



Title: Selling a Lifestyle: Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Bravo's *The Real Housewives of Orange County*, and Social Expectations

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Abstract:

The thesis is a mixed media research and analysis project that shows how the presence of pecuniary emulation in William Thackeray's novel *Vanity Fair* and the reality television series *The Real Housewives of Orange County* (RHOC) advertises societal expectations to their target audiences. This thesis uses textual analysis to prove that the two works may be compared because of similarities in genre and form. It then argues that pecuniary emulation, a theory introduced by Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1899), appears differently in both narratives but has a similar effect of encouraging audience participation in similar lifestyles. The presence of pecuniary emulation in these narratives encourages the audiences of *Vanity Fair* and RHOC to emulate the characters in the works, carrying implications of the expectations placed on women in capitalist societies.