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Fakulta humanitních studií
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“I Like Becky”: Victorian Values in W. M. Thackeray’s
Vanity Fair

Bakalářská práce

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Bachelor Paper

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Viktoriánské hodnoty v díle W. M. Thackerayho, *Vanity Fair*

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Abstract

This work focuses on Victorian values that are typical for this age and especially on those that are reflected in W. M. Thackeray's novel, *Vanity Fair*. An introduction part explains the reader why some values characteristic for Victorian and Regency years are not included. Chapters in the first part of this work are engaged in detailed introduction of Victorian values and what impact it had on the society which was constantly criticized by Thackeray for its vanities and a bad moral. The second part is focused on the novel *Vanity Fair* itself and it pursues the reason for the author's critical attitude to the society of the middle class and how it influenced its characters. Revealing truth, irony or humor are also important issues of Thackeray's novel and thus it is included in this part as well. This bachelor paper should conclude whether the statement, that *Vanity Fair* is a reflection of its age, is valid or not. To support any idea within this work we use examples from the primary text and there are also comments of critics who are focused on the Victorian age or the work of W.M. Thackeray.

Tato práce se zaměřuje na viktoriánské hodnoty, které jsou typické pro tuto dobu a to zejména na ty, které se odrážejí v románu W. M. Thackerayho *Vanity Fair*. V úvodu seznamujeme čtenáře s důvodem, proč některé hodnoty typické pro viktoriánskou a předviktoriánskou dobu nejsou zahrnuty. Kapitoly v první části práce jsou věnovány podrobnějšímu seznámení s těmito hodnotami a jak ovlivňovali společnost, kterou Thackeray tolik kritizoval pro její marnivost a zkaženou morálku. Druhá část je zaměřena více na samotné dílo *Vanity Fair* a odhaluje, jak se Thackerayho pohled na tehdejší svět, zejména střední třídy, podepsal na postavách, co bylo příčinou jeho neotřelé kritiky a jak ztvárnil tehdejší společnost ve svém díle. Odhalování reality, ironie a humor jsou také důležité otázky Thackerayho díla a proto jsou v této práci zahrnuty. Tato práce by měla odhalit, zda lze považovat tezi, že *Vanity Fair* je odrazem své doby, za platnou. K podpoření argumentů vybíráme názorné příklady z románu a práci doprovází komentáře a názory světových kritiků, kteří se zaměřují buď na viktoriánské období nebo na dílo WMT.

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Introduction

The goal of this paper is to examine Victorian values in a novel by W. M. Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* and to consider whether his work is a reflection of the age or not. If there is a statement that *Vanity Fair* fulfills all the requirements necessary to be a kind of a portrait of the Victorian age, a reader might object and make a list of typical Victorian values that he misses in the work. Such a reader of *Vanity Fair* must be aware of several important facts.

First, Victorian time is a very long period and Thackeray's novel touches only the very beginning of the nineteenth century. He also goes back to the eighteenth century, to the era called Regency years, where the story of Amelia and Rebeca began to develop. Then logically, following values unique rather for the time of Queen Victoria's reign and a second half of the Victorian age cannot be mentioned in the novel: Queen Victoria and other influential people surrounding her, the top of the industrial revolution or the development of a railway system.

Second, there are many issues Thackeray deliberately omits and does not describe them thoroughly as he does not want to disturb the reader and the story with many facts or sometimes because of using his excellent technique of veiling. A good example is a military issue. The beginning of the nineteenth century in England was influenced by Napoleon wars and it influences setting of *Vanity Fair*, still Thackeray does not interfere into battle fields and he maintains to focus on the characters as he considered himself mainly as a social critic. This is to be found in the opening of a Waterloo chapter:

We do not claim to rank among the military novelists. Our place is with the non-combatants. When the decks are cleared for action we go below and wait meekly. We should only be in the way of the manoeuvres that the gallant fellows are performing overhead. We shall go no farther with the -th than to the city gate: and, leaving Major O'Dowd to his duty, come back to the major's wife, and the ladies and the baggage (chap. XXX, p. 303).

As it is not a military novel, it is also not a historical novel although Thackeray is writing about the past. Another issue that might be involved would be, for example, Church, but this matter is touched only through some characters, mainly Bute Crawley,

Pitt or Lady Southdown. The work is also about love but Thackeray warns the reader in the very beginning that this is not a romantic piece:

We might have treated this subject in the genteel, or in the romantic, or in the facetious manner. Suppose we had laid the scene in Grosvenorsquare, with the very same adventures-would not some people have listened? Suppose we had shown how Lord Joseph Sedley fell in love, and the Marquis of Osborne became attached to Lady Amelia, with the full consent of the Duke, her noble father: or instead of the supremely genteel, suppose we had resorted to the entirely low, and described what was going on in Mr. Sedley's kitchen;- how black Sambo was in love with the cook, (as indeed he was), and how he fought a battle with the coachman in her behalf (chap. VI, p. 51).

This paper will discuss especially values such as social classes and their acceptance among people, woman and their position in the society. Important is also to explain that *Vanity Fair* is focused mainly on the rich people (some of them not enormously) and a middle class, their idleness, snobbishness, luxury they lived in and also money. It will also provide a comment on colonialism or Bohemians because this group of people or rather way of living influenced Thackeray's work and life. Thus all his ideas and attitude to the society were anti-conservative.

Second part of this paper deals with Thackeray's attitude to the society and its values, especially the negative ones as is selfishness or snobbishness. His criticism of the society, work with characters, irony, humor, revealing reality or pointing out moral values is highlighted.

To support any claim, idea or statement in this paper, quotations from primary and secondary texts are used. Trevelyan's *English Social History* is considered to be a classic work concentrating on the social history. The history concentrates especially on the experience of the middle class and upper class thus it was used as a main source for depicting Victorian society.

A short summery of the novel is presented. in the following two paragraphs.

The novel is taking place during and after Napoleonic Wars and it is a story of two young women, Rebecca Sharp, a poor orphan, and Amelia Sedley, of a good family. Their characters are totally different. After leaving school Rebecca is trying to persuade Amelia's brother Joseph Sedley to marry her. But not for the sake of love, but money,

wealth and a respectable social position. She is a “social climber” and it leads her to a wedding with Rawdon Crawley, whom she met when serving as a governess at Queen’s Crawley. Because of his marriage, Rawdon’s wealthy old aunt disinherits him. For that they have to endeavor to live without a sufficient sum of money. Rebecca has many admirers who support her with money which she keeps just for herself. After her affair with Lord Steyne, Rawdon is leaving her. After some years of travelling round Europe, she ensnares Joseph Sedley and gets all his money when he dies.

From the very beginning of the story Amelia is in love with her fiancé George Osborne, a son of wealthy John Osborne. When Amelia’s father John Sedley bankrupts, John Osborne stands against their marriage. They got married secretly, which leads to disowning George by his father. George dies at Waterloo. Amelia, her son and her family lives in a poor condition. She holds all her attention to her son and a picture of her dead husband neglecting contribution and love of William Dobbin. At last it is Rebecca who persuaded Amelia that George was not a good husband and to marry Dobbin. Their stories mingle throughout the novel.

THE AGE AND THE SOCIETY, VALUES

1. Classes

In our context the term classes are varied social groupings, which formed British Society in Victorian and Regency period. Distinct social classes are differed by inequalities in such fields as working and living conditions, power, wealth, authority, culture, religion, education and life-styles.

The structure of Victorian society was very complicated. It included following: the aristocracy, the upper class, the upper middle class, the true middle class and the working class. Before commenting on each class, there are some important points concerning British society and class structure.

Acceptance of the class system was one of the remarkable things. Chapman says that “most people accepted the existence of social classes as naturally as the Sentry in *Iolanthe* accepts the birth of little Liberals or little Conservatives” (43). Moreover there was no major social confrontation between classes that might cause, for example, civil wars. Instead, there was a remarkable economic and social progress. The hierarchical system was universally accepted. Strong claims that “the effects of the Industrial Revolution held people together as much as it seemingly divided them” (439).

This acceptance, of course, does not mean that all people were satisfied with the social group they belonged to. Especially people ranked low within the social ladder wished to shift higher, which is typical for Becky, who is not only wishing but also trying hard.

The shifts between classes was a fact which was not excluded. In *Vanity Fair* we may notice many means of mobility: a family connection, money, talent, the shared membership of an organization or education. Strong adds “such things accounted for the shifting composition of those who entered the middle classes but the real barrier to cross was that from the middle class into the upper reaches society” (445). There was no need for such a shift if one was of a good birth. Evans explains:

The importance of birth and breeding extended far beyond the privileged aristocracy into the professions, manufacture and trade. The third son of a good family who became, however incongruously, a parson; the hereditary solicitor with no great sense of fact or law [...] these were all privileged beings with unquestioned rights. [...] To know one's place was essential;

to be *déclassé* disastrous. And when each men *had* his place, toadies and tuft-hunters were more easily recognizable and much more comical (49).

The class structure was a reality but this reality was not stable, it was changing. For example ownership of a land had always been a key to a social acceptance and a status. But with the increasing strength of manufacturing the phenomenon of land-owning was in decline. Another significant change was that thanks to liberalism a middle class was gradually becoming a very strong social force. On one side classes differed a lot but on the other hand there were particular things some classes shared:

Unlike the aristocracy and gentry, however, the middle classes were a shifting kaleidoscope, embracing everyone from the entrepreneur to the skilled worker. Certain things they had in common. Two of them were that the wife did not work and that the household had at least one servant. From the middle class upwards no women worked, her role being that of running the home as a dutiful wife and mother, directing the household servants and, occasionally, undertaking charitable work (Strong 434).

Aristocracy is defined as a class of noble families with the priority of governing and “territorial estates of which the tenants - whether they liked their landlords or not – had the habit of fealty” (Evans 47). To belong to this class and have a title meant to be born in an aristocratic family or marry a person from an aristocratic family. Together with gentry, upper classes and the middle class these were the most criticized by Thackeray. Especially for habits as is greedy, idleness, bad moral, political vanities, possession, showing off, inherited titles etc. Usually it is an irony or an exaggeration, which Thackeray uses to point them out. In chapter LXIV, the whole paragraph is used to enlist Lord Steyne’s titles and “no single paragraph about Lord Steyne tells us more about him and his society, or about vanity in high places, than that list of titles and honours in his obituary” (Welsh 74).

Everybody knows the melancholy end of that nobleman, which befell at Naples two months after the French Revolution in 1830: when the Most Honourable George Gustavus, Marquis of Steyne, Earl of Gaunt and of Gaunt Castle, in the Peerage of Ireland, Viscount Hellborough, Baron Pitchley and Grillsby, a Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, of the Golden Fleece of Spain, of the Russian Order of St. Nicholas of the First Class, [...] a Trustee of the British Museum, an Elder Brother of the Trinity House, a Governor of the White Friars, and D.C.L.,... (p. 700).

Then there is an upper class that is formed by county families with a “long established squirearchy” (Evans 47). This group covered Army senior officers (on condition that they had bought their commissions, if of good birth), city bankers, successful lawyers, Church dignitaries, reputable politicians, and diplomats.

One of the vices of upper and middle classes was an aping the aristocracy, their behaviour, clothing, and manners. People with such a habit were eager to be in their society, to become their companions, to receive an invitation to their house meant a lot.

Talking about aristocracy and reading *Peerage* was a great amusement especially for ladies as it was in *Vanity Fair* in the scene where Miss Swartz is visiting Miss Osbornes, “During these delectable entertainments, Miss Wirt and the chaperon sat by, and conned over the *Peerage*, and talked about the nobility” (chap. XXI, p. 210). Miss Horrocks became also a victim of this aping vanity when she was appointed to be a housekeeper at Queen’s Crawley:

The servants were instructed to address her as 'mum', or 'madam', - and there was one little maid, who persisted in calling her 'my lady', without any rebuke on the part of the housekeeper. “There has been better ladies, and there has been worser, Hester,” was Miss Horrock’s reply to this compliment of her inferior: so she ruled, having supreme power over all except her father, whom, however, she treated with considerable haughtiness, warning him not to be too familiar in his behaviour to one 'as was to be a baronet’s lady'. Indeed, she rehearsed that exalted part in life with great satisfaction to herself, and to the amusement of old Sir Pitt, who chuckled at her airs and grace, and would laugh by the hour together at her assumptions of dignity and imitations of genteel life. (ch. XXXIX, p. 425)

The tie between the aristocracy and the working class is called the middle class. The term was used for the first time around the mid-eighteenth century and it was strongly associated with the increase of economy and expansion of cities. This 'middling social category' always included broad group of population and this difference was growing especially in the nineteenth century. Together with businessmen there was also an increasing number of entrepreneurs, shopkeepers and merchants. The growth of industry, foreign trade and expansion of empire led to the spread of commerce and finance such as insurance companies or banks which necessarily demanded an army of managers, clerks, professionals. The expansion also touched the sphere of local

government ensuring jobs for lawyers, teachers, doctors, officials, civil servants, assistants or governmental officers.

The difference was also seen in the properties and finances they gathered. The economic situation of some individuals reached enormous wealth comparable to those of aristocracy and at the same time some people from lower-middle class earned only as much as a skilled worker. Another differences that occurred inside the middle class structure was a religion, background or politics. Nevertheless they got the same outlook of life stressed by competition, self-reliance, personal achievement and individualism. So that sometimes middle class is characterized by accepting full responsibility of self, own family and the community but interpretations of these terms were mixed.

Historians say that in spite of the divergences, the middle class presented a coherent body transforming their political and economic power to build society into their image and their success was there thanks to their ability of versatility.

The 'ability of versatility' had also its negative side in the sense of a relationship between people. The character of Mr. Osborne, a middle class businessman, was versatile enough to break up his long-term relationship with his friend Mr. Sedley, who was a bankrupt. Old Osborne stood for a persuasion that other contact with Mr. Sedley would not be fecund and social acceptable anymore. Thackeray depicted that middle class man as a cold-hearted snob who yearns nothing but fortune. Mr. Osborne is according to Thackeray a prototype of a self-righteous middle class non-gentleman.

At the bottom of the society of England was the working class with its two sections: the working class (labourers) and the poor, who did not have any job, or did not work regularly and were subsidized by charity). The working class practiced jobs of miners, weavers, factory workers, and coalmen or household servants. This class included about 85 percent of population but they owned not more than 50 percent of the land. As well as the middle class during the industrialisation, working class also grew up in number in that period. Their living conditions varied also a lot (it was depending on the labour they practised) and many of them lived in poverty. The working class was not an aim of writing for Thackeray as his main interest was in the middle class. But still in *Vanity Fair* we can feel that there is something what people from the middle class hate, something they do not want belong too. It is a world of poor that they despise.

2. Women, Gentlemen

Woman, her rights and a position in a society was an important issue of Victorian period and it is also one of the leading themes in *Vanity Fair*.

According to Strong's study:

Victorian Britain was above all a sternly patriarchal society in which women at every level were subordinate. In the case of the lower classes women were looked upon as a reservoir of cheap labour, being paid only a third to two thirds of what a man was paid. Until the 1880s opportunities for women remained circumscribed, confined almost wholly to domestic service or the textile industry, plus piecework at home (438).

An image of an ideal woman in the early Victorian Era was shared by most in the society: "young, large eyed, ringleted, melting, beautiful beyond probability"(Evans 103). Legal facts were not that delightful as a married woman had legal rights similar to those of a child. No women was allowed to vote, own a property (after marriage all her properties were in the hands of her husband), be employed (except a job of a teacher and a domestic servant). To have own saving accounts or checking accounts was also out of question.

Women as well as their bodies were seen as pure and clean and were considered as a property of her husband. They were expected to represent their husband, and look after the happiness of their families. Her duties were to keep a household in a comfort, organize prestigious dinners and parties for his husband and his friends as well as organize and order her servants. An ideal woman should also devote to her children, be interested in culture and improve her abilities all the time. Mrs. John Sandford, quoted in *Victorians*, points out requirements a proper wife should fulfill:

A woman may make a man's home delightful, and may thus increase his motives for virtuous exertion. She may refine and tranquilize his mind – may turn away his anger, or allay his grief. (this is what Amelia wished to do and where she would probably fully succeed) Where want of congeniality impairs domestic comfort, the fault is generally chargeable on the female side; for it is for woman, not for man, to make the sacrifice, especially indifferent matters. She must, in a certain degree, be plastic herself, if she would mould others, and this is one reason why very good women are sometimes very uninfluential. They do a great deal, but they

yield nothing...

In everything that women attempt, they should show their consciousness of dependence. There is something so unpleasant in female self-sufficiency, that it not infrequently prejudices instead of persuading.

Their sex should ever teach them to be subordinate; and they should remember that, by them, influence is to be obtained, not by assumption, but by a delicate appeal to affection or principle. Women, in this respect, are something like children: the more they show their need of support, the more engaging they are.

The *bas bleu* is eager for notoriety, and avails herself of her requirements only to secure it. She does all she can to sustain her claims; she accumulates around her the materials of learning, and her very boudoir breathes an academic air. Its decorations are sufficient to proclaim her character; its shelves are filled with books of every tongue; its tables are strewn with the apparatus of science; the casket of jewels is displaced for the cabinet of stone, and the hammer and alembic occupy the stand allotted for the workbox (110).

The above mentioned consciousness of dependence may be assigned to Amelia Sedley who never came with an idea of her own, was not free thinking creature, fully dependent on other people decisions while Becky Sharp was able to be independent as much as it was possible but always wise enough to cover this ability pretending she is a dependable woman obeying and loving her husband. Women were dependent especially on their male family members who later may secure them if their husbands treated them badly or they do not marry at all.

It was not only duties that were filling a programme of a Victorian woman from the upper and the middle classes. Chapman argues that “while poor women worked alongside men in factories and workshops, the more favoured classes sat at home, immobilized in their heavy clothes, sewing for missions and charities. The increasing production of ready-made goods reduced the scope of household occupations and idleness became a fashionable cult” (11). Not to be bored these women were giving tea parties, visiting theatres, parks and other reputable places and they also focused their interest in fashion and aristocracy manners aping. Trevelyan remarks to this issue, “For the early Victorian 'lady' and her mother of the Regency period, too often had nothing in the world to do but to be paid for and approved by man, and to realize the type of female perfection which the breadwinner of the family expected to find in his wife and daughter” (501).

Our impression of an easygoing ordinary life of such a woman is messed up by Thackeray's description of a typical day of Jane Osborne who is keeping the house for her father:

It was an awful existence. She had to get up of black winter's mornings to make breakfast for her scowling old father, who would have turned the whole house out of doors if his tea had not been ready at half-past eight. She remained silent opposite to him, listening to the urn hissing, and sitting in tremor while the parent read his paper, and consumed his accustomed portion of muffins and tea. At half-past nine he rose and went to the City, and she was almost free till dinner-time, to make visitations in the kitchen and to scold the servants: to drive abroad and descend upon the tradesman, who were prodigiously respectful: to leave her cards and her papa's at the great glum respectable house of their City friends; or to sit alone in the large drawing-room, expecting visitors; and working at a huge piece of worsted by the fire, on the sofa, hard by the great Iphigenia clock, which ticked and tolled with mournful loudness in the dreary room. The great glass over the mantle-piece, faced by the other great console glass at the opposite end of the room, increased and multiplied between them the brown holland bag in which the chandelier hung; until you saw these brown holland bags fading away in endless perspectives, and this apartment of Miss Osborne's seemed the centre of a system of a drawing-rooms. When she removed the cordovan leather from the grand piano, and ventured to play a few notes on it, it sounded with a mournful sadness, startling the dismal echoes of the house (chapter XLII).

Jane spends her spinsterhood in her father's house, bored and longing for a wealthy husband while her married sister is now "the fashionable Mrs. Frederick Bullock" (Welsh 88) and her name occurs every morning in the *Morning Post* in the articles titled 'Fashionable Réunions'. For Jane and other women from vanity fair, this is the life worthy envying and wishing.

To stay without a husband meant a family disaster and "the woman who did not marry was a problem. Many households were over-staffed with unmarried aunts and sisters", Chapman concludes (11). Becky was clever enough to realize this problem that is why she started trapping Joseph Sedley without any delay. As a result many weddings were approached to without love of a bride and a groom and as the base for such a marriage stood a fortune. This is evident thanks to the Thackeray's narration in *Quite a Sentimental* chapter:

Miss Maria Osborne, it is true, was 'attached' to Mr. Frederick Augustus Bullock, of the firm of Hulker, Bullock and Bullock; but her was a most respectable attachment, and she would have taken Bullock Senior, just the same, her mind being fixed as that of a well-bred young women should be, - upon a house in Park Lane, a country house at Wimbledon, a handsome chariot, and two prodigious tall horses and footmen, and a fourth of the annual profits of the eminent firm of Hulker and Bullock, all of which advantages were represented in the person of Frederick Augustus. Had orange blossoms been invented then (those touching emblems of female purity imported by us from France, where people's daughters are universally sold in marriage), Miss Maria, I say, would have assumed the spotless wreath, and stepped into the travelling carriage by the side of gouty, old, bald-headed, bottle-nosed Bullock Senior; and devoted her beautiful existence to his happiness with perfect modesty, - only the old gentleman was married already; so she bestowed her young affections on the junior partner (chap. XII, p. 113).

The novel concentrates on the two characters of women but Thackeray does not see any of them as a heroine. Baker adds, "Thackeray was not always clear-headed about his good characters, especially when they were women. It is therefore pleasing to note that he was under no illusions about Amelia, or for the matter of that about Becky Sharp" (358). Thackeray saw these two (Amelia and Rebecca) as proper members of vanity fair, foolish, selfish, not generous people eager after vanities and in his eyes they do not deserve calling ladies, thus not heroines.

To define a gentleman, who is considered a prototype of Victorian era, history reminds a figure of Beau Brummell. The phrase, "You are a real Beau Brummell," is bringing to mind a very neat, perfectly dressed man. He was a man well known especially for his obsession with fashion and clothing. Michelletti adds a fact that, "Beau Brummell was a proof that a man with humble ancestors and no great fortune could become a figure of Regency Society provided he had charm, wit, audacity and the patronage of the Prince Regent" (*Beau Brummell*), which supports an idea, that a gentleman did not have to necessarily come from upper classes (Beau Brummell was originally an ordinary clerk). He brought many changes into the world of gentlemen. First, he insisted on proper bathing and keeping the body clean instead of using fragrances. Then, because of his influence men began to wear dark colored sober formal jackets with a cravat and trousers instead of embroider satin and silk coats and knee breeches in peacock colors.

A status of gentleman was a very thorny point for Thackeray and a vast part of his criticism was based on that. He and other Victorian novelists were engaged in the sorting men to gentleman and non-gentleman. There was a tendency to assign gentlemanliness to aristocracy thus they wrote about aristocrats who did not behave like gentlemen and about men from lower classes who did so. Greig wrote about gentlemen:

The rank of Gentleman, in fact, is a typically English institution, ill defined, far from rigid, mitigating the rigours of social stratification, and enabling individuals in a lower group, in special circumstances, and as it were inadvertently, to escape into a higher without seriously disordering the social scheme (Welsh 50).

The connection of *Vanity Fair* and gentlemen does not match quite well because Thackeray did not see any of the characters as a gentleman. The reason is the same as with marking female characters as ladies. Thackeray's strong belief was that vain people (according to him no character in *Vanity Fair* lacks this feature) do not deserve a label of a gentleman or a lady.

Another typical feature belonging to the Regency years and the Victorian period, connected with gentlemen, are gentlemen clubs. These were sanctuaries only of men, as women were not allowed to enter these places, breaking this rule would be seen as immoral and unacceptable. The clubs served as a core for political and business activities, gambling, reading, socializing and dining. It was visited by politicians, lawyers, merchants, industrialists, military men (Rawdon Crawley or George Osborne were frequent guests of clubs) or writers (Thackeray himself).

3. Business, money, individualism

The world of *Vanity Fair* is strongly impacted by money or better to say money hunting. It is a money obsession that Thackeray regarded as one of the top vanities. Intrigues, hypocrisy, fawning, lies, all that happened because of eagerness after anything that smells like money. Strong belief that rich people are better and more honest than the others was accepted by society within the Regency and Victorian period. This belief was supported by economic system set in the country for which individualism, liberalism, laissez-faire were crucial elements.

The doctrine of Individualism with its main motto 'self-help' stresses the fact that each individual should make his own economic decisions without interference of the state, government or the community as it also advocates the right of possessing a property. The main element of individualism is called responsibility. To be responsible means to be pro-active, make decisions consciously and carefully and also accept responsibility for what a person does or, on the contrary, does not manage to do. To meet humans need, men must transform their environment by work. A very radical sort of individualism, which holds very sternly to the vision of the economic individualism, is known as a laissez-faire (translation from French is "let people do as they choose").

Individualism of Victorians is an aspect that has been raising a criticism in the past and also present days. Because as Chapman explains "in its crudest form it could lead to the justification of ruthless" and the Industrial Revolution "had raised not only men of ability and insight, but also men of dishonesty and cruelty" (41). The society insisted on the virtues of an individual and interfering of the free flow of endeavour was judged as an iniquity. The years of economic growth and making profits were disturbed with the come of the Napoleonic wars:

The course of the Napoleonic wars, with blockade and counter-blockade, made business a gamble. There was every incitement to manufacturing enterprise, except security. England's control of the sea, and her new power of machine production, not yet imitated in other lands, gave her a monopoly of many markets in America, Africa, and the Far East. But the European markets were alternately opened and closed to British goods according to the vagaries of diplomacy and war. One year an allied State would have its armies clothed and shod by British workmen: next year it might be under the heel of France, a part of Napoleon's 'continental

system'. The unnecessary war with the United States (1812-1815) was another element of disturbance to trade. The suffering of the English working class were increased by these violent fluctuation of demand and employment; and unemployment was worst of all during the post-war slump after Waterloo (Trevelyan 478).

Such economic conditions meant calamity for the working classes, constant wealth for the landlords and a risky job for “ 'the middling orders of society': it made this merchant a profiteer, like old Osborne in *Vanity Fair*, and that other, like poor Mr. Sedley, a bankrupt” (Trevelyan 480). Of course, for this reason the shopkeepers and others from the same social rank longed for peace which would bring security, lower taxation and open European markets. According to Trevelyan opposed to these people “many of the wealthier – moneyed man and their families – shared the Tory politics of the 'quality', to whose society they were admitted, with whom they married, and from whom they bought seats in Parliament and commissions in the army” (Trevelyan 480). Thackeray deals with the question of buying army commissions quite often. In *Vanity Fair* it was George Osborne who was from a wealthy bourgeois family and he could afford such a purchase and then mingle with the sons of nobility: “(Rebecca) reading the *Gazette* one day, and coming upon the announcement of 'Lieutenant G. Osborne to be captain by purchase, vice Smith, who exchanges” (chap. XVII, p. 172).

The economic situation of the age is reflected in the characters of Mr. John Sedley and Mr. John Osborne and their successes or falls. John Sedley's fate is sealed after Napoleon's escape from Elba, when uncertain circumstances bring old Sedley's business to ruin and he bankrupted. Then he did not gave up as he tried many times to establish new business and get his position in the society back. However all his endeavor was pointless because all his former business partners did not like any connection with a poor man living in a shabby house in Fulham:

Jos's London agents had orders to pay one hundred and twenty pounds yearly to his parents at Fulham. It was the chief support of the old couple; for Mr. Sedley's speculations in life subsequent to his bankruptcy did not by any means retrieve the broken old gentleman's fortune. He tried to be a wine-merchant, a coal-merchant, a commission-lottery agent, &c. &c. He sent round prospectuses to his friends whenever he took a new trade, and ordered a new brass plate for the door, and talked pompously about making his fortune still. But fortune never came back to the feeble and

stricken old man. One by one his friends dropped off, and were weary of buying dear coals and bad wine from him (chapter XXXVIII, p. 406).

Old Mr. Osborne, a former friend of Mr. Sedley, is in a different position as his job is doing quite well. After the bankruptcy Thackeray described his behaviour toward Mr. Sedley as the relationship full of scorn and savageness. Osborne insists that Sedley's being both out of business and out of respectability is a sign of wickedness and Thackeray's words in chapter XVIII are: "From a mere sense of consistency, a persecutor is bound to show that the fallen man is a villain – otherwise he, the persecutor, is a wretch himself" (p. 177). Osborne's money greedy is also seen in the moment when he persists on the decision, that his son George will not marry poor Amelia but the rich Mullato Miss Schwarz. Craig stands for the idea, that "Osborne is perhaps an inept caricature of the City man who has succumbed completely to the superstition of money" (Welsh 100). Carey depicts Old Osborne as "snob, bully, dullard" and regards him as "one of Thackeray's most fearsome and penetrating portraits" (186). He stresses Osborne's respect for possession, which is stronger than respect for people (clearly demonstrated when George married poor Amelia and as a consequence his father John Osborne obliterated his name from the family Bible where the births of his children were recorded). But it is also said that Thackeray "does not allow us any easy contempt for Osborne" because, "he has been a generous father and anything that money could buy had been his son's" (186).

Besides Mr. Sedley and his family it was also Rebeca Crawley who suffered a bankruptcy, although in a sort of different way because she never had any money, except her secret savings. She and her husband Rawdon had no proper or regular income, the only possible way to stay in the circle of a noble society was to gamble and lead an easygoing, wasteful, showy life that would be persuasive enough and would ensure credits from traders and shopkeepers:

They had credit in plenty, but they had bills also in abundance, and laboured under a scarcity of ready money. Did these debt-difficulties affect Rawdon's good spirits? No. Everybody in Vanity Fair must have remarked how well those live who are comfortably and thoroughly in debt: how they deny themselves nothing; how jolly and easy they are in their minds. Rawdon and his wife had the very best apartments at the inn at Brighton; the landlord, as he brought in the first dish, bowed before them

as to his greatest customers: and Rawdon abused the dinners and wine with an audacity which no grandee in the land could surpass. Long a custom, a manly appearance, faultless boots and clothes, and a happy fierceness of manner, will often help a man as much as a great balance at the banker's. (chap. XXII, p. 223)

For the society it was not that unusual as a credit economy was quite developed. One of the victims of this credit system was Mr. Raggles, who owned a house in Curzon Street where Rebecca and Rawdon stayed for a year. His mistake was to allow them a credit which ruined him up. Chapter XXXVI is aptly titled *How to live well on nothing a year* where the narrator asks exactly the same question and reveals what are the possibilities to run the household without money. The chapter also lists what economic 'disaster' meant Rebecca's visit of Paris:

It was not for some weeks after the Crawleys' departure that the landlord of the hotel which they occupied during their residence at Paris, found out the losses which he had sustained: not until Madame Marabou, the milliner, made repeated visits with her little bill for articles supplied to Madame Crawley; not until Monsieur Didelot from the Boule d'Or in the Palais Royal had asked half a dozen times whether *cette charmante miladi* who had bought watches and bracelets of him was *de retour*. It is a fact that even the poor gardener's wife, who had nursed madame's child, was never paid after the first six months for that supply of the milk of human kindness with which she had furnished the lusty and healthy little Rawdon. No, not even the nurse was paid- the Crawleys were in too great a hurry to remember their trifling debt to her (p. 388).

Except living on a credit it was also Rawdon's gambling (it may reflect Thackeray's own experience with gambling, when he as an undergraduate in Paris lost lot of money on hazard) which helped them with their financial situation. Although Rawdon was quite a good player the money he won was not sufficient to set the debts or to run a household and his demanding wife.

An example of the text in *Vanity Fair* where the money obsession and a conviction that rich people are better, virtuous or different, is definitely Becky's famous reflection "I think I could be a good woman if I had five thousand a year". And Thackeray as a narrator ironically comments "And who knows but Rebecca was right in her speculations – and that it was only a question of money and fortune which made the difference between her and an honest woman?"(chap. XLI, p. 448).

4. Bohemian world

Thackeray's life and his writing was closely connected and influenced by a Bohemian society. The Bohemia movement hit not only London but also other cities in Europe. But there were some features typical only for Bohemians in London. Victorian Bohemians gathered especially in a netherworld of Grub Street which is closely associated with hack writers, painters and other artists. Bohemia in London is also typical for its long literary history. Thackeray and Dickens were two literary figures who brought the biggest fame to Bohemians and most of hack writers lived in their shadows and stayed unknown. The main source of their income was journalism and it was not easy to make money because this job was not permanent and certain. This group of middle class young carefree men lived free simple life, wrote whatever they liked and did not care about moral or education.

Another feature was an exclusion of women; coffeehouses, which they frequently visited, were assigned only for men and presence of women was very rare even intellectual women were not expected to visit bohemian society.

William Makepeace Thackeray defined Bohemia as:

a land over which hangs an endless fog, occasioned by much tobacco; a land of chambers, billiard-rooms, supper-rooms, oysters; a land of song...of delicious reading of novels, magazines, and saunterings in many studios a land...where most are poor, where almost all are young, and where, if a few oldsters do enter, it is because they have preserved...their youthful spirits, and the delightful capacity to be idle" (*Bohemianism and Counter-Culture*).

Although Bohemians had different beliefs and the population varied, there was one important element that made the bohemian society a unity: refusing of bourgeois values. The first of rejected values was materialism and an owning of a private property. To demonstrate this they usually possessed only what they could carry with themselves and seldom they had a flat, a house or some other type of dwelling. They stayed in the streets, coffeehouses or other public spaces.

Besides, there was a constant rejecting of strict moral values set by Victorian society. Carefree life, idleness, alcohol and drug experimentation or promiscuity were displays of their rebellion against noble society. In the eyes of other people, Bohemians

were very idle (which was in fact caused by their rejecting of wealth hunting) and they did not want to do anything which would bring them material wealth. Their interest was only in writing and messing around. One anonymous Bohemian said, “I don’t do any work, on the pretext of writing a poem; and I write a poem to have an excuse for not doing anything”.

The daily life was a reflection of the idleness. They lived only for a moment and they fully enjoyed every pleasure of day and night, heart or their intellect. The day of a Bohemian begun with the morning work on his art, literature or anything they enjoyed. But as they lived or gathered for their work in one room, the work could not be much effective. They spent most of these working times with talking and enjoying one another. Nights belonged to an amusement. Men were visiting coffeehouses and were also looking for a company of women, which was their great passion.

Due to Thackeray’s obstinate criticism of bourgeoisie he may be called 'an icon of Victorian Bohemians'. He considered himself as a Bohemian and it was this type of life that fulfilled his expectation. As a real Bohemian he lived in poverty, he joined the Bohemian community not only in London but also in Paris, his works openly criticized middle classes, the gentry or the aristocracy. Another demonstration of his Bohemian activity were satires of the British and also French aristocracy supported by his own sketches. Through his drawings he was expressing his feelings against wealth classes. Sketches of the aristocracy were far more satirical and humorous than those portraying Bohemians; drawings of Bohemians were also very often included in his works.

He liked to introduce himself as a Bohemian and in *Vanity Fair* it was Rebecca whom he made one of them. She was attracted by vagabond, wild, bohemian people in cheap hotels and visiting gaming houses was also one of her pleasures. Within her vagabond stay in Europe she was enjoying her Bohemian life. She joined scums of the society and did not care about moral or etiquette. In the chapter LXV Thackeray describes the place where she stayed in Germany and her fondness of such bohemian life:

Mr. Jos [...] was directed to the very top of the house, above the first-floor rooms where some travelling pedlars had lived, and were exhibiting their jewellery and brocades; above the second-floor apartments occupied by the *état-major* of the gambling firm; above the third floor rooms, tenanted by the band of renowned Bohemian vaulters and tumblers; and so on to the

little cabins of the roof, where, among students, bagmen, small tradesmen, and country-folks, come in for the festival, Becky had found a little nest; - as dirty a little refuge as ever beauty lay hid in.

Becky liked the life. She was at home with everybody in the place, pedlars, punters, tumblers, students and all. She was of a wild, roving nature, inherited from father and mother, who were both Bohemians, by taste and circumstance: if a lord was not by, she would talk to his courier with the greatest pleasure; the din, the stir, the drink, the smoke, the tattle of the Hebrew pedlars, the solemn, braggart ways of the poor tumblers, the *sournois* talk of the gambling-table officials, the songs and swagger of the students, and the general buzz and hum of the place had pleased and tickled the little woman, even when her luck was down, and she had not wherewithal to pay her bill (701).

Thackeray's bohemian attitude might be a precondition for which one would expect that his works are focused on poor classes or lower middle classes. In fact Becky's bohemian life, Sedley's house in Fulham and a menage of Great Gaunt Street residence were the only low levels of the society in *Vanity Fair* and no other Bohemian existences except Becky appeared there. Actually, he was sometimes criticized that he did not involve the poor world in his works and instead he was attracted by the middle classes. His image of a Bohemian was also interrupted by some critics who saw a snob and flunkey in himself. It was caused by his fame. After unpleasant years of poverty in Grub Street he, as a renowned author, was permanently invited to balls, dinners and parties. The invitations came from Presidents, princes, dukes, duchesses and other noble people. Greig even thinks that "he knows how to reveal the flunkey because there is something of the flunkey in his own character" (Welsh 45). In the same passage Greig brings an excellent excuse of Thackeray:

"If," he said, "I don't go out and mingle in society, I can't write." Later still, he revised this statement in a review of John Leech's *Pictures of Life and Character*: "A social painter," he said, "must be of the world he depicts, and native to the manners he portrays" (45).

But if Thackeray was right and it was not just an excuse it provided the best experience for writing *Vanity Fair*, although the highest social event was a ball at Gaunt House. To understand his behaviour and move between the society of Bohemians and the aristocracy (all the invitations he received were accepted by Thackeray) we must

know that Thackeray was of better origin than other Bohemians and he was a real gentleman:

Thackeray might profess republican and anti-aristocratical views, might abuse Society for its "lordolatry" and "mammoniacal superstitions," and might often, immediately after some grand dinner or ball in Mayfair, be found in Evan's Supper Rooms in the company of true Bohemians, he could not, even if he would, cancel the effects of his own birth and breeding. He had been born a gentleman, and brought up by one whom he thought and spoke of as one of the finest ladies in the land. He was "native to the manners he portayed" (Greig 46).

Wherefore we may conclude that although Thackeray was a Bohemian, *Vanity Fair*, going on especially in the society of the middle class, reflects this society perfectly.

5. Victorian Puritanism, morality, church

There were two main religious elements influencing the society during Regency and Victorian era. Puritanism and Evangelicalism. These two mingled and it is not easy to determine which one stood above the other one. During the first thirty years of the nineteenth century a great many changed in thoughts and habits of life due to Evangelicalism, a religion movement, which spread from below upwards and infiltrated into all classes of the society. An individualist Protestantism was an active movement (before Evangelicalism) that was associated with humanitarian activities, rigidity of personal behavior and an evident piety. Although it was an important factor of eighteenth-century England it had little influence on the freethinking Established Church or on the exuberant life of not working classes. But when these classes felt that their privileges and possessions are threatened by Jacobites from France there came an exquisite revulsion from French atheism and it resulted in 'seriousness' among the gentry. And many changes happened: "Indifferentism and latitudinarianism in religion now seemed seditious and unpatriotic, and a concurrent change in manners took place, from license or gaiety to hypocrisy or to virtue" (Trevelyan 506). Since then family prayers were not present only at the households of merchandisers but they also belonged to the dining-room of country houses. 'Sunday Observance' was recovered, streets to the churches were suddenly full of carriages.

Evangelicalism "the moral cement of the society" (I. Halévy qtd. by Trevelyan 490) was by many considered more as an attitude than a party but it became an important part of Anglican Church. Evangelicals were followers of Calvin's doctrine, which helps to understand why the image of Victorians was so corresponding to the one of Evangelicals. In Chapman's words, Calvinism "meant a strong emphasis on the individual, on personal piety and good works, marred too often by a rigid insistence on pre-election for salvation or damnation. On the credit side, it inspired men like Wilberforce and Shaftesbury; on the debit, it played in too easily with the tendency to assume superiority through the possession of good fortune" (46). The above-mentioned debit is again an aspect that raised Thackeray's criticism. In *Vanity Fair* his comments are not focused on a religion itself (he considered himself as a social critic) but he cared about what influence it might have on his characters and if they were able to behave and

think like human beings and resist to the vanities which then religious belief might hold forth. Evangelists also focused a lot on the action of a man in the present world or in the future. But they cared too much about the consequence of an action rather than the action itself and they did not concentrate on the purity of the motivation at all.

A negative side of the Victorian religion was also experienced due to Puritanism. A Victorian version of Puritanism was quite interesting as its spirit was demonstrated in many ways. Most significantly in the attitude to sex. A specialist on sexual revolution expresses his opinion to this issue:

The 19th century frantically insisted on propriety precisely because it felt its real faith and ethics disappearing. While it feared nudity like a plague, Victorian Puritanism had the effect of an all covering gown that only inflames the imagination. By insisting on suppressing the sex instinct in everything, the age betrayed the fact that it really saw that instinct in everything. So, too, with Sigmund Freud, Victorianism's most perfect rebel.

Romantic Revolt, Freudian psychology, or its popularized version, became one of the chief forces that combined against Puritanism. Gradually, the belief spread that repression, not license, was the great evil, and that sexual matters belonged in the realm of science, not morals. A second force was the New Woman, who swept aside the Victorian double standard, which was partly based on the almost universally held notion that women – or at any rate, ladies – did not enjoy sex. One eminent doctor said it was a “foul aspersion” on women to say they did (*The Second Sexual Revolution*).

Taboos on sex were sometimes bringing very bizarre situations. It happened to a doctor, that he “was struck off the register for issuing a sixpenny edition of *The Wife's Handbook* – it was the cheapness and therefore easy availability which created his worst offence”, says Chapman (47). Concerning women it was again Puritanism and a moral that affected the way they dressed or what rules they were to follow. As an example woman was not expected to wear any clothing that would uncover her skin, undergarment or even stockings or it was taboo to use an expression “leg” in a company of the opposite gender.

Puritanism did not influence only Thackeray's characters but also himself as a writer because he did not want to alert his prude readers. In *Vanity Fair* he complains that he must avoid to tell us about later part of Becky's life because 'the moral world' must be satisfied: “We must pass over a part of Mrs. Rebecca Crawley's biography with

that lightness and delicacy which the world demands – the moral world, that has, perhaps, no particular objection to vice, but an insuperable repugnance to hearing vice called by its proper name” (chap. LXIV, p. 684). On the other hand we must consider whether in some cases Thackeray meant to satisfy the moral world or if the reason for not telling everything was because of his excellent technique of veiling. Or as Williams explains, the purpose of the above mentioned passage from chapter LXIV may be further, “the main reason for his refusal to commit himself to direct statement about Becky had done during the later part of her life was that it did not take place within the framework of the social world with which he was dealing, and did not involve her selfish seeking after vanity” (63).

Despite all the moral, paradoxical is that Victorian streets, especially in London, were full of prostitutes and brothels. The situation arose from increasing population and richness.

Except for 'rescue work' which the pious were now actively taking in hand, the evil (prostitution) was left untouched. It infested the towns with the least public control; 'the harlot's cry from street to street' made public resorts hideous at nightfall. The growing 'respectability' of the well-to-do classes in the new era diminished the numbers and position of the more fortunate 'kept mistresses', who had played a considerable part in eighteenth- century society. But for that very reason the demand was increased for the common prostitute who could be visited in secret. The harshness of the world's ethical code, which many parents endorsed, too often drove a girl one seduced to prostitution. And the economic condition of single women forced many of them to adopt a trade they abhorred (Trevelyan 504).

6. Colonialism

Colonialism came as a great challenge for Britons of the Hanoverian and Victorian era. The possibility to move to other destinations was warmly welcomed especially by the freer spirits from lower classes who resented to the rules of farmers and squires. And as early Victorian people were not “wholly a product of the city, incapable of going back to the land or of plying more trades than one” (Trevelyan 487) they were able and willing to undergo the hardship of a pioneer life. But it was not the only circumstance that helped the great movement of colonization. One of the reasons was also the over population, the economic and social troubles in the after war period.

It was not only workers who were leaving for destinations like Australia or India. It was a chance for people holding a position of an officer, banker, lawyers or a diplomat. Serving for example for East India Company in India was considered very prestigious by the society. In this exotic destination it was possible to earn good money and the one who came back to England raised in the eyes of single women because of his reputation, fortune, experience, exotic commodities and fabrics he brought with him. An excellent representative of a colonist in *Vanity Fair* is Joseph Sedley, an older brother of Amelia Sedley. Thackeray tells the reader more about him and his service:

He was in the East India Company’s Civil Service, and his name appeared, at the period of which we write, in the Bengal division of the East India Register, as collector of Boggley Wollah, an honourable and lucrative post, as everybody knows: in order to know to what higher posts Joseph rose in the service, the reader is referred to the same periodical.

Boggley Wollah is situated in a fine, lonely, marshy, jungly district, famous for snipe-shooting, and where not unfrequently you may flush a tiger. Ramunge, where there is a magistrate, is only forty miles off, and there is a cavalry station about thirty miles farther; so Joseph wrote home to his parents, when he took possession of his collectorship. He had lived for about eight years of his life, quite alone at this charming place, scarcely seeing a Christian face except twice a year, when the detachment arrived to carry off the revenues which he had collected, to Calcutta (chap. III, p. 22).

But in the society there were not only positive responses to the colonialist and their attitudes. Robert Lowe, British politic (qtd. by Evans) criticizes:

The man in a colony is simply a money-making creature. From morn till night, all the year round, his faculties are strained up to and concentrated upon that one object. He has no time for anything else, no time to love, no time to hate, no time to rejoice, no time to mourn. He does not seem even to heap up riches that he may enjoy them. He does not buy books, pictures, busts or laboratories, or any other means of strictly rational pleasure, for the sake of rational pleasure, but he makes money that he may *have* it, and enable his wife, perhaps, by piquant dances and stylish equipage, to excite the envy, hatred and uncharitableness of her neighbours (Evans 8).

The above-mentioned envy and hatred is evident in *Vanity Fair*.

VICTORIAN VALUES WITH THACKERAY'S EYES

1. Thackeray and his relationship to the character, settings

One of the factors, which might help with the decision whether *Vanity Fair* reflects reality or not, is Thackeray's choice of setting and characters. It is better to say what names he chose, and whether it can be identified with real places or names coming from the time covered by *Vanity Fair*. It is not an illusionistic world, Thackeray went back to real London and other European cities and the novel is penetrated with existing names of cities, streets, squares, parks and also hotels; for example Hyde Park, Russel Square, Weimar, Regent's Park, Wiesbaden, Waterloo or Brussel. In reality many of the places in the story Thackeray visited by himself. For example he "was off to see the Hotel de la Terrasse in Brussels, where Becky had stayed" (Carey 177). After some years of travelling round Europe he visited Germany and 1830 he settled in Weimar and fell in love there or he spent several months in Paris. Catherine Peters claim, that it was in 1846 in Brighton when Thackeray came with the title *Vanity Fair*. It happened at the Old Ship Inn and Peters follows:

His characters also visit Brighton and stay at the Ship Inn, in the early scenes of the novel. Thackeray loved the place, with its lingering air of Regency frivolity. 'Brighton, a clean Naples with genteel lazzaroni ... that always looks brisk, gay, and gaudy, like a harlequin's jacket' (Introduction to *Vanity Fair* 13).

Thackeray also included experience that was not that pleasant as is his visit of Brighton. Lost of money or terrible experience with school are facts which hit *Vanity Fair* as well. Places like gaming houses, frequently visited by Rebecca, were also places well known to him. "While he was at Cambridge he was selected for treatment by two professional gamblers who deprived him of £1,500, which he paid when he came of age" (Williams 17). Interesting is that most of his life experience is transferred into the novel by the character of Rebecca. They both had dreadful experience with school system and a discipline. In 1822 Thackeray attended a Charterhouse boarding school that he, as William says, called a Slaughterhouse for its brutality of his teachers. Rebecca visited a school on Chiswick Mall where she was not treated well because of her poor origin. Thackeray immediately introduced his opinion to the school system via

a teacher, Miss Pinkerton, when he called her 'Semiramis of Hammersmith'.

While going through Thackeray's biography thoroughly and comparing it with the book, there can be seen other interesting examples, where his life experience influenced the story. Again it is Rebecca who is a representative of Thackeray's Bohemian era and his fondness of an idle life and that is why she is taking readers to appropriate vagabond places. Peters concludes this issue with a statement that some sections of the work "draws heavily on his own memories of the places: history, reminiscence and fiction coalesce" (21).

A question of characters' names is more complicated. We do not know if all the names in the story or the whole characters came from a real world and if they were to represent somebody whom Thackeray knew personally or met. Carey is persuaded that at least some of the characters from the novel represented acquaintance of Thackeray. He claims that Amelia resembled a real person. He explains that her relationship with Dobbin reflects Thackeray's relationship with Jane Brookfield. Amelia let Dobbin to admire her and keep close to her and she was raising his hopes by not saying that she would never be with him. But on the other hand she was playing an unattainable widow. It is her behavior that was similar to the one of Jane Brookfield to Thackeray. Carey says, "Jane Brookfield was ready to flirt with Thackeray, but remained exasperatingly faithful to her husband" and he concludes, "Thackeray told Brookfield that he had Jane in mind when he created Amelia" (183). Baker gives another examples of such resemblance. He observed that Thackeray was reported to had said that "Sir Pitt was almost the only exact portrait in the whole book" and that it was known that he was to copy to some extent the eccentric Baron Rolle of Stevenstone (361).

However Thackeray gives more evidence, (maybe more clear and sure than Carey brings) that *Vanity Fair* is not from an illusory world but from real one when he mentioned real historical figures as it is in chapter XLVIII, in a scene with the visit to the King:

Yes, we saw him Fate cannot deprive us of *that*. Others have seen Napoleon. Some few still exist who have beheld Frederick the Great, Doctor Johnson, Marie Antoinette, &c.- be it our reasonable boast to our children, that we saw George the Good, the Magnificent, the Great (p. 506).

2. Social critic, irony

It was partly a natural result of his being allied to no group and having no fixed place in society that Thackeray became a social critic. From Bohemia, the disreputable, classless and lively society of London journalism and night life, he could look at society objectively (Williams 18).

One of the successful way how to criticize society and make those who are actually criticized to read it is to use humour. In *Vanity Fair* Thackeray is harshly criticizing moral values but still people were willing to read his work. There could be many explanations why he found an audience despite his bitter irony. The readers probably did not get the sense of his irony or they did not realise that the spoiled snobbish characters represent a mirror of themselves or when he or she got what is wrong with the characters they said to themselves 'yes, I can see my neighbour behaving in that humbug way' but they would not admit 'yes, it is typical me'. Mario Praz (qtd. in Welsh) comes with a different explanation. He is of opinion that Thackeray's criticism is acceptable because it does not "depict vice either under alluring forms, or under forms so totally repugnant that they shock the moral sense but rather as it is depicted by a preacher" (49). Praz is not the only critic who calls Thackeray 'everyday preacher'. He was considered to be a lay preacher of moral sermons preached to lay public. He wanted to remind people not to forget to behave like human beings. And it was the problem he had with society and thus his characters in *Vanity Fair* who do not have the qualities of humans are introduced as puppets in a Puppet show. It is not only a speculation, as it became a part of the novel; the preface with an ironical tinge called *Before the Curtain* finishes with:

What more has the Manager of the Performance to say? - To acknowledge the kindness with which it has been received in all the principal towns of England through which the Show has passed, and where it has been most favourably noticed by the respected conductors of the Public Press, and by the Nobility and gentry. He is proud to think that his Puppets have given satisfaction to the very best company in this empire. The famous little Becky Puppet has been pronounced to be uncommonly flexible in the joints, and lively on the wire: the Amelia Doll, though it has had a smaller circle of admirers, has yet been carved and dressed with the greatest care by the artist: the Dobbins Figure, though apparently

clumsy, yet dances in a very amusing and natural manner: the Little Boy's Dance has been liked by some; and please to remark the richly-dressed figure of the Wicked Nobleman, on which no expense has been spared, and which Old Nick will fetch away at the end of this singular performance (p. 2).

Williams feels that the characters are puppets because all are "driven by their own desires" and they do not seek anything worth devotion. He sees two types of characters; those who are strong enough to realise what direction they are impelled and they are trying to change the course and the others who never realise and follow their desire (71).

There is one important element in *Vanity Fair* that helped Thackeray to reach humorous and ironic effect of the novel. Thanks to the role of a narrator he managed not only that but he was also allowed to interfere the text and with his ironic comments "teach" his readers. There are discussions among critics who actually the narrator is; Thackeray himself, or a part of created world of characters, the Master of Puppet show or Becky Sharp, as Williams suggested (68). Nevertheless Thackeray managed to infiltrate himself excellently into the story by the narrator whose roles are variable throughout the story. Sometimes he is an omniscient narrator with the right to know everything, then "the irresponsible, baffled spectator" (a question "Was she guilty or not" after the 'discovery scene') or the "mere reporter (himself meeting the characters at Pumpernickel in 1830)" Above all he was a moralist always reminding his readers to remember that *Vanity Fair* is "a very vain, wicked, foolish place, full of all sorts of humbugs and falseness and pretensions" (Welsh 83). But whatever the narrator omniscient was Thackeray did never tell everything as he was leaving much between the lines and by that he was teasing his readers and let them to think.

Thackeray liked to be amusing and he considered himself a humourist but Dodds emphasizes that he never created a comic scene just for the sake of the comedy effect (Welsh 35). According to Thackeray "humour is wit and love and the best humour is that which contains humanity, that which is flavoured throughout with tenderness and kindness". Although Victorians liked humorous novels they were not so sure about *Vanity Fair*. His irony was the reason because it was lightly covering what was a reader laughing at and they were suspicious if it was not themselves at last.

Thackeray as a social critic always emphasized a status of gentleman because he thought that only a real gentleman does not deserve a label of snob. He did not care what social level he came from or what is he wearing. Thackeray proved to be a gentleman himself and according to Praz he also represented a “humorist who never loses the urbanity of gentleman” and he says that it was a gentleman not only in his manner but also in his character, which is more important “for he has perfect self control and serenity of spirit” (Welsh 49).

3. Snobbishness, the title *Vanity Fair*

Looking through all major values of Victorian period there must be also mentioned qualities which Victorians themselves would not be probably proud of and would not probably introduce them as values of their golden age. But as a result of many circumstances Victorian people gained a label of snobs, hypocrites and egoists. Of course, all people cannot be blamed of being selfish and snobbish but Thackeray was strongly pessimistic in judging people and this is obvious in *Vanity Fair*. Every character he created has at least a bit of selfishness, hypocrisy or other immorality inside. In a paragraph where Carey is talking about character of Dobbin he tells us about Dobbin, “true, he is not faultless, and would not be in *Vanity Fair* if he were” (187).

Thackeray as a social critic expressed his perception of the Victorian society already in the title. But he did not use the title *Vanity Fair* since the very beginning of his writing this novel. The original title and later a sub-title of the book was “Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society”. Thackeray explained that the title of *Vanity Fair* came unexpectedly to his mind without any associations during the night in Weimar. But some critics see that an inspiration for his idea comes from Bunyan’s book *Pilgrim’s Progress*. The relevant part is:

they presently saw a Town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity; and at the Town there is a Fair kept, called Vanity Fair: it is kept all the year long; ... at this Fair are all such Merchandise sold as Houses, Lands, Trades, Places, Honours, Preferments, Titles, Countries, Kingdoms, Lusts, Pleasures, and Delights of all sorts, as Whores, Bawds, Wives, Husbands, Children, Masters, Servants, Lives, Blood Bodies, Souls, Silver, Gold, Pearls, Precious Stones and what not.

And moreover at this Fair there is at all times to be seen Jugglings, Cheats, Games, Plays, Fools, Apes, Knaves, and Rogues, and that of all sorts.

Here are to be seen, too, and that for nothing, Thefts, Murders, Adulterie, False-swearers, and that of a blood-red colour.

... Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this Town where this lusty Fair is kept; and he that will to to the City, and yet not go through this Town, must needs go out of the World. (Introduction by Catherine Peters 13).

Bunyan's Fair offered exactly the same 'goods' which Thackeray saw in the Victorian society. The goods, which were irresistible for inhabitants of Vanity Fair, for which they deserved his criticism and constant reminding of their vanities. Peters compares Bunyan's Fair to the passage where the characters arrived to Brussel before the Battle of Waterloo, "Gambling was here in profusion, and dancing plenty; feasting was there [...], there was a theatre ... beautiful rides ... a rare old city" (Introduction to *Vanity Fair* 14).

When talking about *Vanity Fair* a word 'snob' is another term that deserves an explanation for it goes hand in hand with Thackeray's criticism. Originally a *snob* had different meaning than it has now:

In early Victorian England the snob was a member of the lower middle, trading or commercial classes who had some pretensions to gentility or consideration. A snob was a newcomer or a social outsider, and the word is frequently used to imply no more than that (Williams 51).

Greig's theory of developing this word from just a "townsman" is that members of Cambridge University used the word as a slang expression for "low fellow, cad or bounder". And then Thackeray using that word in his writing established more restricted meaning: "person with an exaggerated respect for wealth or social position" (Welsh 39). It is admirable that Thackeray gave a new term to the world without any intention to do so. Baker suggests that the famous Thackeray's definition of a snob "mean admiration of mean things" is not "final or exact". As a correct definition he accepts, "the habit of pretending to be higher in the social scale than you really are" (355). Later Thackeray came with a new definition and he equated snobbishness, first with "worldliness, then with humbug, then with an unhappy passion for peacock's feathers". Then he admitted nonchalantly: "We can't say what it is, any more than we can define wit, humour, or humbug; but we *know* what it is" (Welsh 40). The meaning of a snob was established but there is a believe that Thackeray's ability reached only the point of defining snobbery but he was not able to "cure the sickness of an acquisitive society" (Welsh 41).

Selfishness is another point which occupied Thackeray's mind. He made many references to it in *Vanity Fair*, either directly or through symbols. An exam is when he let little George Osborne junior, a narcissistic infant, egoist himself, wrote a school essay on Selfishness:

Of all the vices which degrade the human character, Selfishness is the most odious and contemptible. An undue love of Self leads to the most monstrous crimes; and occasions the greatest misfortunes both in *States and Families*... The selfishness of the late Napoleon Bonaparte occasioned innumerable wars in Europe, and caused him to perish, himself, in a miserable island – that of Saint Helena in the Atlantic Ocean (p.629).

And if we consider little George's behaviour than we can agree with Carey's idea that little George by underlining '*States and Families*' ought to catch the point but he does not and that, "Napoleon and he, in their different spheres are of a kind" (195). Another example is provided by characters of Rebecca and Rawdon Crawley who although did not intend to ruin Raggles family they just wanted to live exquisitely without money but because of their carelessness about other people they drove impoverished Raggles to the prison and his family was without anywhere to go. Amelia's egoism is in her relationship to Dobbin, in chapter LXVI is said "She didn't wish to marry him, but she wished to keep him. She wished to give him nothing, but that he should give her all. It is a bargain not unfrequently levied in love" (p. 722). According to Carey, "selfishness is Thackeray's quarry in *Vanity Fair*. He is out to track it through its sinuous ways, to show it coiled within the most harmless-looking motives" (195).

4. Reality, revealing truth

One of the most important points in Thackeray's writing was revealing the truth and depicting reality. Not only in *Vanity Fair* but also in his other works he insisted on depicting a real life only in the way as he saw it. He wanted to make a real picture of the social world without any bias and thus he had to reject some of the conventions which other writers used for their novels. Thackeray as a devotee of realism wrote in his letter to Masson:

The Art of Novels *is* to represent Nature: to convey as strongly as possible the sentiment of reality- in a tragedy or a poem or a lofty drama you aim at producing different emotions; the figures moving, and their words sounding, heroically: but in a drawingroom drama a coat is a coat and a poker a poker; and must be nothing else according to my ethics, not an embroidered tunic, nor a great red-hot instrument like the Pantomime weapon (Welsh 31).

This is why Thackeray was openly and deliberately rejecting to fulfill conventional expectation. For example, in the first chapter he warned his audience that Amelia "is not a heroine" and thus "there is no need to describe her person". That is to say that one of the stereotypes was that a novel had usually two heroines of opposite characters; one bad and the other one good, which Thackeray did not apply in *Vanity Fair*, provably both Rebecca and Amelia were bad. In his letter to Robert Bell he explained his rejecting of heroism; in the name of morality and reality:

My object ... is to indicate, in cheerful terms, that we are for the most part an abominably foolish and selfish people ... all eager after vanities. Everybody is you see in that book, - for instance if I had made Amelia a higher order of woman there would have been no vanity in Dobbins falling in love with her, whereas the impression at present is that he is a fool for his pains [,] that he has married a silly little thing, and in fact has found his error ... I want to leave everybody dissatisfied and unhappy at the end of the story – we ought all to be with our own and all other stories (Welsh 69).

For Thackeray it was also not acceptable that novel ended with a marriage or a death-bed scene. He confessed:

It is much better to look at the end of a novel; and when I read “There is a fresh green mound in Brentford Churchyard, and a humble stone, on which is inscribed the name of 'Anna Maria'” ... I shut the book at once declining to agitate my feelings needlessly.

Thackeray never failed to be sentimental in the scenes where it would not be appropriate. The ending of *Vanity Fair* is ironical and skeptical in the same way as Thackeray was skeptical about the society he criticized:

Ah! *Vanitas Vanitatum!* Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? Or, having it, is satisfied? - Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out.

It was probably his love of the truth and reality that led him to create a subtitle to *Vanity Fair – A Novel Without Hero*. For Thackeray a hero did not exist in a real Vanity Fair world and thus his novel representing that Fair could not contain any as well. According to Williams, Thackeray was attacking some patterns of fiction of his time especially heroic concept that was “insisting on analysis of character and motivation which revealed a degree of selfishness in almost every human action” (61). No wonder he chose that subtitle when we consider that the two main characters of Amelia and Becky were both selfish. There was just a small difference between them. Becky was selfishly bad woman while Amelia was selfishly good. Dodds observed that Thackeray as well as other writers saw most men as a complex “mixture of the heroic, the noble and ignoble” and that it is necessary to highlight this complexity rather than simplify it for sentimental readers (Welsh 32).

Thackeray supported an illusion that *Vanity Fair* is not just a novel not only by including names of places and persons that existed in the real world but also by the liveliness of characters and things that were not in the main focus. There are genealogies, papers, certificates that sound so real, stuffs with precise size, colours, food and drinks of lovely taste. And there are characters appearing out of blue and disappearing not to come anymore; Mademoiselle Fifine, Madame du Barri, Monsieur Fiche, Wagg, a small coal merchant, Mrs. Mango of Mango, Horrocks or Tom Moody the huntsman.

5. I like Becky

Thackeray has always been admired for his ability to express his thinking and feeling through his characters. Tillotson stresses his power to present his characters and the action through dialogues, grouping or gestures and what is more without comment on them (Welsh 85). All of his figures in *Vanity Fair* even minor ones seems to be withdrawn from a real world and they were real to Thackeray. Baker talks about Thackeray's genius "unconscious working of the mind" and he cites exact words which Thackeray exclaimed of one of his characters "How the deuce did he come to think of that?". Thackeray often claimed that he did not control his characters, that he was in their hands and they took him where they pleased. Although he was possessed by his characters, sometimes he interfered the story and manipulated his characters.

Although bearing all the vanities a *Vanity Fair* may offer, Rebecca became the most likable and attractive character. Thackeray used to say she was the only intelligent one who could express his wit and smartness. If we want to find someone who would fit Thackeray most in other fields it would be again Becky, for example as she represented his favour for the Bohemian world or hatred to the hypocritical superiors. From the very beginning a reader is made to like Becky. She was a penniless girl teaching French at Mr. Pinkerton's school for just little money a year, she suffered constant humiliation for her origin and poverty. Then after leaving school she was despised for her social standing as a governess. After arrival to Amelia's house Mrs. Blenkinsop, serving as a housekeeper said "I don't trust them governesses, Piner [...] They give themselves the hairs and hupstarts of ladies, and their wages is no better than you nor me." So we keep our fingers crossed for her to escape her current conditions and thus we sometimes neglect her immoral deeds. Fortunately, not Thackeray who with his talent for satire is constantly reminding us of her sins and he does not let us to enjoy Rebecca. His merciless and firm judgement of Rebecca never weakens but his technique of doing so is rather hidden than open as in chapter XLIV where Rebecca pretends to be loving and carefull mother to her son:

She listened with the tenderest kindly interest, sitting by him, and hemming a him for her dear little boy. Whenever Mrs. Rawdon wished to be particularly humble and virtuous, this little shirt used to come out of her

work-box. It had got to be too small for Rawdon long before it was finished, though (p. 470).

If nothing else it is her cold relationship to her son and her infidelity to her husband what may be the first reason for mixed opinions of Becky. The scene where she is boxing the ears of her son for listening her singing to Lord Steyne is very strong and suggests nothing but the fact that she is a very mean person. But still we do not fully damn her and we defeat her against narrator's comments because all the sins she made were there due to her will to escape a poverty.

Becky is a prototype of a social climber. She used all her weapons – wit, knowledge (French language), abilities (singing, playing the piano), posing, smartness and beauty – to get higher on a social ladder. She knew that money and good contacts can help. There were hours and hours she spent with old, wealthy Miss Crawley but not because she enjoyed her society but because their friendship could bring a favour to her and Rawdon and consequently a fine sum of money as a heritage. Carrey admits that Becky is always worth watching because her “resourcefulness and vitality, and the interplay between her hypocrisy and her genuine feelings, make her unpredictable” (181). Who would expect that in the last chapter (after listening to Amelia's conversation with Dobbin) she would ever say ““Ah!”, she thought, “if I could have had such a husband as that – a man with a heart and brains too!”” (chap. LXVI, p. 723).

In comparison with Amelia she is more successful. She is actively trying to shape her destiny while passive Amelia is accepting hers. Becky also proved to be better wife in assisting her husband in their financial problems. She managed to settle the troubles with Rawdon's creditors and she got a job of Governorship of Coventry Island for him. Opposed to Amelia she made her husband proud of her and there was a whole-hearted devotion from his side.

Baker knew that Thackeray would never call Becky heroine (except chapter XXX, p. 309, where he ironically commented, that if there is a heroine, it cannot be the humdrum Amelia; it must be Becky Sharp) however he made a comparison “Becky Sharp is as manifestly the heroine as Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost*” (357).

Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor paper was to establish a framework of Victorian values and find them in William Makepeace Thackeray's novel, *Vanity Fair*, in order to help with a decision whether this work can be regarded as a reflection of the Victorian society. The work focuses on Victorian values appearing especially in the very beginning of the Victorian era and Regency years because the novel depicts this era although it was written in late 40s of the nineteenth century.

The first part of this paper focused on the values that were forming Victorian society. Chapters are dealing with different areas but all of them were fecund in the sense that it was possible to find the same problems in the novel. Examples from *Vanity Fair* were provided and it demonstrated that Thackeray did not create his own world but he depicted the society exactly as it was with his critical attitude of a Bohemian. Neither the lapse of time dividing the age when Thackeray wrote the novel and the time when the story took place did distort the real facts. *Vanity Fair* proved to bear such important issues as is classing of society, woman and gentleman position in the society, individual's attitude to money and business or Bohemian movement rejecting conservatism.

The second part observed Thackeray's attitude to the Victorian society. Thackeray regarded himself as a social critic and he saw the society as a very vain place. The opening chapter found out that Thackeray's places and some of the characters chosen for *Vanity Fair* were reflecting real ones. It also deals with the idea that Thackeray's own life experience as a middle class representative and a Bohemian is reflected through the character of Becky Sharp. Because of many circumstances Victorian society was famous for its vanities like snobbishness, hypocrisy, social climbing or selfishness which Thackeray depicted in *Vanity Fair* and it was the main reason for his criticism that was provided by brisk irony and humor.

Another fact proving the statement that *Vanity Fair* reflects Victorian society is that Thackeray, as a follower of realism movement insisted on describing society as he saw it – with all its unpleasant features and without any sentiment. He always wanted to reveal the truth and reality.

There are many critics who consider *Vanity Fair* a glittering masterpiece. Baker noted that *Vanity Fair* is “a great anatomy of society; it is a picture of life, but a picture that not only portrays but shows the significance of its subject” (383).

Thanks to the information and facts that this paper has collected, this work will be concluded with a final statement that Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* is a reflection of the early Victorian society thanks to the values that occurred both in Victorian society and in the society that Thackeray depicted in *Vanity Fair*.

Resumé

Cílem této práce bylo zaměřit se na Viktoriánské hodnoty a poukázat na ně v díle Williama Makepeace Thackerayho *Vanity Fair*.

Práce se v úvodu věnuje otázce, které hodnoty budou rozebírány a které ne. To z toho důvodu, že dílo se odehrává již v období těsně před začátkem viktoriánského období a na jeho samotném začátku, tudíž celé období není zahrnuté a proto se v něm některé hodnoty nemohou objevit (například královna Viktorie či rozvoj železnice). Také se zde vysvětluje, že Thackeray se chtěl zaměřit pouze na kritiku tehdejší společnosti a proto nerušil čtenáře scénami z vojenského prostředí, přestože děj se odehrává také v období napoleonských válek, které silně ovlivňovaly tehdejší společnost. Zrovna tak se příliš nevěnuje romantickým okamžiků některých jeho hrdinů, protože tím by mohl odvádět pozornost od toho, co měl román splňovat a to vykreslit tehdejší společnost v takových barvách v jakých ji on sám viděl – marnivou, zkaženou, pokryteckou a domýšlivou.

Kapitoly první části práce podávají podrobný náhled na ty otázky, které ovlivňovaly tehdejší společnost a bylo možné najít příklady těchto hodnot v díle *Vanity Fair*.

První kapitola nazvaná *Classes* odkrývá složitost tehdejšího rozvrstvení v britské společnosti. Tehdejší společnost se dělila na třídy a člověk patřící do jisté skupiny měl svá privilegia, postavení ve společnosti, vlastnil odpovídající majetek, těšil se jisté úctě. Thackerayho pobuřovalo zejména to, že lidé se nechovali dle postavení, které jim náleželo, ale snažili se za každou cenu dostat se do lepší společnosti, napodobovali aristokratické chování, ač to vypadalo směšně a při takovém snažení zapomínali na slušné lidské chování, lidi kolem sebe a proto je Thackeray označoval za pokrytce. Thackeray se ovšem nezaobíral všemi vrstvami společnosti, ve *Vanity Fair* najdeme minimální odkaz na vrstvu pracujících a nejvíce se věnuje střední třídě.

Další kapitola *Women, Gentlemen* je zaměřená na postavení ženy ve společnosti a fenomén gentlemanství. V tehdejší době měla žena mnohem méně práv než v dnešní době a jejím posláním bylo starat se o rodinu, domácnost a reprezentovat manžela. Ženy z vyšších vrstev nechodily do práce a volný čas vyplňovaly právě starostmi o manžela a děti, zařizováním večírků a dýchánek, procházkami, návštěvami divadel nebo některé

četbou či hrou na nějaký hudební nástroj. Pro mnohé však takový život byl spíše nudou, zejména pokud žena zůstala bez manžela, což představovalo velký problém, proto mnohé mladé dívky pořádaly 'hon' na manžela, aby si zajistily bezpečný a zajištěný život. To vše nehledě na to, jestli se jí dotyčný muž líbil, byl přiměřeného věku nebo ho dokonce milovala. Takové ženy neodpovídaly Thackerayho představám o 'lady', za což je také kritizoval. Hlavními představiteli ve *Vanity Fair* jsou dvě ženy Rebecca a Amélie. Thackeray je odmítá nazývat hrdinkami právě pro jejich výše zmíněné i jiné marnivosti. Tato kapitola se také zabývá otázkou gentlemanství, které bylo pro Thackerayho zásadní. Gentlemanství neposuzoval jen podle vzhledu a společenského chování, nýbrž podle činů, pohnutků, které ho k takovým činům vedou, charakterových vlastností a nezáleželo přitom z jaké společenské vrstvy pochází.

Jak byla společnost ovlivňována penězi se řeší v kapitole *Business, money, individualism*. V době, kterou román zachycuje, nastal velký rozkvět obchodu a zároveň napoleonské války způsobily krach a naopak i růst některých firem, což se dotklo i jedné z Thackerayho postav. Tehdejší doba byla význačná ekonomickým směrem zvaným *laissez-faire* a individualismem, pro které bylo charakteristické, že stát nezasahoval do konání jednotlivce a ten se o sebe musel umět postarat sám, což pro některé znamenalo katastrofu, pro jiné úspěch. Dle Thackeraha se společnost vyznačovala hamižností a posuzovala charakter jednotlivce podle toho, jakým majetkem oplýval. Hlavní představitelka Becky Sharp byla jednou z těch, kteří se pro peníze přetvařovali, podležali a obětovali přátelství nebo lásku.

V kapitole *Victorian Puritanism, morality, church* se dostáváme k otázce náboženství. Thackerayho postavy se nevyznačují přehnaným sklonem k náboženství, přesto jsou ovlivněni tehdejším puritanismem a morálkou. Puritanismus byl velmi striktní v tom, jaké chování ve společnosti je akceptovatelné a které není. Mnoho věcí se stávalo tabu, bylo zakázáno o nich mluvit, přestože v myšlenkách přetrvávaly, což opět vedlo k pokrytectví ve společnosti. Z takového důvodu se nesmělo mluvit o sexu, ženy se musely zahalovat odpovídajícím způsobem atd. Paradoxně byl Londýn plný prostitutek.

Kolonialismus byl fenoménem, který napomáhal rozmachu britského impéria. Přinášel s sebou vznik nových pracovních možností, čehož lidé hojně využívali a ten, kdo zastával nějaký úřad v kolonii, se ve společnosti mohl těšit značnému obdivu a

respektu. Muž, který zastával takové místo byl lákadlem pro vdavkuchtivé ženy, které mu proto podlézaly, což Thackeray znázornil na dvojici Josef Sedley a Becky Sharp. Josefa vyličil jako směšného obtloustlého snoba, který v kolonii neměl zřejmě nic moc na práci a věnoval se spíše neřestem jako je jídlo nebo móda.

Pro Thackerayho tvorbu byl důležitý původ a jeho působení jako bohém. Kapitola *Bohemian world* přibližuje život bohémů a proti jakým hodnotám ve společnosti se stavěli. Jejich úhlavním nepřítelem byla střední třída, jejich honba za majetkem či konzervatismus. Pro Thackerayho dílo je přínosné, že při své kritice mohl zúročit zkušenosti, jak ze světa chudých spisovatelů, tak ze života střední třídy (narodil se do dobře situované rodiny), kterou právě tolik kritizoval.

Druhá část práce začíná kapitolou, která řeší Thackerayho vztah k místům a postavám jeho románu. Zde se snažíme zjistit, do jaké míry jsou reálné či smyšlené. Existují záznamy, podle kterých lze doložit, že některé postavy jsou inspirované existujícími lidmi a některá místa, která se v románě objevují dokonce sám Thackeray navštívil.

V následující kapitole představujeme Thackerayho jako kritika společnosti. Ta se vyznačuje ironií a humorem. Ve *Vanity Fair* je velmi důležitým elementem role vypravěče, který svými ironickými poznámkami doprovází celý román. Někdy má roli vševědoucího, jindy uzná za vhodné některé záležitosti přejít a vůbec je čtenáři nesdělovat. Zkrze jeho poznámky cítíme, že s morálkou oné společnosti rozhodně není spokojen a nenásilným způsobem naznačuje, že nikdo z těch, kdo se objevuje na jarmarku marnosti rozhodně nesplňuje jeho požadavky na gentlemana nebo dámu potažmo hrdiny.

Kapitola nazvaná *Snobbishness, the title Vanity Fair* nás seznamuje s historií slova snob a názvu díla. Dovídáme se také jaké nešvary zmítaly jedinci na jarmarku marnosti a to zejména snobství, sobectví, či egoismus.

Pro Thackerayho bylo vždy důležité odhalovat pravdu a dívat se na svět reálnýma očima. Tím se také řídil při psaní *Vanity Fair*. Jako realista popisoval věci tak, jak je viděl a jakékoliv příkrášlování mu bylo nepříjemné. Proto nerad dělal hrdiny z těch, co jimi nebyli, což vysvětluje i podtitul *Without Hero* – bez hrdiny. Opovrhoval takovými romány, které končily romantickou svatbou nebo jiným pro tehdejší svět nereálným koncem.

Závěrečná kapitole nazvaná *I like Becky* se věnuje zejména hlavní představitelce v románu. Ona totiž podle některých kritiků odráží osobu samotného Thackerayho, kdy on sám tvrdil, že ona je jediná natolik inteligentní postava, která ho může zastat v otázce důvtipu, humoru a jazykové obratnosti. Becky také jako jediná z hlavních postav ve *Vanity Fair* odráží jeho bohémský život. Přestože má Becky určité obdivuhodné schopnosti, pro které ji čtenář může obdivovat, Thackeray je nemilostivý a neustále ji kritizuje a vyjadřuje svůj negativní názor na její marnivost.

V závěru této práce přistupujeme k hodnocení dosažených informací a faktů, které nám měly přispět k posouzení zda *Vanity Fair* může být považován za odraz své doby. Jelikož nashromážděné informace hovoří pro odpověď ano, uzavíráme tuto práci s tím, že *Vanity Fair* můžeme považovat za reálný odraz viktoriánského období.

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ÚDAJE PRO KNIHOVNICKOU DATABÁZI

Název práce	“I LIKE BECKY”: VIKTORIÁNSKÉ HODNOTY V DÍLE W. M. THACKERAYHO, <i>VANITY FAIR</i>
Autor práce	Michaela Macurová
Obor	Anglický jazyk pro hospodářskou praxi
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Vedoucí práce	Michael M. Kaylor, M.A.
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