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CATEGORIZATION, COMMODIFICATION OF WOMEN AND FEMALE STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN THACKERAY'S *VANITY FAIR*

Abstract: Indoctrination of women in Great Britain reached its peak during the Victorian age. The embodiment of this peak is the phenomenon of separate spheres. The Victorian culture categorized women as either Angels in the House or fallen women. These moulds were reflected in the Victorian novel. In contrast to common categorization of women, Thackeray makes an effort in *Vanity Fair* to represent real women, women who do not fit into prescribed types and definitions. This research attempts to prove that both Becky and Amelia are aware of their inferior position. Both of them do what they consider socially acceptable. Their identities are performed, but Amelia's performance passes as natural, whereas Becky's acting is recognized. They succeed to dominate men they get in touch with. While Amelia marries Dobbin, morally the most prominent character of the novel, Becky's triumph is short-lived. One of the main causes of the moral crises of the Victorian era is society's attitude toward women. Thackeray suggests that only a radical change in beliefs will lead to their better position.

Keywords: Becky Sharp, Amelia Sedley (Osborne), rebellion, object, marriage, the femme fatale, the "Angel in the House", the "fallen" woman.

1. INDOCTRINATION OF WOMEN IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

As Raymond Chapman notices in his book *The Victorian Debate: English Literature and Society 1823–1901*, English society went through a period of tremendous flux and change during the Victorian era. Chapman underlines the fact that "fortunes [we]re made and lost, reputations rose and fell" (Chapman 1968: 145) in a short period of time, so that individuals had to adapt quickly to these changes. Similarly, Jennifer Hedgecock claims that the Industrial revolution confused the Victorian society. As a result of this confusion, there was a need to "codify gender and class differences" in British society (Hedgecock 2008: 24).

Therefore, there were major differences in terms of what was considered appropriate for the members of various classes and genders. However, one fact was

out of the question – the Victorian age as a male age, an era when men were in the positions of power. The male power structure feared the empowerment and emancipation of women. As a consequence, one of the most important tasks of the authorities was to convince women that their inferior position was for their own good.

Although indoctrination of women is not the legacy of the nineteenth century¹, it is certainly a period when the indoctrination reached its peak. This peak is embodied in the phenomenon of separate spheres. The common belief was that the two genders, due to their different genetics, were predetermined for diametrically opposed social roles. Women, who were perceived as emotional, vulnerable, and intellectually inferior to men, were considered appropriate for domestic sphere. On the other hand, men were perceived as aggressive, competitive, rational and practical human beings, which made them appropriate for the public sphere. Those women who did not want to aspire to reach the image of the ideal women, known as the “Angel in the House”, risked to be labeled as “fallen women”².

Although women were commonly considered morally superior to men, there was a deeply entrenched belief that their character was not consistent and that it was liable to various influences. The society prompted the attitude that particularly women’s sexuality should be kept under control. Having in mind fears of the liberated females, it comes as no surprise that the Victorian novel, as the dominant literary genre of the period, dealt with the “Woman Question”. As Tim Dolin observes, the Victorian readers (which had a great per cent of female readers) were very much interested in the question “what would happen if women took charge of their lives and articulated their ambition or anger?” (Dolin 2005: 137).

The position of woman in the Victorian society became one of the most important themes of the Victorian novel. When it comes to William Makepeace Thackeray, one of the major Victorian novelists, he often wrote fiction dealing with this issue. Speaking of *Vanity Fair* (1848), Thackeray’s masterpiece, we are going to demonstrate that Thackeray attempts to represent real women in this novel, women who do not fit into Victorian moulds and codes. The protagonist of the novel is a notorious, unconventional Becky Sharp who threatens the stability of the existing power structure. Becky seemingly accepts Victorian objectification and commodification of women, but she aspires to use this commodification in her favor. Although Becky succeeds to climb the social ladder, her triumph is short-

¹ Joan Perkin, the author of *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England*, argues that women in Britain lost their equality when the Normans invaded the island. The Normans brought feudalism with them. After the invasion of the Normans men took control of all social resources, which they used to dominate women (Perkin 2002: 1).

² Whereas the Angel in the House stands for an ideal woman of the Victorian age, who is selfless and submissive, the fallen woman, according to Dijana Tica, refers to women who had any kind of extramarital sexual experience. However, Tica remarks that homeless women, as well as mentally ill women and women who expressed immoderate emotions and passions, were also considered fallen (Tica 2012: 77).

lived. As in most Victorian novels, the order is retrieved by the end of the book. Ambitious Becky and passive Amelia achieve only partial success in achieving their goals. The society regains its stability, but the questions concerning the position of women and the effects of their commodification and categorization remain open.

2. CATEGORIZATION OF WOMEN

Thackeray makes an effort to represent women realistically, to show that real women do not fit into prescribed moulds and categories. Katharine Rogers asserts that Thackeray masterfully balances the positive and negative aspects of the “good” and “bad” Victorian woman (Rogers 1972: 257). As Tica and Rogers notice, Thackeray’s experience with traditionally “good” women accounts for his excellent characterization and understanding of women. Whereas Rogers elaborates on his complex relationship with his “adoring, strong-willed and saintly” (1972: 257) mother, Tica claims that Thackeray’s marriage with a weak and passive Isabella revealed to him all the imperfections of “the Angel in the House” (Tica 2012: 79). However, Rogers states that ambivalence that Thackeray felt for “good” women does not mean that he rejected this type of woman, but that he was able to see both its positive and negative side (1972: 258).

Choosing Becky Sharp for the protagonist of the novel Thackeray “challenges the conventional idea of a heroine” (Wheeler 1985: 49). As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar remark in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, most of the Victorian novelists chose passive and submissive female characters for the heroines of their novels. Gilbert and Gubar claim that the novelist perceived strong and independent female characters as potentially dangerous because they possessed traits traditionally associated with men, such as selfishness, aggressiveness and vivacity. According to Gilbert and Gubar, characters like Becky are rebels who protest against traditional gender roles. Women like Becky cause fear because their “male” characteristics may jeopardize authority and traditionally dominant position of men (Gilbert, Gubar 2000: 29).

Though critics such as Dijana Tica describe the character of Rebecca Sharp as an embodiment of the “fallen woman” (precisely, an unconventional fallen woman), the critics such as Jennifer Hedgecock and Heather Braun advocate the position that Becky does not fit either into the category of the Angel in the House (the domestic woman) or into the mould of the fallen woman. Their hypothesis is that Becky represents a femme fatale, a woman who “enters mainstream Victorian culture without being detected as dangerous” (Hedgecock 2008: 17). Though the femme fatale has the same or similar starting point as the fallen woman (an orphan, law origin, sexual misconduct), she, unlike the fallen or domestic woman, does not take the conventions of Victorian culture seriously. Unlike the fallen woman, whose reputation is permanently destroyed, the femme fatale does not give up even

when her affairs are exposed. For example, when Rawdon accuses Becky of having an affair with Lord Stayne, she does not think that everything is lost. She quickly makes new plans and moves on. Unlike fallen women, whose destiny in life and fiction was often a tragic one (take Hardy's Tess as an example), the character of Becky Sharp possesses remarkable energy, which accounts for her position as the most vivid character and heroine of the novel.

3. ATTITUDE TOWARD MARRIAGE

As Suzanne Fagence Cooper notes, the whole British society, including “journalists, novelists and even the Queen herself were all conspiring to make marriage essential” (Cooper 2001: 18) during the Victorian age. Still, we have to bear in mind the fact that the Victorian girls had to take decision of marrying extremely carefully since there was not an easy way to exit an unhappy marriage during this era³. Moreover, as Judith Lowder Newton argues, ideology, “which governed both life and literary form, required that a heroine should marry, but marriage almost always meant relinquishment of power” (Newton 1981: 8). However, our hypothesis is that the protagonist of *Vanity Fair*, Becky Sharp, actually rises in influence and power starting from her marrying to Rawdon Crawley. Becky succeeds to hide her problematic origin and uses her education and beauty to rise in society, to climb the social ladder. Marriage to a wealthy gentleman was the sole means of changing class for middle class Victorian women, and Becky was capable of using all her resources to turn this dream into reality.

When it comes to marriage, Thackeray's novels support the view that finding a suitable husband was extremely important to Victorian women. Thackeray shows sympathy for naïve women like Amelia Sedley, who lives under an illusion that her husband is a Prince Charming who is loyal and deeply attached to her. He warns his female readers not to think of marriage as a romance. He advises them to look up to the character of Maria Osborne, who understands the Victorian concept of marriage:

Miss Maria Osborne, it is true, was ‘attached’ to Mr. Frederick Augustus Bullock, of the firm of Hulker & Bullock; but hers 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 woman 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 & Bullock, all of

³ Until 1857 it was possible to get a divorce only if it was decided so in the Parliament. In 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act came into force. This act reflected the double standards regarding male and female gender. If we take into consideration that due to economic and social reasons divorce was a rare occurrence, it comes as no surprise that divorce rate in the late XIX century was only 0.2 %.

which advantages were represented in the person of Frederick Augustus (Thackeray 1848: 218).

However, *Vanity Fair* differs from the novels of Thackeray's contemporaries in respect that Thackeray does not regard marriage as the end of women's efforts and problems:

As his hero and heroine pass the matrimonial barrier, the novelist generally drops the curtain, as if the drama were over then: the doubts and struggles of life ended: as if, once landed in the marriage country, all were green and pleasant there: and wife and husband had nothing to do but to link each other's arms together, and wander gently downwards towards old age in happy and perfect fruition (1848: 507).

In most of the Victorian novels, marriage takes place at the end of the book. Although Becky and Amelia's goal is to marry well, the author implies that marriage brings a lot of challenges and temptations. For Amelia, marriage symbolizes an instructive experience. Only after she suffers neglect by her husband does Amelia realize that women must be duplicitous and manipulative in order to keep men by their side. On the other hand, for Becky marriage is only a tool which will help her improve her status. She marries Rawdon Crawley, who brings her position, but is penniless. Therefore, Becky must find a man able to satisfy her desire for wealth.

4. STRUGGLE FOR POWER

As Claudia Nelson points out in *Family Ties in Victorian England*, marriage in Victorian England was similar to a contract between a wife and a husband. Under this "contract" a woman gives her virginity in exchange for the consent of the husband to limit his sexual needs to his wife (Nelson 2007: 20). In *Vanity Fair* we have a vivid and authentic reflection of the marriage market phenomenon of Victorian culture. Female characters of this novel are viewed by male characters as objects, commodities on the market. Both Amelia Sedley and Rebecca Sharp are aware of this attitude. Luce Irigaray asks the question "how can women claim the right to speak in a male, patriarchal society, having in mind that they are looked upon as products used and exchanged among men?" (Irigaray 1985: 84). In order to transcend the state of an object, a woman must, in Irigaray's opinion, play with mimesis. To play with mimesis means that a woman seemingly accepts and shares male conception of her. This strategy will help women "to make 'visible', by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible" (1985: 76). In order to remain unnoticed in her strivings, a woman puts on herself a mask of femininity (Butler 1990: 114). Becky Sharp plays the role of domestic woman so successfully that she convinces almost all characters into her virtuous nature.

However, if Becky's mask is easily perceived, it should be mentioned that Amelia puts on a mask as well. She behaves in a way that she regards as socially acceptable. Amelia naively believes that accomplishments she mastered at Miss Pinkerton's school will help her marry well and live happily ever after. After her disappointing marriage to George, Amelia decides not to allow men to subdue her. Similarly to Becky, she treats Dobbin as a toy. Amelia likes to have someone to lean on, but suspends Dobbin's desire until she realizes that she will definitely lose him if she hesitates any longer.

Lisa Jadwin in the article *The Seductiveness of Female Duplicity in Vanity Fair* claims that Becky's most important "weapon" in her strivings for social success is her language. As Jadwin implies, the way in which the Victorian women spoke differed from the men's language. Although women were dissatisfied with their position in society, a direct rebellion against the world domineered by men would be met with disapproval and condemnation. Therefore, according to Jadwin, women were compelled to change their speech in a way that corresponds with Luce Irigaray's mimicry. Jadwin claims that this speech, so called "double-discourse", on the surface appeared as the speech that was considered appropriate for women. However, intelligent women like Becky were able to slightly change that speech. Becky, who was an expert in using double discourse, was capable of sending a message by overemphasizing certain parts of the speech (Jadwin 1992: 664). Victorian society taught women to be passive and helpless. Still, as Jadwin observes, acting in a passive and helpless way led women to subordination. To transcend their inferior position, cunning women resorted to mimicry – they mimicked the "women's speech", but they changed it in a way that enabled them to express their rebellion in a socially acceptable manner (1992: 665).

As Lowder Newton states, there was a clear distinction between influence and power during the Victorian age. Whereas power was in the hands of men, women were not in the position of power. They were considered to have a great influence on others in terms of being able to "persuade others to do something that was in their own interest" (Newton 1981: 4). Exerting an influence did not mean being able to control or claiming the right to self-definition. However, in novels such as *Vanity Fair* we deal with subversive writing. Although the novel is set in the time of the Waterloo battle, historical events are in the background. What is important to the author is the life and fate of two main female characters. The two of them succeed to seduce and manipulate almost all of the male characters.

As we have already mentioned, the barriers between classes were so deeply entrenched that it was almost impossible to cross them in the nineteenth-century Britain. The aristocracy looked upon the middle class, whereas the members of the middle class looked upon the working class with contempt. However, Becky Sharp, being intelligent, cunning, independent and pragmatic, quite early realizes in what sort of society she lives in. Having in mind the prejudice of the upper class against the people of low origin, she puts on a mask. As Hedgecock remarks, the charac-

ter of Becky Sharp is an embodiment of the resentment of middle class women in Victorian Britain, who were marginalized and looked upon by the aristocracy. As this critic claims, middle class women were ready to “risk everything to gain power” (2008: 12). Becky is aware that in shallow and superficial Victorian society the appearance of virtue and morality is important – it is not required to be moral, but to seem moral and pure. She has the potential to pose as a lady – she is blond⁴, has good manners, and possesses good education. Moreover, her name suggests her sharpness, her social intelligence that Hether Braun defines as ability “to identify precise moments when knowledge of social customs and mannerism will work to her advantage (Braun 2012: 59). As Braun notices, Becky’s shrewdness is demonstrated by the fact that she even succeeds to turn her low origin (“connection with starving artists and promiscuous French theatrical performer” (Braun 2012: 59)) into a virtue (to be fluent in French was considered noble, a trait of a true lady).

Using her duplicitous skills, Becky Sharp succeeds to change the power structure in her favor. Contrary to a typical Victorian woman, who is dominated by a man, Becky is the one who possesses power and control in all her relationships with male characters. As Hedgecock notes, Becky, as a femme fatale, must exert control and power over men (2008: 10). Apart from flattery, which she uses to manipulate both men and women in order to advance her social position, she also uses, as Braun claims, “tools of repetition and delay” (2012: 49) to enchant and seduce her male victims. As Braun explains, the femme fatale plays the role of a mysterious and inaccessible women so as to attract a man. Perceptive and pragmatic, she realizes that she should suspend and delay rather than gratify men’s emotional and sexual needs in order to exert bigger influence on them (2012: 52). Her acting and mimicry are rarely recognized by men. The sole male character who has a clear insight into Becky’s nature and intentions is William Dobbin. Dobbin is morally the most sublime character of the novel. As Kathleen Tilotson notices, moral characters are true enemies of Becky Sharp since her calculations do not prove efficient when she uses them against honest and decent men (Tilotson 1978: 137). Apart from them, the members of aristocracy instinctively feel that Becky’s manners and behavior is only a pose (2008: 25), but they cannot prove this accusation.

Becky’s marriage to Rawdon Crawley is only a jumping board for the unscrupulous and ambitious heroine. Becky uses this marriage to enter the high society. To rise in position and power she needs a wealthy and powerful cavalier. Becky succeeds to find a man who perfectly matches her aspirations. Lord Stayne helps Becky to fulfill her dreams of climbing the social ladder to its top. At the peak

⁴ As Katherine Rogers observes in *The Pressure of Convention on Thackeray’s Women*, Thackeray rarely described his female characters in accordance with traditional “Anglo-Saxon association of bloneness with goodness and acceptability” (Rogers 1972: 262). Being blonde helps Becky to act her role of the paragon of domesticity in a more persuasive way. By reversing the colouring of his female characters Thackeray mocks the shallowness and unfoundedness of the traditional categorization of women.

of her rising Becky is introduced to the king. But our “little adventurer” is never satisfied. She persuades Lord Stayne to organize the performance of “live motions”. The main role, that of Clytemenstra, is, of course, entrusted to Becky Sharp. As Maria Dibatista notices, Becky’s role of Clytemenstra points out to her rebellion against patriarchal society. The narrator associates Becky with Clytemnestra and Philomela⁵. Becky, as both Clytemnestra and Philomela, commits a lot of misdeeds, which is a consequence of oppression that she suffered as a child and a young woman. Becky, just like the two female ancient characters, rises against patriarchy that attempts to subject them and turn them into objects. Philomela, just like Becky, cannot defend herself like a man, she is denied the right to speak and openly protest against injustice inflicted on her. She expresses her rebellion through art. On the other hand, Becky cannot act in an open and direct way because the male society does not let women use the means that are allowed to men. The sin (or the greatness) of Becky Sharp is her unwillingness to come to terms with being reduced to an object. Therefore, Becky rebels, which results in the “sudden intrusion, the unanticipated agency, of a female ‘object’ who inexplicably returns the glance, reverses the gaze, and contests the place and authority of the masculine position” (Butler 1990: vii). Becky treats all the male characters she gets in touch with as mere tools that will help her to achieve her goals. Doing so, she reverses a typical situation (in which women are subordinated to men) and dominates men.

Dibatista sees the cause of the cultural crisis in the problematic attitude of men toward women, which results in amoral behavior of Becky Sharp and long-lasting mourning of Amelia Osborne (Dibatista 1980: 833). As this critic explains, attitudes toward women, marriage and sexuality form the foundation of cultural and social stability. Therefore, individual oppressions do not influence only a private, but a public sphere as well. Moral crisis of the society that Thackeray depicts is to a great extent the consequence of attitude toward women. Becky Sharp is the heroine of *Vanity Fair* because she stands for the rebellion of an oppressed woman (1980: 833), a woman who does not accept an inferior role that society intended for her and attempted to confine her in that manner.

The critics who write about *Vanity Fair* agree that Becky is manipulative and recognize her performing skills, whereas most of them depict Amelia as passive, weak and natural. Nonetheless, Kit Dobbson claims that identities of both Becky

⁵ Two famous ancient myths are concerned. Clytemestra was a wife of Agamamnon, the king of Mycenae. Agamamenon goes to the Trojan war. In the meantime, Aegisthus seduces Clytemnestra. After the king of Mycenae returns from the war Clytemnestra plots with Aegisthus to murder him. The motive of this crime is sacrificing of Clytemnestra and Agamamnon’s child Iphigeneia in order to ensure the safe sailing of ships. Philomela is also a famous avenger. She was raped by Tereus, the king of Trace and husband of her sister Procne. When she threatens to tell what happened to her, Tereus cuts her tongue. However, Philomela finds a way to inform Procne about her husband’s misdeed – she weaves a tapestry and writes about the rape on it. When Procne finds about Tereus’ sin, she kills Tereus and her favorite son and serves him as a meal to her husband.

and Amelia are unnatural, performed. Dobbson underlines the fact that Becky and Amelia do what they regard as socially acceptable. The sole difference between them is that Becky's performance is exposed, whereas Amelia's performance is regarded as natural (Dobson 2006: 1). As Dobbson observes, Becky Sharp is in a less secure position than her friend, which makes her more sensitive to the opinion and judgment of "the gossiping world" of *Vanity Fair* (2006: 1). Similarly, Braun suggests that both Becky and Amelia "perform the role of helpless and inferior female in order to elicit love and protection from easily duped male characters" (Braun 2012: 57).

Becky and Amelia polish their performing skills at Miss Pinkerton's school. However, Amelia internalizes what she learns there, whereas Becky only apparently accepts social rules. Therefore, as Dobbson claims, Amelia plays her role of grieving widow too long because that is what society expects from her, having in mind the fact that Victorian culture promoted the idea that a woman should have only one partner in her life (2006: 19).

Although Amelia is usually perceived as a victim, Suzanne De Phyllis asserts that Amelia does not yield to anyone after her husband's death. De Phyllis claims that after her unfortunate experience with George Amelia does not want to get married. Therefore, she only flirts with men in order to feel loved and valuable. She is afraid that she will quickly bore the men who find her attractive. That is one of the causes for her rejection of Dobbin (De Phyllis 1999: 396).

It is general knowledge that Thackeray does not believe in the heroic potential of people. Still, he believes in the possibility of adaptation. Although through the character of Amelia Sedley (Osborne) the novelist points at all the imperfections of the Angel in the House, we have to mention that Amelia matures after her husband dies. After her unfortunate experience with George Amelia refuses to be reduced to an object. Like Becky, she suspends male desire and in that way becomes more likable and inaccessible, which is the essence of her charm as a widow.

5. VANITY FAIR – AN UNCONVENTIONAL VICTORIAN NOVEL

To sum up, *Vanity Fair* is in many respects an unconventional and subversive novel. In this novel Thackeray challenges stereotypes and commodification of women, implying that attempts to make women subject to what is expected from them may have long-lasting effects on the whole society. Unlike his contemporaries, he chooses an independent, selfish and energetic character for the protagonist. Contrary to deeply entrenched beliefs that men are more powerful and less moral, Thackeray suggests that women are those who have greater power and who are naturally duplicitous and prone to manipulation. As he notices at the beginning of *Vanity Fair*:

What a mercy it is that these women do not exercise their power oftener! We can't resist them, if they do. Let them show ever so little inclination, and men go down on their knees at once: old or ugly, it is all the same. And this I set down as a positive truth. A women with fair opportunities, and without an absolute hump, may marry WHOM SHE LIKES. Only let us be thankful that the darlings are like the beasts of the field, and don't know their own power. They would overcome us entirely if they did (Thackeray 1848: 54).

Thackeray implies that women in fact have a great potential to be in the position of power. However, having in mind the confines of the Victorian culture, women's sole means of rising in position and power was through men. Intelligent and cunning women could improve their status by acting and manipulating men. Thackeray's main charge against the Victorian society is that it enforced women to choose, whereas men were not compelled to make a choice. There were two paths for a middle class Victorian woman: that of the passive and submissive Angel in the House; the other path was intended for active, sharp and independent women who were eager to take a risk. Both paths had their advantages and disadvantages, and it was up to the Victorian women which path they would take.

Becky Sharp, obviously, stands for the second alternative. Dorothy Van Ghent compares Becky Sharp to Moll Flanders, suggesting that both of them symbolize the whole civilization, "a microcosm in which the macrocosm is subtilized and intensified" (Van Ghent 1969: 33). The greatest achievement of Becky Sharp is the intensity of experience, her determination to take her life in her own hands and make most of her resources. Adventures and destiny of notorious Becky is a sort of Thackeray's warning of what women are capable of under the influence of a shallow and hypocritical society. Becky's energy and vitality are truly magnificent, but she scares us at the same time. Pursuing her ambitions means losing herself somewhere along the way. As a typical femme fatale, she must keep her emotions under control. This does not only mean that she treats men as tools for improving her position – she proves to be unable to be a good mother to her only child, who lives with his aunt because his mother cannot bother to take care of him.

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КАТЕГОРИЗАЦИЈА, КОМОДИФИКАЦИЈА ЖЕНА И ЖЕНСКА БОРБА ЗА МОЋ У ТЕКЕРИЈЕВОМ *ВАШАРУ ТАШТИНЕ*

Резиме: Индоктринација жена достигла је врхунац током викторијанског доба. Отелотворење тог врхунца је феномен одвојених сфера. Викторијанска култура категорисала је жене као „анђеле у кући” или „посрнуле” жене. Ове категорије нашле су одраз у викторијанском роману. За разлику од уобичајеног укалупљивања и категорисања жена, Текери се у *Вашару таштинне* труди да представи стварне жене, жене које се не уклапају у прописане врсте и дефиниције. Ово истраживање настоји да докаже да су и Беки и Амелија свесне свог инфериорног положаја. Оба лика раде оно за шта сматрају да је друштвено прихватљиво. Беки и Амелија се понашају онако како се у викторијанском периоду сматра прикладним за жене. Ипак, Амелијино понашање пролази као природно, док је Бекина глума препозната и осуђена. Оба лика успевају да заведу и изманипулишу скоро све мушкарце са којима ступају у контакт. Док се Амелија удаје за Добина, морално најистакнутији лик у роману, Бекин тријумф је краткорочан. Ово Текеријево ремек-дело представља сатирични коментар на позицију жена у викторијанском друштву. Један од главних узрока моралне кризе викторијанског доба јесте у односу друштва према женама. Текери сугерише да једино коренита промена у уверењима и односу према женама може довести до унапређења њихове друштвене позиције.

Кључне речи: Беки Шарп, Амелија Седли (Озборн), побуна, објекат, брак, фатална жена, „анђео у кући”, „посрнула” жена.