to change their bad characteristics or not. Interestingly, Moll and Becky who are on the same track in the beginning, finally choose two different paths which later lead to another difference, which is the different ending. Moll chooses to repent and change her bad traits while Becky chooses to maintain her bad characteristics and feeds her hunger of higher position and wealth. Their decisions later become the leading point to the theme of both novels.

The development of Moll's characteristics leads to a contrast ending to Becky's story. Moll, the one who decides to change her bad characteristics,

finally has the opportunity to make a better living. She does not reach her dream to be a genteel woman but she lives happily with her former husband. She makes a better living because she grabs the chance in front of her and makes the right decision. Becky, who decides to maintain her bad characteristics, has to deal with a life without an opportunity to make a better living. She has a bad reputation because she clings on her bad traits so that there is no one who wants to be close to her. She ends up miserably and lives from charity. These two contrast endings obviously give a hint to the theme of the novels. I can conclude that the tight bond between the portrayal of Moll and Becky, including the differences in their decisions, obviously helps reveal the themes which are: “One who is willing to change one’s negative traits will have an opportunity to make a better living”, in Moll Flanders, and “One who is unwilling to change one’s negative traits will have no opportunity to make a better living”, in Vanity Fair.

It is obvious that the themes of the two novels are similar as they deal with one’s willingness to change one’s negative traits so as to have an opportunity to make a better living. In Moll Flanders, Moll is willing to change her negative traits so that she has the opportunity to make a better living. On the contrary, Becky in Vanity Fair chooses to keep her bad traits so that she ends up living miserably.

In my opinion, the themes of the novels are universal. Although the background of time in these novels are the 18th and the 19th century England, the theme statements are still applicable today. To have a better living, one must make some changes in his or her life in order to be a better person. The one who

does not want to change something bad in his or her life will close the opportunity to make a better living. There is no time border for these themes.

Seeing the dynamic and the static characters in both novels, I personally like Moll Flanders as a dynamic character more than Rebecca Sharp. She makes the right decision about her life, so I think she deserves a better living because she really stays in her repentance. However, Rebecca Sharp also gives me a lesson about life. Her being a static character is an example of a person who does not want to change the bad traits. Finally, she has to accept the fact that she has no one to count on and there is no one who trusts her anymore. Both of them create two different role models of what a woman should do to survive in the society. One does not have to be rich to gain more friends and happiness in life. One's good traits will be the key to make good relation with others and also with God.

When analyzing both novels, I notice that Thackeray describes the situation and also the rules in the society in his era more clearly than Defoe. It is likely that Vanity Fair, which is one of the early Victorian novels of manner, sets a more specific matter. It is of course due to the fact that the novel is a satire towards the society; therefore more information about society can be found in Vanity Fair, especially concerning women, than in Moll Flanders. Different from Thackeray, Defoe as "a devout Presbyterian" (Zaleski) includes religious aspect in portraying Moll. The religious aspect plays an important role in the changing of Moll's characteristics, the core of the whole novel. Moll's repentance finally makes her become a person with good morality. Nevertheless, both Defoe's and

Thackeray's different emphasis help me see the portrayal of Moll Flanders and Rebecca Sharp more clearly.