

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FEMALE PROTAGONIST IN THE FRENCH NOVEL MADAME BOVERY BY GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

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Introduction

The French novel 'Madame Bovary' by Gustave Flaubert is one of the best examples for the realist novels as it represents the realistic plight of the female protagonist Madam Bovary. The prime motive of my study is to do a critical analysis of the female protagonist presented in the novel. The conditions of Madam Bovary depict the nineteenth century woman fastened in the undesirable background and matrimonial relationship. In contrast with the other women in the book Madam Bovary is interested in fashion, sex and pleasure. Nevertheless, the world that she survives is completely different from what she expects. In this novel the author employs irony with the intention of reviewing the romanticism and exploring the link between gorgeousness versus degradation, demoralization and destiny versus free will. Madam Bovary places herself straightaway on a path which leads towards moral and financial deterioration throughout the story. During the story Madam Bovary encounters troubles maintaining her conventional duties as a wife and a

mother. When the protagonist marries, she does not have a clear sense of identity. However, she knows that she does not want to be stuck on in her native place for the rest of her life. Mainly, she assumes that what she feels for her husband will develop into love and that she will become satisfied wife which never happens. Soon, though, when her feelings for Charles fail to materialize, she becomes severely depressed, feeling herself to be displaced and incapable of enduring the monotony of her daily life and marriage. In analyzing the character of the female protagonist I mainly focus on the characteristics and the background of the society during the nineteenth century and try to figure out what are the root causes of the tragic ending of the female protagonist.

Methodology

When focusing on the methodology I have adopted in this research, apart from deeply analyzing the original text I take into consideration different books, reviews and research done by different scholars on the character of Madam Bovary. Different readers are

interviewd as including the scholars and the students in the university with the intention of gathering information on their perspective of Madam Bovary and her fate which reflect the plight of women during the 19th century.

Experimental results

Madame Bovary represents the ennobled image of the perfect nineteenth century woman, simply by giving her thoughts, feelings, and desires. Our protagonist is at the same time the perfect woman and the miserable woman of this period. She's elegant, a good housekeeper, and on the externally seems like an obedient wife, but on the contrary in reality she is an adulterous, a spendthrift and frivolous woman. Through the life of Madam Bovary, Flaubert tries to depict us an objective, intimate outlook on the difficulties of womanhood during a restrictive and judgmental time period. She is continuously frustrated by her powerless position as a married woman. The fictional world of 'Madame Bovary' is reflected by the discrimination of the sexes which is a characteristic of patriarchal society.

In this novel Flaubert depicts the reader that women in his time tend to manifest themselves and be defined mainly through the men in their lives, with their restricted power to live according to their will and fulfill their own ambitions. The entire novel is woven around the struggle to win freedom and power by the protagonist. Flaubert narrates the life of a middle class bourgeois woman who is fed up with her life and struggles in order to gain something greater. The author is sympathetic of the social confinement of 19th century French women. When

we realize these factors, it is not difficult to suppose that the novel Madame Bovary is written as an ode to the misery of women in a strictly patriarchal society.

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