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Item Type	Thesis
Authors	Molinari, Isabella
Citation	Molinari, Isabella. "French Realism in Madame Bovary". BA Thesis, John Cabot University, Rome, Italy. 2017.
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Download date	2026-03-06 05:21:55
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Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14490/324



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Minor in Communications

French Realism in Madame Bovary

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Fall 2017

Abstract

The purpose of my thesis is to analyse *Madame Bovary* in full depth in order to see it through various angles, which are historical, stylistic or literary. The end of this analysis will give way to a discussion on the way Flaubert accomplishes his task of writing an impersonal novel, in a majorly detached way and with a lack of most temporal or historical references. Realism will be a subject in question and many scenes will be listed as proof and of evidence of the findings. Flaubert did not like to be called a Realist, but most critics list him as a Realist, and *Madame Bovary* appears to be a primary sample novel of what Realism is. It is often listed with *Middlemarch* by George Eliot, and *Illusions Perdues* by Honoré de Balzac.

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1. The Realist Novel

Flaubert can be considered the leader of French Realism. Realism is hard to define. As a literary and artistic movement, it was a development of Romanticism and came to be right after the end of the Romantic era. Romanticism was more imaginative and sentimental. Realists affirmed a new way of making art, as a pen on a blank piece of paper. Realism, in literature and art is representing people as they really are and it is different from idealism. The Realists, call for sober reason. *Madame Bovary* is one of the first examples of literary Realism. As George Lucaks writes, ‘the difference with modern realism, is that there is an inward and the outer look in realist novels, making distinctions between classes (Lucaks 94)’. So that if you were part of the middle class in *Madame Bovary*, you would be looking inward to your community and looking outward towards the higher or lower classes. This distinction, is what makes the difference between social classes, quite clear in the novel. Also, the exclusive point of view of being in the minds of people, and looking ‘outward’ at the elite is very original and new.

Realism, in fact meant studying the middle classes, in a way to change the themes and innovate written novels by shifting attention from the small number in the elite to the average person. Therefore, the poor and the middle classes were once for all inserted in the world of novels. Realism, was in *Madame Bovary* a depiction of everyday life in a small town in France. The realist movement, had particular attention to the new rising bourgeoisie, the then powerful middle class. It was the time when the empire was being set aside after the occupation of the Bastille. Realism be-

came important because it was a way to face facts. It was also a way to affirm a new identity, the bourgeois identity. In *Madame Bovary* although there are no specific references to political or historical notions, the bourgeois way of life is much embodied in Emma. The fact she changes clothing, furniture and lifestyle frequently means she is trying to embrace a transformation within herself but mainly a rise a status.

Moreover, in the times of Flaubert, the years of medical advancements, following the great population growth, and a fast pacing mechanical advance with the construction of steam boats and many railroads, life does changes because the means change. *Madame Bovary* reflects these changes and the press is often a part of life in Rouen, and even the steam boat is there to carry Emma across to an island with Leon. In *Madame Bovary*, Emma is protagonist of despair, and depression which gives rise to a psychological debate. Psychology is another important theme in realist novels and a new consciousness which is primordial in the novel, but which becomes of central importance after the life of Sigmund Freud.

It is taking the extraordinary out of the common which makes the book so effective. In fact the study of the psychological life of a provincial woman may seem dull at first glance, but turns out to be entrancing while reading. Flaubert's intent is to portray the life of a woman in his age, the most interesting fact is that the subject matter, and protagonist is a middle class woman. In this period, women still weren't equal in rights to men and were very much dependant from their husbands. The surprise here is that Emma turns out to be, on one side dependent but also open minded to a certain extent and intellectually intriguing. She becomes the heroine of the book, and Charles is subordinated to her life.

Even though the book was very original and had a good intent, it was nevertheless, censured when it was published. The main reason being the theme of adultery. One of the most provoking scenes in this sense, which also demonstrates the way Flaubert narrates the story is when Madame Bovary is in front of the fireplace after meeting with Monsieur Homais for the first time.

The fire shone on her fully, penetrating with a raw light the weave of her dress, the regular pores of her white skin, and even her eyelids, which she closed from time to time. A bright red glow passed over her each time a gust of wind came through the half opened door (Flaubert 69).

This scene is evocative of times past, and supplies vivid imagery to give a sense of what seemed sensual and attractive to the eye of a man in the nineteenth century. It was the transparency of the dress in particular, dresses which were obviously very covering. The ankles showing, added to the transparency depicts carefully what seems bland to a modern eye, but what would have been particularly interesting for a man of the times of Flaubert. Also, it is seen from the point of view of Léon, which is quite determinant because he then falls in love with her.

Other scenes of Leon and Emma together, are surely very provocative, to a mind stamped on the stereotypical family of the past, with an authoritative husband, and a submissive and silent wife. For instance, when they are in Rouen the scene of Emma and Leon in the church is for a Christian mind of the nineteenth century quite provocative.

The church, like a vast boudoir, was arranging itself around her; the vaults were leaning down to gather up, in the shadows, the confession of her love; the windows shone resplendent to illuminate her face, and the censers burned so that she would appear like an angel, amid clouds of perfume (Flaubert 213).

The scene which transforms a church into a woman's boudoir, and diverts attention from the religious connotations, the church may have, to the sensual. The imagery that Leon had in mind, is off-setting for novel readers, of the past. Furthermore, there is something very entrancing of the laic or 'areligious' aspect the church has at the end of the paragraph. The church is unvested of its grandiosity and sacred features, in accordance with much of the protestant religion rather than the French catholic view.

The major criticism, on Flaubert for his novel *Madame Bovary* is that he does not have a 'good' character. This is what Henry James and Sainte-Beuve, both noted. Henry James, in fact says about Charles Bovary that he is 'stupidly helplessly good.' Although, it is disagreeable, to say that Madame Bovary is evil inherently, rather she is depressive and sad. It is rather, out of time, to consider depression an evil. It is now considered a passage of life, a much spoken of topic, and something which Madame Bovary would have overcome were her story to be transposed in the twenty first century. Charles Bovary, is mainly helpless in aiding Madame Bovary. Even the structure of the story is not linear, because Flaubert seems to introduce Charles as the protagonist, when later he passes to be almost the antagonist to the main character who is Madame Bovary.

Emile Zola was a friend of Gustave Flaubert and he believed in Naturalism as a literary current, although his first romance, *Therese Raquin* is very much similar in plot to *Madame Bovary*. It includes an adulterous relationship which ends in the homicide of the cousin and husband of Therese, including Therese herself. Naturalists wanted to portray reality through a scientific and scrupulous observation of reality of the personal lives, of common and ordinary people. To be a naturalist or a realist, it is necessary to make a whole picture of life, including the poor, the rich and the bourgeois. It is usually a social theme, which is reviled through the story.. Sometimes like in Charles Dickens case it becomes a political ‘document’ and a testimonial of hard realities which are otherwise unseen.

The nineteenth century, was the time of the great industrial revolution, and the time when science finally became a profession. There were also great advances in medicine, leading to the successive discovery of penicillin by Alexander Fleming in the first beginning of the twentieth century. This was not however, why Flaubert included medicine as a theme in his romance. It was because he was the son of a surgeon and this biographical fact is a great clue to understanding how the story of *Madame Bovary* came to be. The book includes various phases of *Madame Bovary*’s life from her wedding, to her first and second lover. Then an operation scene, which includes a countryside doctor, Charles, operating as a surgeon an experiment on a clubfoot. Charles does not have the qualification to do this, and Hyppolite, the servant dies.

The literary interest in this scene, however, is not only the subject matter, but also the fact that Flaubert describes it in order to convey the feeling of being in the

room of the operation. Furthermore, the fact that Realism permits the author in this case, to expose things which might turn into horror, but in a way to give an account of it as neutrally and scientifically as possible. This impersonality of the author is fundamental as to describe events which are already very near to us, a comment here would threaten the harmony of the book.

However, Flaubert excluded fantastical elements, and high class society to avoid giving an image of the extraordinary life which was far away from the large portion of society which were readers but not part of the elite. Probably like in realist paintings, to have the liberty to not embellish life as it was, in their novels. The realists founded a new literary method based on observation of life, and which was there as in greek theatre at times, only to show the audience their own mistakes, faults or gains, for the scope of a catharsis.

Thus, realist novels exclude the much more romantic and gothic themes, of the supernatural, the exotic, and the oriental. The places are often, small towns or even cities, but they show life from the perspective of characters like merchants, artisans and peasants. Writers, wanted to portray life as it is, in its simplicity and natural beauty. The difficulty is then in observing what is extraordinary in the ordinary, casting light on what usually is in the shade. This is why Realist writing has a humble intent. *Madame Bovary* starts with the life of Charles Bovary as a child on his first school day. Here we see how a seemingly non-important event, is described with such emphasis, that it becomes something interesting. Readers, feel the sensations, that Charles, with his awkward hat feels in the new classroom.

Ovoid and splayed with whalebone, it began with three circular sausages; then higher up there followed two rows of lozenges, one of velvet, the other of rabbit fur, separated by a red band; next came a kind of bag ending in a polygon of cardboard embroidered in intricate braid, from which hung, at the end of a long excessively thin cord, a little cross piece tassel of gold threads. It was new; the visor shone (Flaubert 4).’

In this scene we are launched back to the ages of elementary school, in the classroom, and the universal quality of the experience, being timeless and something we can relate to, attracts our attention. Reading the first pages, the reader may ask immediately, what the story will be about. The characteristic of this novel is that it does not start with the story of the protagonist, Emma, and that she is not even introduced to us until we’ve read about the story of Charles Bovary. Readers might then wonder why; is there a duality in the protagonist? Is it a tactic or is it a fault of Flaubert as a writer? In reality Flaubert writes to Louise Colet that for the first part of the book he has no clear story and this was a result of his concentration on detail and style rather than on plot. By the second part, Charles becomes just Emma’s husband.

The description of Charles’ hat, like the description of a wedding cake later on, and the description of the castle at Vaubeysard, are all exquisite and well cared for. The castle described, speaks of grandeur in a fragile moment for Emma, a moment of depression. The contrast between Emma’s misery and the grandeur of the castle, when she arrives, makes us feel the emotion and warmth of something larger than Emma’s reality. The desire of her imagination is at last fulfilled when she sees the kind of courtly ball which Walter Scott may have described in *Ivanoe*. For a moment it seems

she is transported into the fantasy world she imagined in her life while attending school but finally she becomes alive. Although, it is not for long because when the servants burst the window panes of the hall she walks alone to the windows and feels melancholy. She sees the peasants, observing the castle from the somber windows. By this scene we get an image of the lust which resides inside the castle. The peasants seem to be filling their eyes with something they will never be able to experience.

When the party is over, Emma feels restored for a while in her house in Rouen, she's rejuvenated. But Emma is depressed again when she realises she is not going to be at one of those parties again, and that she's back to her daily routine. Emma's sadness probably develops in the convent at school, in the austere religious environment. Where she does not feel the freedom to go out in the sunshine and play with others but she is stuck inside with her books.

On the whole, Emma finds difficulty, with her husband, she does not like him, and she feels a prisoner of the feelings he has for her. Also, she suffers many days lying in bed, with fever, nausea while staring at the ceiling. Charles loves her but she prefers solitude to spending time with her adulating husband. She is a slave of her own merits, which are beauty and intellect. She likes reading, writing, and playing music on the piano. She nourishes her intellect and imagination, until her fantasies become demanding to the point she wants to go to the capital, Paris. The fact Flaubert introduces the metropolitan city of Paris, is due to the historical notion of mobility from town to city and the new idea of the metropolis' which developed at the end of the industrial revolution.

Both Léon and Rodolphe, treat her with little consideration, they use her and provoke her even when her husband is present. There is little respect of Emma's devotion, she writes letters, demonstrates passion, although she is a married woman but they both move on and leave her in the midst of an emotional drama. The result is that Emma after these affairs acts as though she has no regrets. Madame Bovary lives a great conflict between choosing an elevated love, one of intellect or a passionate one, of bodily senses. By the end the life in Rouen becomes so confusing for Emma, people often chattering about Emma and her strange ways, end up secluding her, fatally. Flaubert does a great job to describe the scenes in Rouen and Yonville in detail, but the novel conveys a sense of loneliness and isolation through Emma. The villagers, seem peaceful and happy but Emma's life is traced with various nauseating moments, illnesses and an ongoing melancholy of the past. But, has this past ever been better?

Flaubert defamiliarizes the reader by inserting and introduction of a protagonist which is far from the typical romantic heroine, as those of Jane Austen; Emma, Elizabeth or Catherine. He surely refuses to give that expectation of Love, passion and feeling. Rather Emma is a heroine of the sensuous desire of the body, while suffering depression and melancholy, fever and fainting.

'Flaubert's achievement is, by common consent, an achievement in technique (Wooster Stallman 196)'. Flaubert in fact uses irony, characterisation and sensory words to describe places and moods... The irony is often based on a critique of the bourgeoisie. In fact by the end of the novel, Emma's suicide seems to testify the failure of this 19th century leading class. Flaubert himself did not like the bourgeoisie, even though his mother and family and his surroundings were particularly bourgeois.

He probably praises more the society in Vaubyessard castle. The society of fashion, romance, balls and luxury. When, for instance at the ball Emma sees a billet-doux falling from the hands of a woman and sees a man picking it up he is critiquing the lavishness and sexual promiscuity of the aristocrats. The aristocracy, is corrupt and should be an example to Emma since it is the upper portion of society.

Furthermore, the ride in the cabin with Léon, is another scene which describes Emma's suffocated feelings. 'Like the drawn blinds of Leon's cab (in Part III, chap. i), are supposed to conceal an enactment of pent-up passion, but ironically the concealed exotic passion is celebrated without any lover-only by the lonely woman inside. The coach is empty! (Wooster Stallman 196).' This scene makes Emma seem superficial and also Léon, describing the carriage as if it were empty, especially of meaning. Emma's pedantic, use of books, music and daily schemes mount her so that she feels free but in the end she is only a victim of the imagination. She spends time indoors, and never goes out, sometimes she peeps through the window, especially when Rodolphe comes to the garden.

As Bishop Loyd explains in his book on romantic irony in French literature, 'By "realistic irony" I mean irony that belittles, disparages, or deflates a character while managing to maintain the realistic author's apparent objectivity, self-effacement, impassivity, impartiality, and impersonality, his (impossible) goal of being, like God, everywhere present but nowhere visible (114).' This definition, explains clearly what realism meant to some authors. It was like being the 'fly on the wall' in a room, or having god- like powers, to see everything and be impartial to feelings, emotions and passionate effusions. As Flaubert said 'to write impersonally a novel with no subject.

Like painters, the writers wanted to be indifferent and unbiased towards what they were interpreting. Very much different from impressionists, that wanted to give a representation of what the painter saw through his eyes, thorough his perspective. The realists, wanted to make a truthful 'testimonial' of what they saw, they wanted to record history, in it's true essence, without distorting it and including the perspective as people living in the era. They did not show their point of view. They wanted to create an impersonal style in art.

The point of realist novels is in fact to write about the common people, because they are the unseen, the unnoticed, but to the realist mind they are impregnated with historical hue.

In the 19th century, Flaubert was prized for his realism (he was also claimed by naturalism and rejected both labels), understood as psychological representation or the accumulation of circumstantial detail (called the 'reality effect' by Roland Barthes). Yet such detail in Flaubert tends to overwhelm rather than sharply define the character. Accordingly, the 20th century has valued him for his challenges to mimesis, including the traditional privileged ties between author and reader, writer and character, individual and society. (credoreference.com)

The fact that Flaubert likes to overdo characters is due to the fact that realists value the psychology of a story, and so their characters often have an overwhelming life story. They have mental problems, also suffer despair and grief at times, it must be intended this is not always the case. Realist novels, they do not embellish the sto-

ries with features like happiness or smiles, they tend to represent reality as it is both good and bad. However, sometimes it may happen that the psychological elements, and the torment of life, of some characters turn the story into a sad reality which no-one, except few, want to deal with.

The story of the Bovary's is realist since the start. The vivid descriptions also help the elevated mind, or the privileged, to imagine places they have never been from their couches. In this sense Realism, is also for the aristocracy. Then other readers may find it amusing to know stories of their neighbours and fellow companions. Even though, it seems to be much more addressed to the higher classes, as it is a portrait of the lower ones. There is also a great solidarity, in these novels, a sense that not only happy stories are the ones we want to hear or read. This may be what really interests us, the sad narrative about how the poor live and survive. Mainly, because in Europe in the times of Flaubert, there was a great divide between the upper and lower classes, with little mobility between them.

The beginning of the book is as important as the end of the book, the beginning includes, Charles' first wife, his devotion to Emma from the start, and Monsieur Rouault's proposal to Charles Bovary to take Emma's hand.

And although the little one agrees, we have to ask her anyway. You go along. I'll go home now. Now listen carefully; if it's yes, you won't have to return because people might notice, and besides, she'll be too excited. But so that you won't worry, I'll open the window shutter all the way. You'll be able to see it if you turn around and lean over the hedge.

This passage exemplifies, how Flaubert gracefully carries us from one scene to the next with a soft nuance of imagery, which does avoid having interruptions, or sudden changes in the course of the story. Flaubert's writing, is chronological and well planned. The scenes succeed from one to the other, letting us glide through the reading with our eyes and imagination. The fact that Monsieur Rouault opens the shutters for Charles, and the way he tells him about marrying Emma, is a serious matter. The symbol of opening the shutters is as if Monsieur Rouault, were to open his arms wide and his house, for Charles to come in. And calling Emma 'the small one' indicates how Emma has been brought up in a protected environment.

Windows, in this novels are important symbols, they are the thin line between people and society. There are many examples, of Emma glancing out the window where passers by see her and where she sees details of life around her house. The windows at Vaubyessard, are actually broken into by the peasants, so does this mean that the line between individuals and the society is being surpassed. Or, like when Emma gazes out of the hotel window in when she's with Léon just like in *Cat in the rain* by Hemingway. She day dreams, thinking about her own personal problems, wishing to be elsewhere, or actually being able to be present, with her feelings and her intentions, right in the moment.

Hemingway once said, 'I want to write the best phrase I can ever write' but Flaubert had another intent, he wanted to write a book on 'nothing'. A book without, a subject, an intent or a topic, for the purpose of finally producing something genial, perfect or sublime. It is this radical idea which makes his realism is minimalist, a real-

ism which is dotted here and there but which is not present throughout. To the point, we may ask is Flaubert a realist? Considering his other novels, *Salamambo*, the *Temptations of Saint Antoine*, or *Sentimental Education*, we may on the whole say he is not a realist. Although, his most successful novel, *Madame Bovary* overthrows this idea or this statement.

Flaubert's writing is similar to realism in painting like that of Gustave Courbet, or Edouard Manet. The interest towards, beauty richness and especially the Sublime, is shifted to gloom, despair but also the imaginable, the real and the confined touchable space near us. Realism is said to be the opposite of idealism, but much escapes instead, the rules of Romanticism. The realists believe in human nature, much more than the romantics do and shift the eye towards human behaviour rather than nature. Also, as in painting the same happens in literature, that the subject is now the lower class the 'unnamed' or hidden people among us who have little opportunity in life, but seem awfully interesting to the realist artist or writer. It is probably this moment, that the artist becomes a part of the elite, and demonstrates his superiority, because he is now the aristocrat interested in revealing all the secrets of society by studying these at first hand.

Furthermore, the night at the castle at Vaubyessard is for Emma very important. When she returns home she is nostalgic, and wants to go to another event as such. Emma, is invited thanks to her husbands, friends and acquaintances. Although, she is not the intellectual woman, who seems to be appropriate to such parties. Emma's dilemma is that she is intelligent, but not a woman of intellect. She never studies, reads the masters of literature or plays opera music on the Piano. Although, she is ris-

ing in status thanks to her husband's position as a Doctor, her school career at the Ursaline college, has not taught her much other than a discrete sense of self-discipline. She cannot hold up a dialogue on philosophy, or high class literature or politics. Probably, it was not even possible for a woman of the time, it was even fairly rare. To be a woman like Madame de Stael, you could only reach the top through noble titles, and a close contacts to writers through literary circles.

Therefore, Flaubert creates a woman character who rises greatly in status, thorough book reading and knowledge of music. But is she really an intellectual as we would call the other members of the aristocracy. Considering Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey*, and Catherine Morland. Surely, we could say that as in *Northanger Abbey*, for Catherine, novel reading is a winning argument with Henry Tilney who marries her. For Emma Bovary, novel reading does not give her that security to become the happy wife of Charles Bovary. The difference between Emma and Catherine is that Emma is also a lonely character. Her relationship to books is comforting but also obsessive. She probably has studied and has a good cultural background, but does not transpire happiness and enthusiasm, when she reads or when she spends time studying at the Ursaline school. Is it then the different in print of the religious nuns and the normal school Catherine attended, which makes the difference. What is certain is that Gustave Flaubert does not seem to innovate or take a step further than Austen.

The scenes at the castle of Vaubyessard demonstrate however, a dexterity in writing techniques on Flaubert's side. The scenery comes across as clear and captures our interest in the smallest detail, making each word;

The ballroom was stifling; the lamps were growing dim. People were moving out into the billiard room. A servant climbed onto a chair and broke a couple of panes; at the sound of the shattering glass, Madame Bovary looked round and saw, in the garden, pressed against the window panes, the faces of peasants, staring in.

Here we notice how small details, can have great effects. The breaking of the windows, is key to understanding, the richness of, and abundance shared by the aristocracy at the castle. The room is steamy and the waiters decide to break the windows, in order to let the air in. This could be the moment, of Emma's rise in consequence, she could demonstrate to all her position as the wife of a family doctor. Although, the opposite seems to occur in her mind. She feels disoriented and cannot compensate the space between her times in the countryside at home with her father, or her schools with her present life. She feels trapped as if no one could culminate the long lasting loneliness she had suffered at school, or conceal why such a beautiful woman had such a desperation.

After the party, Emma becomes obsessed, and this is the beginning of her decline. She feels she wants to have more than she has, she wants to be rich and wealthy. She also becomes outrageous when Charles' friend says he isn't good enough. There are many instances where she seems to have become crazy. She dances alone in her room, starts buying fancy clothes, not being able to afford them. Not regarding the fact that she cannot pay her debts, she is completely lost in reverie. She daydreams often and there is an apparent detachment from reality. Her fancy for nov-

els take a larger place than her love of life. At the ball Emma realises Charles is not the man for her. Does she imagine that she would like to be the woman of the famous Count of Vaubyessard? Obviously, she is attracted to him and she often rethinks the fact that he invited Charles particularly because she was a beautiful woman and not 'peasant' like.

The consequence of the party, demonstrates the failure of Charles as a good man and as a bourgeois. Although, it is ambivalent whether there is a critique of the bourgeoisie, we know that Emma falls into depression after the party. Flaubert does not particularly criticise the bourgeoisie or neither the aristocracy, it is rather a satire, and a mockery. The aristocrats seem to the reader's eye, a group of exalted people who like richness and do not bother about what people think and feel. The times of Flaubert, the political situation after the revolution, demonstrated that the aristocracy was in decline and there was a rise of the bourgeoisie. Therefore, subtly Flaubert through realism, observes how Emma enjoys the party more than other members, and her thoughts seem to pervade the atmosphere of the party. The party in itself is fancy but it is through Emma's eyes which it becomes interesting.

The billet-doux, the champagne glasses, the games and dances all show a richness, which makes Emma envy the women sitting around the table. Although, through her innocence the aristocrats seem almost to have a frenzy for vanity and looks. Emma, is obsessed once home, of transforming her own house hold into the castle of Vaubyessard. She craves to see once more the tables the chairs and the fancy dresses. The theme which exudes here is that of the country girl turned away from innocence, she becomes lascivious with Leon and Rodolphe. She wants to travel, and

where top fashion. This transformation reveals ineffective, it does nothing but enhance her problems.

This is the real critique which Flaubert makes, he means to say that the procession of people moving into metropolises and finding jobs in the city, like Paris, makes people change and become almost beastly. In fact Emma, strongly desires to go to Paris, and not live in Rouen or Yonville anymore. She wants to be a part of the aristocratic, noble life. She wants to see theatre, go to the Opera, and once her intellectual interests are not fed, she desires death and suicide. Her frequent illnesses come more often, and the more she fantasises the more she does not live her life.

Furthermore, the problem is that she has all she wants but her novels make her wish for more. Sometimes, it is important to accept your own circumstances, rather than comparing yourself to others. The trauma she has is perhaps, moving from the countryside into a town-city, and not standing the social life. She tries hard to adapt, but perhaps the book wants to underline the fault of arranged marriages or the fault of the bourgeoisie, always trying to appear and not trying to be, in matter of fact. The reality though is that the book does not reject the bourgeois ways so we find in the novel; 'Not the bourgeois boredom that romanticism rejects, but the wise ennui of mature realism that has outgrown romanticism (Johnsen 848).' Realism as this quote says may be in the search for ennui, and enjoys the subtleties of real life, searching to find the something interesting in daily experiences. What is more, 'Reading romantic literature is the exemplary spiritual exercise in bourgeois culture. (Johnsen 845)'

When asked about *Madame Bovary*, once, Flaubert answered; "Madame Bovary c'est moi." In fact, women character's are rarely so well defined by men au-

thors. The quote explains how Flaubert was considering the life of women in his age. Flaubert, was also a great observer of life, Flaubert once said ‘There is no truth. There is only perception. (Flaubert) ’ In *Madame Bovary*, Emma seems to observe others, through her critical lens. The mysterious glance, as that of people observing her, is the response to her own critical observation on others. Time passes and sometimes it is comforting, sometimes it is enrapturing, but to describe Emma’s mental state we are cast in a story with a setting with no time.

The dates, the historical events, and the days pass without us questioning or interrogating this flux of long days. Important historical notions like the revolution of 1789 are not even mentioned throughout the novel. This links partly to the description of a state of depression that which Emma suffers. Or better, in order to describe the depressive state the author does not give spatial and temporal references to the reader.

Today, we are used to knowing time, places and events immediately by just taking a glance at our calendar. In the past, historical notions were a thing for the rich and noble, the cultural segment of society. Although Emma is intelligent and in her conversations almost has a philosophical quality, she does not have a sense of time. Many scholars analysed this sense of time in *Madame Bovary* but could not find an explanation, or precise date to when it is set. The sense of time comes through, the clothes, the carriages and the poor medical nations of the doctors. Perhaps, the lack of time boundaries, gives the special romantic effect of Emma’s love affairs. Perhaps, all lover’s have no sense of time and space, they have mixed feelings and times of loneliness and despair. Emma’s story tells us about an extreme belief in passion and of what love entails.

We read about clocks, dates and years but time isn't specified. 'The date of the elopement between Emma and Leon is set to the 4th of September, but there is no year. (Green 1)' As Claudine Gothot Mersch says 'there is no point in investigating time (Green 1)' because there is no reference to a set date or a year. The reader must calculate his own sense of time, but the lack of temporal references, is closely tied with the depression, both Leon, Emma and Charles in part experience. Today we would call Emma Bovary's illness a cyclic depression, or a bipolar disorder. However, Madame Bovary was published the year Sigmund Freud was born, and lacks the terminology belonging to psychology in itself. The appeal to the book may concern the fact Emma suffers an incurable passion which without psychology leads her to suicide. The failure of Charles, to cure the club foot, the bad impressions she has given to her friends and neighbours, and the gossip she hears on her account, lead her to make her life end dramatically. Many heroines of books, end killing themselves, or to die in the name of love, especially in greek tragedy like Medea, it is almost an expectation.

The torments of Emma, is much of a gothic novel theme. Although, Emma is a thorough reader, she is not independently creative and this is a great fault. Creativity, is a part of our mental activity, and it is essential to keep it nurtured because were Emma creative, she would have written herself a romance not only love letters to Rodolphe, she would have expressed her desires in something practical, were it drawing, or painting, or writing love poems. In fact she excels in school, but is soon fed up of school, and the nuns. There is a cry for independence, in what she says and does. She wants to travel (to Paris), she wants to run away with Leon and then with

Rodolphe, and she adores the castle of Vaubyessard where she'd like to enjoy surprising everyone by her charms and her Waltz's.

Emma, like Catherine Morland, in *Northanger Abbey* is escalating society, through her intellectual capacity. In fact, reading is much regarded by the rich as an indicator of intelligence, manners and of a good family origin. The difference, is that as for Emma it seems to be an obsessive passion of hers, which she seldom talks about and discusses, Catherine Morland talks to Henry Tilney about her readings. In such a way that Henry falls in love with her, and marries her although, his father is very upset when he knows what's going to happen. The difference then is that Emma misinterprets her readings, she does not read thoroughly as would make her exceptional. She never talks to Charles about her books, and this is the dysfunction of their family, the lack of communication on topics which would nourish the relationship.

Catherine Morland, is a romantic heroine in this sense, she abides to the rules, and succeeds. She does not play around with them or mock people. Her love of reading is what connects her to Henry Tilney's sister, too. They have topics to discuss about and Catherine is found always well prepared. While Emma, seems to have a lack of purpose, in her life which is due to her depression. She does not like Charles, she does not like Leon and perhaps likes Rodolphe but she is not reciprocated. Elizabeth Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice*, is even more of an educated woman, she actually has read most of Darcy's library. She is proud of herself, and boasts her intelligence, insistingly to demonstrate that Darcy is arrogant to her.

Northanger Abbey is particularly interesting because it exposes Jane Austen's thoughts on novel reading. With an intrusive narrator, she explains what she thinks is

a good reading habit. As to say that Catherine Morland, is the perfect romantic heroine who reads appropriately. Some critics have said that the book is feminist and submissive of the other sex. Others believe it is in response to the famous novel *Pamela* by Richardson. ‘Austen makes her new standard of natural behavior pointedly relevant to readers (Lambdin 119).’

However, it is certain that Austen was a romantic writer, and very much different from a realist one. Realism evolves later, and is in some ways superior or an evolution to, Romanticism. The realists search the universal seed of life, in the common daily lives of workers, bourgeois and like in *Madame Bovary* even the aristocracy. Streaming through all the social levels, Flaubert tries to find the common sentiment in the reader. Just as in official papers we write in a formal manner without personal nuisances Flaubert, writes as an ‘impersonal’ narrator. Writing to a wider array of readers, Flaubert, wanted to write to the general public, and not write to please the scholars and literate. In the common we find the universal, and in the universal we find the diversity but also the similarity.

2. Understanding Flaubert

As Roland Barthes writes in his essay on literature;

Flaubert, avec le plus d'ordre, a fondé cette écriture artisanale. Avant lui, le fait bourgeois était de l'ordre du pittoresque ou de l'exotique; l'idéologie bourgeoise donnait la mesure de l'universel et, prétendant à l'existence

d'un homme pur, pouvait considérer avec euphorie le bourgeois comme un spectacle incommensurable à elle-même

[Flaubert, has founded this artisanal writing, with a great sense of order. Before him, the main interest of the bourgeoisie was the order of the picturesque or the exotic; the bourgeois ideology explained the universal and was pretensive of the existence of a 'pure' man, who could embody the bourgeois way euphorically.] (Barthes).

Flaubert is an artisan writer, who fabricates a tragic sense of feeling, of pathos. His novels, contain an enchantment, inherent in his way of enhancing the real. Perhaps the lack of a spacial context and temporal references implements this fairy tale-like technique. The first to describe an operation and it's bad outcome, in a novel in such detail is Flaubert. Roland Barthes' essays, are probably the best in describing, Flaubert's technique, realism and the bourgeoisie. He states that in the times of Flaubert, writing and writers have exhausted all topics, subjects have been written and re-written. Flaubert says 'I want to write a book on nothing' in fact, meaning, he wants to write at this point, a book without a specific theme or cliched ideas.

'Resistance of the "real" (in its written form, of course) to structure is very limited in the active account, constructed by definition on a model which, for its main outlines, has no other constraints than those of intelligibility; but this same "reality" becomes the essential reference in historical narrative, which is supposed to report "what really happened": what does the non functionality of a detail matter then, once it denotes "what took

place"; "concrete reality" becomes the sufficient justification for speaking.
(Barthes 146).⁷

In the *Reality Effect* essay, Roland Barthes describes how Flaubert narrates a seemingly true story, while being very careful to justify his act, and giving a full account of his imaginary story. The historical notions are unnecessary because the reality effect is given. So, the impression is of speaking to a person who is telling you a long story, and not giving you the historical constraints of the story, since it is just a dialogue between him and you and he needs to keep you attentive to the details. The novel turns out to be similar to a memoir of things imagined. The story is strictly a human story, and therefore, does not need to differ from the telling of people, places and events (which are not necessarily historical).

In *Le Dictionnaire des Idées Reçues*, Flaubert writes that novels;

Pervertissent les masses. Sont moins immoraux en feuilletons qu'en volumes. Seuls les romans historiques peuvent être tolérés, parce qu'ils enseignent l'histoire. Il y a des romans écrits avec la pointe d'un scalpel, d'autres qui reposent sur la pointe d'une aiguille.

[Novels pervert the masses. They are less immoral in paper series than in volumes. Only the historical romance can be tolerated, because it teaches history. There exist romances written with the point of a scalpel, others which are placed on the point of a pin.] (Flaubert 79)

This definition, explains why Flaubert is careless about promoting his own writings, or why in his novels he subtly critiques the pleasure of reading a romance novel. In *Madame Bovary* in particular he critiques Emma for reading lightly and superficially. Although, she likes to read historical novels like *Ivanhoe* by Walter Scott. After these books, Emma architects her life in an imitation of life she finds in the novels. Therefore, in relation to these stories about court life, and cavaliers she feels diminished, and the book serves to disillusion on what is real life in general. Emma seems to have an inferiority complex, concerning money matters and social class. Once she's seen the life of the aristocrats, she wants to change radically and this goes on until she finally takes poison and dies.

In fact, Emma would have been a pretentious reader for her age, and also a curious intellectual. Although, her capacity does not tunnel in one sense, neither in her marriage or her private life. She falls in the trap of imitating others and comparing herself with other women, until she gets into trouble. She compares herself with women at Vaubyessard, with Charles' ex wife, and with the people in Rouen. She suffers from a powerful febrile imagination which eventually kills her. As if struck by visions she takes on a transformation journey. Not in a religious sense, not in a cultural sense; her motif is to become part of the elite aristocracy, to live in Paris, and descend carriages in the fumes of the streets, while being noticed for her jewels and fancy clothes. She wants to prosper, and wants Charles to be a respected and renowned Doctor.

The problematic Emma, is always in search for a major change of fate, and what happens is only tragedy. Flaubert, refers to the bourgeois hypocrisy, when Emma falls

into ruin and offers sex in change of money. Because she impoverishes herself to the point of selling her body. Here, we understand that far away from being a princess in manners and grace, she's fallen down a several steps in social class. Although, the moral here is evidently; 'do what you can with your own means and do not regard what others do'. Emma had a caring husband, and a loving child, and was wealthy but she always rejected effusions with Charles. From the start she refuses his kisses, yells at him and refuses to reciprocate his attentions.

The disenchantment, of romance, in *Madame Bovary* comes in a revolutionary period, after the French revolution and the death of the king and queen. Therefore, Emma's desperation to make changes tunes in with the general sentiment that revolution is a just measure. Emma is revolutionary in her life, she decides to change manners, clothes, to smoke and to buy new furniture.

Flaubert distorts the point of view, or better, handles it with care, shifting to different perspectives. Thus, we feel not only Emma's position, but in a more realistic way, what her entourage is thinking. This technique, is effective but at times it becomes too evident, that the speaker has changed. The free indirect discourse, moreover, serves to vehicle these changes. It is almost certain that the protagonist is Charles Bovary in the start of the book and ends to be Emma Bovary. Further on, the reader is presented with the literary project of the author, and presented to the real protagonist. This is a defamiliarization intended for the reader, because most novels either begin in medias res, or introduce the protagonist straight away.

Charles is a foil to Emma, he does not excel in his studies, he is a passive lover, Emma instead is a passionate lover, and never feels inhibited, Emma is also an

excellent student. Also, the fact Flaubert raises Emma on a level higher and praises her talents, is very rare, and demonstrates Flaubert's writing skills while he writes about the world of a bourgeois woman. Emma suggests a different kind of heroine, a heroine not like the gothic one and neither like the romantic one, the realist heroine, is a hero of much more human texture, she is the heroine of everyday life.

The contradiction here is that Emma dies tragically. The story is said to be related to a true story which happened in France when a woman Delphine Delamare, the wife of a doctor in Rouen committed suicide in similar circumstances as those of Emma Bovary. She incurred in serious debt, wore fancy clothes, and entertained herself with various lovers. The realist heroine, sadly but veritably serves to represent, the story of life, the strange but true stories which occur to real people. The realist intent is thus, served. The suicide stands to represent, the strong emotional life of women, while at the same time, soothing the spirits of women readers, and functioning to raise awareness on the life of women in the days when there was sexual disparity.

Characterization is certainly important for keeping the reader attentive to the story. In fact at times, one is obliged to follow the story of the protagonists rather than on the story of the events. Realism, is the fact that knowing what goes on in different minds, and different characters' thoughts contemporarily, we see an all-encompassing view of the story. Flaubert did not want to use the conventions of story-telling. His story, does not look like a fairy tale, and neither like a tale, it is instead trying to observe the rules of a creative process of fiction. These rules are, for instance, trying to give a real impression of places and events, detaching them from historical context, to make them a true fictional product. It is certainly not made in the style of a memoir,

or a historical novel, it is dedicated to a more profound intent, which is to record the everyday life of a group of people in a certain age.

Flaubert's realism, works well in changing subject matter from the usual romantic story of chivalric loves, to a modern version of a romantic and passionate lover, the difference is that Emma is the seducer. Here we have the point in question, the novel has a strong erotic element, since a large part of the scenes refer to a woman who begins courtship. The scenes with her lovers, are indirectly referring to sexual content which is not mentioned, provoking the reader's imagination, and stimulating

Flaubert transforms writing into a form of art, therefore, he follows the classical literary rules but also adds a creative aspect. He 'fitted each word into each sentence and each sentence into the graph just as patiently as an artist in mosaics would arrange a pattern.(Carter 209)' He much admired Rabelais as other French writers did. He was also a good friend of Maupassant as evident in their letters. Fiction is a form of art but the notion of writing from different angles is much tied to the unique style of Flaubert. The scene of Charles' proposal, when Charles waits outside Emma's house for forty five minutes is impressive because we are cast into Charles' point of view, whilst, the rest of the narrative then becomes Emma's story.

Furthermore, in the first part of the novel when Charles is at school there appears to be an omniscient narrator. Although, the perspective comes specifically from someone inside the classroom. One of the students narrates the event of the funny hat Charles wears and how all the children laugh and play games at break time. Evidently, Flaubert changes perspectives to emulate real life perception. He introduces a free indirect discourse which is very loose and seems to be a modern technique

in itself. The free indirect discourse takes the form of the stream of consciousness in later writers, but Flaubert is surely innovative in using it very much when at the same not letting any character become confusing or any event becoming superfluous. Another particularity of Flaubert is the density of the plot structure while maintaining a chronological order he tells about any different places and events each time changing setting and atmosphere.

For instance, the operation scene, or the fair, at Rodolphe's chalet, or at home with Bovary's and Berthe or still the carriage scene with Léon. This dense plot reminds us about something much more real than romantic or gothic writings. The plot alludes to time going by, and at the same time Flaubert tells the whole life story of Charles and Emma Bovary, written in sequence in chronological order. The concentration of a lot of material in only one novel without turning into a chaotic mess, is what makes of Flaubert one of the great talents of his age. Thus the changes of perspective serve to make reading fluid and the passing of time more quick. Passing from a main protagonist to a marginal one, the reader sees the whole picture and then we shift into other kind of sketch stories. The shift of point of view makes the narration more appealing. Flaubert handles the reader's interest and directs it to different focal points.

What is more, *Madame Bovary* turned out to be great in form, and a world masterpiece. But the way it is written makes it hard to adapt it to the screen. One would need, a good reader who is also a producer and have all the actors read the book. novel. 'On three different occasions, *Madame Bovary* has escaped from her artistic environment and appeared among men twice on the stage and once on the

screen-and on each occasion her appearance has been the cause of much animated controversy (Carter 209).’

The reason why this happens, is that it’s hard to represent the fast pacing sequence of events in *Madame Bovary*. Also, if one would have to decide which genre it is whether it is a tragedy or a comedy, would be another problem. ‘Flaubert’s method in creating *Madame Bovary* is to proceed by ricochet from one incident to another and thus to expand his action gradually, but methodically, into an ever widening circle of explanation and motivation (Carter 207).’ Most interestingly what Boyd G. Carter writes is that ‘before Emma meets Rodolphe there is no real action (207)’.

It is perhaps incorrect to state that *Madame Bovary*, includes no scenery to be put on a stage. In fact, Flaubert clearly distinguishes between one scene, one place at one time in the story, and makes the most out of it each time. So that I could list many scenes which could be staged fairly easily. The problem is finding the right costumes the right scenery and the right actress to impersonate Emma. Emma must be a strong but sensitive woman, well dressed, at least at the end of the show, and have pale cheeks, and slim legs to show her unhealthy state.

Besides, realism often implies no fashion, or poor-looking scenery. *Madame Bovary*, would probably be called tragedy were it to be adapted to the theatre. But, what must come out of a representation, is Emma Bovary refusal to resign to a dull existence, to abide to the rules of the bourgeois class. She rejects not only Charles, but the whole style of life, which he offers. Emma is a heroine of the romance, in this sense. Although she is often ill, and nauseated, she fights for her dignity and happiness. This story of a woman’s struggle for dignity and independence, was very much admired by the women readers of the nineteenth century. Just a century before, the woman

suffrage and the sexual revolution, these themes regarding the question of women, were already important.

These traits of realism, serves to describe her condition very clearly, the realists did not worry about including the lower classes in their books. They wrote in order to be as realistic, as possible in respect to social realities, for instance,, Emma's wet nurse, and her house, are a depiction of poverty. Realists reject narration as a pretence to demonstrate the idealistic way of life. They prefer to refer to the real life and extract interesting facts from their closest and familiar view of life. We must not confuse though, Realism, neither, in it's idealist sense including, how life is and how life could be, and neither the continuation of romantic themes, and the question of finding the sublime in different ways. Rather, realism, is a refusal of romantic themes, and of idealism on the whole, 'Realism is a depiction of life or careful 'recording' of a way of life. (Baldick 281)'

What is more, Realism became an important theatrical genre, with Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw. It is understandable, that the public likes to see a mirror like image of their own social problems, and their own struggles. The careful analysis of the world we are in direct contact with, not the world we dream to see, but the real one, shown at the theatre, sheds light on the common human struggle. The true realists, were those who wanted to make art without intruding personally with their own impressions on life and their own perception.

Turning back to literature in the specific, Realism was never a world renowned movement, like was classicism or Romanticism, although it was vastly a subject of discussions from then on. The fact that art must be impersonal, and that the author is a god like figure behind the character's who creates them and judges them

but never intrudes in their lives, is all very appealing to modern minds. Flaubert never wanted to be called a realist, as reported in his letters to Louise Colet, but he was influenced by the philosophical debates of his time, and this led various authors to write the manifesto novel of the realist current.

The letters to Louise Colet contain many notes on the writing process Flaubert endured, with *Madame Bovary*.

How does it happen that for a week I've been working well? When it seems to me I don't think of my work at all? I wrote five pages. I'll have completely finished the agricultural fair by the end of next week. If everything were to continue at this pace, I'd finish the book this summer. But I'm probably deceived. Still it does seem good to me. Perhaps it's my longing to be done-So that we can spend time together- that stokes me up, without my suspecting it. (Flaubert 146-7).

This extract from one of his letters demonstrates how close he was to Louise Colet, she was herself a writer, and often Flaubert criticises her language and suggests to read thoroughly and daily the masterpieces of literature. Flaubert, in fact was a great reader himself, and although he was declined from his law studies, he was allowed to stay at home and write. He was also ill with an epilepsy, and was a recluse at home, almost obsessively writing.

'You compress yourself, like a toad, and then stretch to your full length, moving arms and legs rhythmically, head down and teeth clenched. That is what an idea must do through words. No splashing, no failing right or left: that gets you nowhere and

tires you out.(Flaubert 148).’ The letters to Louise Colet, are full of these thoughts by Flaubert, on writing. This is why they are so relevant and are also an inspiration for anyone who wants to write. Louise Colet and Flaubert parted, just while he was writing the operation scene. Perhaps, this life event enhanced, his writing of Emma’s death, and caused him to write the tragedy. Were it not for Louise Colet then, the novel might have had a happy ending, with Emma embracing her life, her marriage and Berthe her adorable daughter.

The scenes where Berthe is included, show how Emma transposes hatred for Charles onto her child. Berthe, grows up almost alone, and her few moments of happiness are when Emma is in a good mood. Emma is absent for her because, she often goes to see Léon. The mother-daughter relationship is totally infringed by Emma’s mood swings and depressive states. The fact that Charles wants the best for his daughter, is because he transposes his love for Emma onto Berthe. This irritates Emma, and she suffocates and feels tormented by the claustrophobic relationship she has with Charles. The meetings at dinner time, and his frequent hugs and kisses, in the lobby or in the bedroom.

Flaubert, in *Madame Bovary*, investigates the woman question thoroughly. He purposefully makes, Charles a man of failure, a man subjected to woman sensuality. He finds this beautiful wife, in the country, brings her to town and she becomes as in many other pastoral narratives, a mundane woman who losing virginity and a sense of self loses also ingenuity. *Madame Bovary*, is obviously product of an age where, men were the workers, but often women also contributed. Thinking about the industrial revolution which spared nobody in working in the work force, women acquired a new status and an awareness of their abilities, came to be a matter of debate. Emma vehi-

cles this progress in the development of the civil rights of women. The romantic movement together with realism, helped to nurture a sensibility in respect to the mind and body awareness not just body. It was eventually these two currents of thought which led to convincing men together as women, that women had were intelligent just as men were.

Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters and George Eliot, were demonstrating in the romantic period their capacities as writers. Writing was something that they could do from their rooms, where they were secluded, after bad schooling times. All of them read books, and became famous from their study rooms, Jane Austen especially was a thorough reader, and learnt much just from reading the masterpieces. Were it not for feminist literature, and the investigation into the private lives of women, in the household or in courtship, women might have had a much slower advance and gained much less position in today's society. In this case, Literature, was not just fictional and referring to fantasy, it was a vehicle to changing ideas and developing new ways of thinking and of conceiving the role of women.

The novelty of *Madame Bovary*, is that after the fall of the roman empire, and during the period in which Protestantism was particularly strong, Flaubert chooses to explore the role of a woman, who he depicts as being in a catholic society. She goes to the Ursuline college, a very strict religious order, she goes to confess to the priest and the state religion is catholicism. France having been the home in Avignon to the catholic state for a period of time, is impregnated with catholic rules, and the religious observance of the figure of the mother Mary and the sacrality of the woman in general. In Avignon scribe monks, were told to rewrite the sacred scripts, but were also demanded, to substitute certain parts, with more appropriate messages. They transla-

ted from Latin to The scope here was to control the masses into acting according to the new bible. The rewriting of sacred texts was necessary to carry forth the tradition of book reading, since there was no other way to reprint books at the time. However, this was still a period where the church was corrupted and particularly mundane people became named priests, or monks or friars.

One of the aspects which is interesting of Emma Bovary, is her catholic background in a eighteenth or nineteenth France. The main historical trait of the book is in fact this demonstration of how the catholic religion had made its way through French society, and became the state religion. Emma is an multi adulteress who finds her marriage suffocating and thinks the only way out is to entertain herself with her husbands friends or relationships. The catholic presence lingering in the background, is there to add critique and judgement to Emma's behaviours. The catholic society, whispers behind her back and also accuses Emma directly of being vulgar, disrespectful and subversive of the rules.

People around her, observe and glance at her in different instances, and always in respect to her detrimental behaviour. It seems through the descriptions that the villagers of Rouen are a solid community, they chat and discuss matters openly between them and ignore the outsider. Unfortunately, Emma is at times considered the outsider, and cannot take part in these discussions. The realist trait, of not romanticising relationships, but making them like a mirror image of what really happens in life, comes across clearly in this novel. Although, the stigma attached to Emma as an adulterous or as a woman of easy virtue, is much tied to the catholic, concept of piety and sobriety. After Emma moves to Rouen, she loses her humble nature, and the teachings of the sisters at the convent, and becomes extravagant and jumps into a mundane life.

Perhaps, Flaubert wants to underline how the the question of women, is an all time problem, which the Egalité, Liberté et Fraternité of the French revolution has ignored. The strong emphasis on freedom, of the 19th and earlier 18th century, is given by the revolutionary era, and society is saturated with the authoritative commands of the emperor.

Another aspect of the book, is the relationship to medical practices. The operation scene, gives us an original view of the job of the Doctor. Probably, even today we see the doctor as a wealthy man, *sans soucie*. He goes to work regularly, has working hours, and weekends off. In Madame Bovary, instead Charles, is full of problems, and suffers slightly from anxiety. He sits at home wondering if he's done his job correctly, and never gives particular medicines he does not have familiarity with, to his patients. Even today, the doctor seems wealthy, rich and fortunate, but to understand this novel, we must consider reading a book on the life of an ordinary doctor, as if it were a day in the life or in this case a little longer, and imagine how it would feel.

The particularities of an operation, would seem grotesque but also an act of true realism, placing us in the shoes of a country doctor. The romance, never really distinguishes precisely the difference between the role of Emma as a character and the role of Charles. The duplicity of the protagonist, amplifies the idea that we can see from different perspectives. What comes across, is a very human feel, where the narrator, is similar to a real life human character who sees things from a multi perspective, considering different situations. The novel describes the Bovary house, in every circumstance even the most personal ones. The reader can imagine being in Emma's room, or with Charles' in their living room, or with Felicité in the kitchen.

One of the results of a realist imprint, is that details are particularly well described by the author in order to give us a real sense of the provincial life of Emma. For instance, the champagne glasses at Vaubyessard and the bouquet of Charles' former wife, Emma finds in her room are all described clearly and drag the reader into imaginary places and in different times. Also, the cupid on the Bovary's wedding cake, or particularly the details of Hyppolite's foot, after the operation.

The operation scene, is the climactic moment of the novel in many ways. The rising action, tells us about the past in a long flashback. We know the life stories of both Emma and Charles, since their childhood. It is not until the chapter on the operation, and when Monsieur Homais starts to convince Hyppolite to undergo the operation, that we feel something really takes place in chronological order and rather than an unchronological one. Monsieur Homais' excitement and Charles at the same time reading to learn about the club foot, and Emma's reaction all contribute to structure the true plot. By the end of the operation, the falling action (*dénouement*) begins and Emma and Charles for separate reasons drastically go into a rapid downfall. Emma economically, Charles by reputation.

The technique of quickening the pace of writing in those chapters before the operation, renders the reader surprised and curious. The book is slow in the start, quick in the middle, and slow in the end, as if the plot were arching. Flaubert, does this spontaneously in part because the beginning and end are the introduction and the conclusion, but also without intent, as to accompany the reader smoothly. This tactic, helps him to introduce a new genre, which is a romance with references to the medical world. His novel, is as Flaubert desired without a specific topic, but at the same time engages us through the development of strong pathos and feeling.

An important theme I still haven't discussed, is the social classes in *Madame Bovary*. Emma and Charles are neither aristocratic or poor, they belong to the Bourgeoisie. The novel demonstrates the powers of the Bourgeois class, in France. Charles and Emma are rising in status, they are invited to a Ball in a castle, and Emma is at the centre of the narrative, the aristocrats, are in the background. She dances, Charles plays a billiard game, and they sleep at the castle. These were times when the aristocracy was not liked at all, and Flaubert tries hard to write a story which is not about them but for once, about the middle class.

Flaubert names *Ivanoe*, and historical novels in *Madame Bovary*, and appreciates that genre but he is certainly writing in a paradoxically different style. There is little reference to history in *Madame Bovary* and when he writes that Emma reads *Ivanoe*, it does not make entirely sense. *Madame Bovary* is effectively a romance of a different kind, and does not include the chivalric romances of Walter Scott, it does not even include the courts and royalty which is present *Ivanoe*. Then why would Emma read *Ivanoe* and what does Flaubert think about historical novels? Flaubert wrote a historical novel himself, *Salanmbo*, and much admired those who were capable of writing in that style.

It is clear that Flaubert wanted to write something original when he decided to write *Madame Bovary* he decided to write a romance which was not of chivalric kind, didn't include a prince nor a king, and the woman was to be a middle class woman. Emma, reads *Ivanoe* but also loves novels like *Paul et Virginie*. She is a good student so it is implied that she absorbs what she reads. However, she becomes obsessed with the stories she reads she wants to recreate a society which she has read about in her books. Flaubert, is not the first to criticise reading habits, in a novel. In *Don Quixote*,

the same thing happens, and also in *Northanger Abbey*, where Jane Austen intrudes in the narration and explains her thoughts on reading habits.

This because writers likes to direct the way readers should read, the novels. Also to include their literary preferences in disguise. However, Flaubert is the first to pinpoint that reading is a social marker. He creates a bourgeois society and obviously reading indicates you are a part of it and indicates that the myth that only the aristocrats are literate is fake. The poor, in *Madame Bovary* are people like Justine, the accordion player, the blind man, and the peasants at the castle window. Saint-Beuve, interestingly appreciates Justine as a character identifying him as the only good natured one. Justine is poor, but he demonstrates affection for Emma.

Another critic which must be considered is Nabokov the great author of *Lolita*, starts his lecture series by explaining, that it is not useful to think that there is a reality and a non reality. He explains, that even though *Madame Bovary*, is realistic she is obviously not true. She is a work of imagination, and there the entire discourse on Realism seems to be clarified. He states that there is no doubt that novels are not real, they are works of art, and fictional. So says Nabokov, talking about literature. Although, the question I pose is not whether Emma was real, but whether Flaubert, depicts the bourgeoisie, in a faithful way. Nabokov as a modern author, simplifies the much debated idea of Realism. But I think there is nothing to be taken superficially. The interesting matter about *Madame Bovary* is that it portrays the bourgeois world, a victory which is not of the Kings, Queens or of the government, but of the people.

The French revolution was a grand moment, the French *peuple*, was finally free to express their dissatisfaction with the monarchy. The bourgeoisie was particularly proud of having debunked such a horrible and submissive authority. This mo-

ment, was an expression of freedom, and must not be mistaken with a loss of freedom. Even though, Emma Bovary, is not happy in the novel, this does not mean that Flaubert is claiming for a return of Napoleon, this only means that to be a realist one must portray even the most bitter aspects of life in general.

This is true Realism, when instead of wearing frocks and cravats people wear ordinary clothes, and commit mistakes, which are human. Emma dies by the end of the novel, and this does not mean that Flaubert, is referring to a pre revolution bourgeoisie, but that he is creating Realism. Therefore, he uncovers, hidden aspects of life in society with no regrets. When thinking about Realism we must consider, the times of Flaubert, the times when there were many taboos, so unveiling truths was something particularly offensive and even somewhat dangerous.

In Lydia Davis' translation, the operation scene and many other scenes are much more vivid because, she uses at times, the original French terms. Also, among the best translators, Lydia Davis is not only a translator but also a fiction writer, so she is capable of moulding and modelling the story with the best fictional outcome. 'The other translations, for instance, the one by Gerard Hopkins, speeds the pace of the narrative, eliminating the special choice of words and the hard fictional work Flaubert produced. It becomes a highly readable novel, but reflects less the authors creative writing. Allan Russell does the same, but at the least he respects the limits of each sentence, and remains on the borders of Flaubert's sentence boundaries. (Wall flaubert.revues.org/1538)'.

Adam Thorpe, is a good candidate for writing the translation, because he was born in Paris but raised to be a poet in the UK and his version is very recent. Also, being a male, he can write about Emma Bovary much more faithfully to Flaubert,

than another writer could. However, he does not have the writing quality that a habitual writer would have.

3. Realism and the theory of the novel

We must consider Ian Watt who is an important critic of Flaubert. He questions the use of the word Realism, stating that the word Realism is mistaken for its primary use which is either philosophical and literary. In fact, Realism was also a great matter in philosophy the fact that Realist literary critics meant to distinguish between literature and philosophy is important. It's hard to identify Realism in literature, in a way that puts aside the concept of what is real and what is not. Nabokov, simplifies the argument very much by saying that literature is never real, it is always a fiction, and especially in the case of *Madame Bovary* which as Flaubert says himself 'n'a rien de vrai'. Realism, is defined by its dichotomy then, and must not be mistaken with philosophy. Ian Watt points out that to write realistically one mustn't be aware of the philosophical discourse, because it becomes extremely confusing.

Madame Bovary, is Realist because it depicts the way that married women are also dramatically sad, and conduct a difficult existence. The romantics used to embellish the way that love is. They would in fact Romanticize, by talking about high culture, the love that grows with intellect, the love that is not bodily but purely aesthetic and irrational. Probably, after the enlightenment, the Realists instead claimed for a more, rational love, a love of the senses, and of feeling. The originality of Flaubert is that he turns down the description of things as if they were beautiful, perfect and sub-

lime. He attempts to describe the crude reality of existence, which is made of happiness, sadness and tears.

Realism, in philosophy comes in many forms, but the main scope is to study what is real, and reality as it is. Ian Watt sustains, that for realist writers it is wrong to consider Realism as a philosophy of life, because it is best to distinguish between 'literature and the real (McKeon 376)'. Philosophy being the education of life, must not be confused with literature which is the study of speech and literacy. As Ian Watt says it's like a Jury, in a court, Realism is like being on trial and having to tell the truth.

3. Conclusion

Madame Bovary, is in fact not a true story, and neither has it anything to do with philosophy. Flaubert, is enjoyable because he excludes political, philosophical, and artistic things in his novel, making it simple to read. So, if Henry James and for instance Jane Austen, are highly intellectual, Realism, is a literature of a lower standard, and much more available to readers, than is a novel like *Daisy Miller*, where the language is eloquent and the ideals are high.

In conclusion, *Madame Bovary* is unique in its genre because it explains a period in history which was a singular moment which will hardly be repeated again; the French Revolution and its outcome. It was the end of an era, the end of the great imperialism of Napoleon, and probably the greatest revolution ever had in history. It was a revolution of ideals, and of political importance. This is what this novel stands for, and it will always be remembered as a realist story of a period which was to be recorded as it was. *Madame Bovary* does not seem historical, but it is much of a historical novel because it records the feeling of despair and strain that the French people underwent, not only during the revolution but even in the years to come, to reestablish an order and a peaceful existence.

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