

Predicament of Female in *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*

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Abstract

This article probes the concept of 'femme fatale' widely discussed in Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary(1857) and Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina(1877), the two world classics in English literature and masterpieces of all time. These novels echo the social context of the nineteenth century in countries of its setting and authorship. Both Flaubert and Tolstoy belong to the realistic tradition of writing. They have succeeded in their mission of portraying their contemporary society, culture, and tradition with minute details. Flaubert's representation of French society and Tolstoy's depiction of the Russian society in their respective novels, and the wonderful plot sketch and characterization have left a perennial influence in the mind of its readership. The most relevant theme usually identified and widely discussed regarding the novel is its concept of 'femme fatale.' However, the discussion here aims at re-imagining this concept in a new vision, focusing on the influence of society in making the protagonists of Flaubert and Tolstoy, Emma and Anna, as victims of gender and class representations. This novel reading intends to delve deep into the concept of 'homme fatale' in opposition to 'femme fatale.' The role of men in making the women as 'femme fatale' is also discussed in detail.

Keywords: 'femme fatale', 'homme fatale', romanticism, realistic, gender, class.

Historical Context

Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857), criticizes the middle-class values that emerged following the French Revolution and imperial reign of Napoleon and can be seen as a strong reaction against romanticism. On the other hand, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1877), represents the transformation that Russia went through from being a backward agricultural economy into a major industrialized world power. Both novels were written in the respective languages of their authors, in French and Russian, and got translated later to various languages, including English. These realistic fictions represent the psychology of characters, mainly the protagonists, and their tragic death. The titular characters are the protagonists in both novels, *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*. The entire plot, action, and other characters revolve around them. Names of the protagonists and the titles of the novels also need close analysis. Emma is known as Madame Bovary, symbolizing truly a rejection of her actual identity. She is known as the wife and property of her husband, Charles Bovary. Also, she is the third Madame Bovary to appear in sequence, the former two being Charles' mother and his first wife, Heloise Dubuc. Whereas, Anna takes her second name Karenina from her husband, shows the secondary status of women in contemporary society. Although she is aristocratic and educated, her identity as a woman is solely based on a man.

Literature Review

The major societal changes that happened in the 19th century reflected the perception of women's nature. Women faced various issues due to society's expectations regarding their identity and social roles. Their roles were limited to the domestic spheres and were destined to be paragons of virtues in marriage and motherhood. Arnold (2005) observes that this situation provided them with only two options; living as the society prearranged for them or choosing to be free of this oppression. Whenever they tried to cross these boundaries, they were considered as 'femme fatale.' McMillan (2000) holds similar views regarding the ideal 19th century-French women concerning domesticity. It was believed that the idea of a woman as a wife and mother represented not only a moral ideal but also an important social reality. Gallagher (2000) observes the displacement of motherhood in *Madame Bovary*. Vinken (2007) mentions the passion of loving, reading, and eating as the tragic flaws in the protagonist. Russian societal views on women in the 19th century and their gender roles were greatly influenced by the idea of the separate sphere for men and women. This ideology confined women to domestic spheres, while men were free to move between spaces: the domestic and public spheres (Morgan, 2007). The role of mother and home-maker was believed to be congenital to them as observed by Danielova (2009). The mutual exclusivity of motherhood and sexuality was explored by Rooks (2014). Shuttleworth (2012) studies the concept of bourgeois demonic motherhood in the Mid-Victorian era. Laird (2014) in her discussion of *Anna Karenina* highlights the power of a happy family although the novel is about unhappy families. Kim and Osgood (2009) demonstrate how young women negotiate maternal subjectivities in relation to their social class.

Similarities in Plot Construction

Emma's longing for romantic love, riches, and social status that she learned through romantic novels during her convent days, makes her unsatisfied being married to an incompetent, middle-

class doctor, Charles Bovary. This leads to a search for romantic love and committing adultery, being extravagant in making her lovers happy and presenting herself with expensive gifts. Finally, she reaches a stage where there is turning back to her life as she feels completely shattered, forces her to consume arsenic, and end up her life. In Tolstoy's fiction, Anna represents the ideal aristocratic Russian wife of the 1870s and married to a cold, passionless government official, Alexei Karenin. She displays a passionate spirit, determination to live independently, and yearns for true love. She dreamt of meeting these virtues in her relationship with Vronsky. Unable to fulfill her dreams, Anna commits suicide by throwing herself under a train. In *Anna Karenina*, we can find a parallel plot progressing alongside Anna's story, that focuses on a male counterpart, Levin, facing similar existential problems as Anna had in her life. In reading the plot of both novels, we find certain features that are common for both. These novels begin and end by presenting characters excluding the titular lady protagonists. In judging the factors that present the protagonists as 'femme fatale,' a much deeper and closer analysis of the plot is necessary.

Madame Bovary: An Overview

Ever since its publication in 1857, *Madame Bovary* has been one of the most discussed books in the history of world literature. Despite the distinction and importance of his other novels, Flaubert had to reconcile himself to the fact that he became known, once and forever, as the author of *Madame Bovary*. The myth surrounding the figure of Emma Bovary is so powerful that, as in the case of Don Quixote, or Don Juan, or Faust, one has to remind oneself that she is a fiction and not an actual historical person; the literary influence on subsequent novelists in France and elsewhere is of determining importance and the critical response to the book is of such high quality that it can be said, without exaggeration, that contemporary criticism of fiction owes more to this novel than to any other nineteenth-century work. *Madame Bovary* begins with Emma's future husband Charles, arriving at village school as a new student who is shy and oddly dressed, for which he is ridiculed by his classmates. Though his father was a former army surgeon, due to his mismanagement of money and relations with village harlots, the family suffers financially. It makes Charles' mother senior Madame Bovary to lose respect for her husband and focus on her son and, lavish all affection towards him. Charles proves to be a failure in his school and college and finally manages to get a second-rate medical degree. He practices as a doctor in the village of Tostes in the Public Health Service. He marries a wealthy widow, Heloise, who is chosen by his mother even elder than him in age. She is not a pleasant woman and shows little love towards him. Charles who is taken away by the beauty and mannerisms of the convent-educated Emma starts to visit the farm frequently which makes his wife jealous and she tries to stop him from these frequent visits. Emma dreams of a romantic midnight wedding, but ends up in a traditional one, with a boisterous celebration.

Emma soon becomes bored and dissatisfied with her married life where she could not find the marital bliss that she always dreamed of. 'Before marriage, she thought herself in love; but the happiness that should have followed this love not having a home, she must, she thought, have been mistaken. Emma tried to find out what one meant exactly in life by the words, felicity, passion, rapture, that had seemed to her so beautiful in books' (30). This shows her absolute disappointment in finding Charles, not a romantic hero that she came across in the romantic

novels and the life style different from that of her romantic world of imagination. She always kept the notion of platonic love in her dreams and awaited to find it in her life. Emma remembers her convent days where she was passionate about religion alongside her passion for romantic novels, the death of her mother that made her a melancholic character typical of certain romantic heroines, leaving the convent and then the life at her father's farm before the marriage. It was at this stage that she meets Charles and hoped for a better life, which ultimately made her unhappy. In the first section, we are introduced to the middle-class provincial life, but later the focus shifts to Emma's inner thoughts. Emma's disappointment intensifies after attending an elegant ball at the mansion of one of Charles' patients, the Marquis d'Andervilliers. She finds Charles more unrefined and clumsier, after being in the midst of rich, elegant noblemen and women, including an old man who was one of Marie Antoinette's lovers. Emma starts showing indifference in her attitude that Charles found weird.

The second part of the novel progresses when Charles decides to move his practice to a larger market town of Yonville to make Emma happy. Charles befriends an ostentatious and obnoxious apothecary, Monsieur Homais where Emma meets the smart, young, law student Leon Dupuis and develops an infatuation due to their common interests in literature and music. She soon gives birth to a baby girl, Berthe that even adds to her disappointment as she was hoping for a boy. She keeps the baby under the care of a wet nurse in the village where they start gossiping about Emma and Leon. Emma and Leon are aware of their love and romantic feelings for each other, but neither of them could reveal it. Emma gets mentally and physically down and starts losing her weight. She thinks of herself as a martyr of love, reminded of the virtues of a good wife and mother. She brings back Berthe from the wet nurse and tries to hide her emotion towards Leon. But she fails to be a dutiful mother and wife in her passion for Leon and has emotional breakups. Leon feels desperate due to Emma's lack of interest in him and moves to Paris for pursuing his studies that makes Emma more desperate.

While Emma suffers due to Leon's departure, she meets a rich and handsome landowner, Rodolphe Boulanger, who brings his servant to Charles for treatment. Rodolphe who is attracted by Emma's beauty decides to seduce her. At the same time, Justin who is Homais's assistant develops an infatuation with Emma: during the annual agricultural fair, while they are alone, Rodolphe confesses his love for Emma. Once again, she tries to show the virtue of a dutiful married woman, but couldn't resist herself. He keeps away for a while and later his presence makes Emma excited. He offers a ride for Emma which was supported by Charles who takes their relationship to be one of platonic friendship. In the forest, he once again declares his love for her and they make love. She returns home feeling highly romantic and they develop a full-fledged affair. She sneaks away from home to meet him and forgets her homely duties and responsibilities for the sake of the newfound romantic love. Rodolphe on the other hand is an experienced lover, who throws away women as he gets bored with them. Soon he felt bored with their affair, except for Emma's beauty, which Emma also realized. The memory of her innocent childhood is prompted by a letter from her father that drags her once again to be a dutiful wife, avoiding Rodolphe and redeeming herself through sacrifice as she felt guilty. Charles proves his incompetence in treating the clubfoot of Hippolyte, a servant at the inn. Emma, who is further disgusted with Charles, renews her affair with Rodolphe more passionately and became less careful and cautious about the social circle. She starts making extravagant purchases from the

merchant and moneylender, Lheureux. She goes into debt buying expensive gifts for Rodolphe to please him. Her entire life changed its course and became more of a prostitute in her denial of family and embracing her romantic lover. She even decides to leave Charles and plans to elope with Rodolphe by taking Berthe with her. Later, Rodolphe dismisses the idea and to stop the affair with her, fabricates a letter and sending it concealed under a basket of apricots. Emma is devastated and suicidal instincts are developed. She is completely broken when Rodolphe moves away, which even affects her health very badly. It takes time for her to recover health.

Charles is in a fix as he is highly concerned about Emma's health and financial condition that was becoming worse. Lheureux shows him a list of Emma's debts. He is forced to borrow money from Lheureux at very high interest to pay them off. Again, she develops the catholic fervor of her youth while ill and shows concern for her husband and daughter. She develops a friendly attitude towards the villagers and Justin feels more passion towards Emma. Charles takes Emma to the opera at Rouen, where they happen to meet Leon that leads to the renewal of their once lost-love affair.

Part three progresses with the strong and passionate love relationship between Emma and Leon. Charles' father dies and Lheureux comes with a list of Emma's debts and forces her to get the power of attorney over Charles' finance to settle the debts. Charles easily agrees to this proposal and send her to Rouen for assistance from Leon for settling the papers. Emma's renewal of affair with Leon weakens her religious sense and gets attracted to his playacting believing it for refinement. He visits Emma frequently in Yonville neglecting his work and friend at Rouen. Emma has more debt to Lheureux and convinces Charles that she has weekly piano lessons in Rouen to meet Leon regularly. The romance between Emma and Leon becomes more intense and they act more like characters of romantic novels that Emma always dreamed. At the same time, she struggles to play the role of a dutiful wife. During her trip between Rouen and Yonville, Emma often meets a deformed, blind beggar and gets scared of his loud, horrible song. Charles becomes doubtful about Emma's piano classes but she convinces him and takes him once again into trusting her. Lheureux convinces Emma to sell Charles' father's estate at a loss as she has the power of attorney, to pay back the debts. Charles' mother burns the power of attorney and Charles signs a new one for Emma.

As Emma indulges more with her romantic and carnal desires with Leon, she demanded more attention and care from him that ultimately leads to his indifference towards Emma. Emma's debts accumulate with no limits as she spends extravagantly, pawns some objects from Charles' house. Slowly there arises a sort of boredom in the affair between Leon and Emma and she starts affairs with some vulgar clerks and lives more like a prostitute. She receives a legal notice, followed by a court order asking to pay 8,000 francs lest she will lose all her property. Emma goes to Lheureux for money but he refuses to help her. Leon halfheartedly promises Emma to help her to get money but finally, a public notice is posted in Yonville announcing the auction of Bovarys' belongings. Emma visits the town lawyer to seek help but he promises to help her in return for sexual favours that Emma refuses. Then, Emma visits the tax collector Binet and tries to seduce him, whereas he denies her attempts. Her next trial was to meet Rodolphe under the belief that he will help her in return for offering herself to him. Emma becomes desperate when Rodolphe avoids her knowing her intentions. Emma who is completely broken becomes angry and desperate. Finding no other option to overcome the situation, Emma goes to Homais'

apothecary shop and convinces Justin to open the cabinet where arsenic is kept and poisons herself. Emma gives a letter to Charles asking him to open it only the next day, hoping for a peaceful death. But she starts feeling sick and the agony increases. Charles and Homais try their best to save her, the priest arrives to give her sacrament, Emma behaves kindly to Charles and Berthe on her deathbed and finally succumbs to death while hearing the blind beggar's song outside the house. Charles' gives a grand funeral for Emma and is upset about losing her. Rouault also arrives Yonville to attend Emma's funeral. Justin who feels guilty does not attend the funeral, instead, he visits her grave at midnight and weeps like a child.

After Emma's death, Charles mourns over it for a long time. Leon gets engaged with a rich lady. One day Charles happens to see some letters from Leon and Rodolphe on Emma's desk and realizes her infidelity. His spirit is completely broken with his knowledge of Emma's extramarital affairs; he struggles to pay off the debts. Meanwhile, he meets Rodolphe who apologizes to Charles and he accepts it. The next day Charles dies in his garden, and his entire property goes to the creditors. Berthe lives with Charles' mother for some time and after her death, Berthe lives with an impoverished aunt and is forced to work in a cotton mill for her livelihood. The novel concludes with Homais eventually awarded with the Legion of Honor medal.

Anna Karenina: An Outline

One of the most impressive features of *Anna Karenina* is how Tolstoy draws the reader's imagination beyond the literal level of the narrative into generalizations that seem mythical in a manner difficult to articulate. Like almost all of Tolstoy's characters, she has a proficiency in the husbandry of identity; she jealously hoards her own unique reality, so that it becomes difficult to say of her that she is a "type" of nineteenth-century Russian lady or a "symbol" of modern woman or an "archetypical" Eve. Tolstoy begins his masterpiece with a philosophical statement about happy and unhappy families. The plot begins with a supposedly happy family, rich, cultured, and elite class, but with a stigma of adultery. Stiva, who is the brother of Anna, holds an affair with his children's governess that leads to depression for his wife, Dolly. Anna arrives in St.Petersburg on a train, to solve the issue between her brother and wife. Anna initially appears dutiful to her husband Alexei Karenin, a high-ranking government official and an important figure in St.Petersburg. She is a devoted mother to her eight-year-old son Seryozha. She even shows motherly affection and care towards her brother's children and keeps good relation with Dolly.

At the railway station, Anna is introduced to Alexei Vronsky, who is a dashing military man. Dolly's sister has two suitors, Konstantin Levin and Alexei Vronsky. Kitty refuses Levin's proposal in favour of Vronsky, whereas Vronsky feels attracted towards Anna and dances with her at the ball. Kitty feels devastated due to Vronsky's denial of her, whereas Levin feels depressed about Kitty's feelings towards him and withdraws to his estate in the countryside. Anna returns to St.Petersburg after solving the issue between Stiva and Dolly. However, her heart reflects infatuation that she felt towards Vronsky and after reaching home dismisses the idea thinking of it as a momentary crush. However, Vronsky follows Anna to St.Petersburg and they get mutually attracted. Karenin who feels suspicious of this new development speaks to Anna and she dismisses his concern about this matter. During a horse race of the military

officers, Levin's horse's back is broken and Anna shows deep concern for Vronsky which is noticed by Karenin. Later, Anna admits her affair with Vronsky and Karenin feels shocked.

Kitty recovers her health and later meets Levin who also became better focused on his farming tasks. They are convinced of their love for each other and get married. Anna who is more attached to Vronsky, requests a divorce from Karenin who rejects the idea of being highly conscious of the social disgrace. Anna moves to the family's country home and finds that she is pregnant. Vronsky decided to resign from his military post; however, his ambitions prevent him from doing so. Karenin finds Vronsky at the country home and decides to grant a divorce for Anna. During childbirth, Anna undergoes intense agony and begs Karenin's forgiveness, which he quickly accepts. When Karenin gives his consent for divorce, Anna rejects the idea. Anna leaves to Italy with Vronsky for some time, in order to escape social criticism. However, on their return back to Russia, society views her with disgrace for adultery. Anna makes a visit to Karenin's house with a birthday gift for her son, meets him, and cries due to regret and joy. As Karenin reaches, she leaves unable to give the toys to her son. Anna feels jealous of Levin's social life and sadness for her isolation from society. Meanwhile, Dolly visits Anna and finds her joyful; at the same time feels pity for Anna's use of sedatives to sleep. Anna is depressed and awaits a divorce from Karenin.

It is interesting to see how relationships are unfolded in the novel. Stiva pays a visit to Anna with Levin and it happens to be the first meeting between them. Anna and Levin feel mutual respect after this meeting. Anna grows suspicious of Vronsky's love towards her. Stiva meets Karenin at St.Petersburg to request Anna's divorce, but he refuses Stiva's request. Anna accuses Vronsky of showing more concern towards his mother than herself and he tries to reconcile, but she remains angry. While Vronsky is away for a task, Anna feels sad and sends a telegram to call him back urgently and gets further upset receiving an apology note from him. Anna in despair visits Dolly, to bid goodbye and returns home. Anna decided to meet Vronsky at the railway station after he returns from his task. On her way to the railway station, she is overwhelmed by lots of emotions, feels indifference towards the crowd around her, and is convinced that Levin no more loves her. She feels the meaninglessness of her life and disoriented thoughts largely disturb her mind while she boards the train. Getting out of the train, her mind still confused, thought of punishing Vronsky by ending up her life. Begging God's forgiveness, she throws herself under an approaching train, feeling regret and confusion. She ends up the agony haunting her, by committing suicide.

The novel's final sections discuss the political and national changes that happen in Russia. Vronsky's mother makes derogatory remarks about Anna being mean and low. Karenin takes care of Anna's daughter and Vronsky expresses his willingness to die for the Slavic cause. Vronsky finds his life meaningless whereas Levin's thoughts and feelings about the newly found philosophies related to life are dealt with in detail. He becomes the desired husband for Kitty and a loving father for their son. Kitty feels happy about Levin's social life and Levin realizes that meaning of life lies in the goodness that one puts into it.

Literary Analysis

In analyzing the factors that represent the protagonists of these two novels as 'femme fatale' a profound observation should be made concerning the context, social condition, genre, philosophy

of the writers, and related ideas. In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert represents the French society of the mid-nineteenth century whereas, in *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy portrays the Russian society of the late nineteenth century. On the former, Emma is portrayed as passionate and romantic, and in the latter, Anna is shown as realistic and cultivated, indicating their estranged relationship with their husbands.

Emma's relation with Charles is one of dissatisfaction and disappointment in the realization that he does not have any of the virtues that she expected in him as the romantic heroes of the novels that formed the base of her life. Her longing for the dream, romantic heroes led to extramarital affairs with other men that made her more of a concubine and morally corrupt. Dating Rodolphe, Emma thought that he is understanding, romantic, and able to fill the vacuum in her, but later rejected by him as he considered the relationship mere escapism. Leon appears much bolder and brave as identified by Roifah and Eliyanah (2012). He declares his love for Emma and demands her to be his lover that she has been waiting for all her life. Initially, her marital status prevents him from accepting her fully, but later develops a strong romantic and sexual relationship. Emma's over-demanding nature affects her relationships with Rodolphe and Leon and results in their denial of her. Rodolphe is more cunning and smart compared to Leon, who is more compromising to help her. Emma is ready to give everything in her possession, her body, love, soul, and money to the man who can provide her love and sexual satisfaction that she aimed at. This results in providing her lovers with love and luxurious goods to make them attached to her. However, all her attempts proved to be a failure as she yearned for the ultimate gratification of her carnal desires. Emma being religious from a very young age is aware of leading a moral life and from time to time tries her best to remain a dutiful wife to Charles and a good mother to Berthe. However, she couldn't control herself as her emotions and feelings ruled over her rational and moral sense. For Anna, though she had a cold relationship with her husband, the affair with Vronsky occurred by coincidence. She was not in search of a romantic hero, but the attention and care that she received from Vronsky dragged her into an affair with him. Anna tried her best to remain refined, elite, and poised in several instances.

Social class is another major factor that decides the life of the characters in both novels. Emma yearns for an elite, aristocratic French life, though she belongs to a middle-class family. But Anna is already from an elite, noble family and her desires are least connected with class, though she feels bound socially. Alexei Karenin is highly class conscious and that is one of the main reasons he allows Anna to have a secret relationship with Vronsky, whereas he cannot allow divorce for the fear of losing his status in society. Meek(2012) remarks that the Oblonsky's are aristocrats, with the trappings of the upper class-rank, servants, a townhouse, and a place in the country. But they are in debt, and the country house is falling to pieces.

In Emma's life, desire for material prospects led her to commit adultery, whereas, for Anna, it is a sort of spiritual satisfaction from the love that she dreamed for. Emma's lovers took advantage of her weakness realizing her needs and character. Her husband Charles is the only one who couldn't judge her properly (Flaubert, 2001). She was so faithful and impressed about her that he was blind about her ways with other men, taking it for platonic friendships. Anna committed adultery only with Vronsky and other men who came into contact with her including the co-protagonist of the novel, Levin had high regard for Anna seeing her as a lady with noble character. However, society's notion about these protagonists in both novels is more or less the

same. Adultery is the driving theme that makes the society view these characters as morally corrupt, whether they have single or multiple extramarital affairs. Thus, the judgments of society keep both characters at the same heights. The society was largely patriarchal and they view the men involved in these affairs not as immoral to a great extent, because of their gender. It is always the woman who is stigmatized in society and blamed for moral decay.

Emma and Anna's storyline progress in an almost similar fashion. Emma has eventful incidents in her life in comparison with Anna. This is because there is a co-protagonist for Anna in *Anna Karenina* that is Levin. The majority of the novel's ideas reflect Levin's parallel search like Anna's, in finding the meaning of life, his stance about modernism, politics, and interest in farming. Levin acts as a mouthpiece of Tolstoy in many instances. This is a driving factor that makes both Anna and Levin cross their paths but in opposite directions, although some common facts connect their personalities. Though they represent their specific gender roles, both are honest in their relationships and in constant search that is spiritual in finding the meaning of life. The outcome of this search is tragic in Anna's life where she finds independence and freedom from the bondage of life through suicide. For Levin, he realizes the need to find happiness by himself being the perfect man for his house and end up in a happy family for him. The linking thread between Anna and Levin is Stiva who represents a typical 'homme fatale' symbolizing most of the features associated with this concept. The novel begins with his adultery and he represents the modern man. Meek (2012) sees him 'beloved by everyone for his charm, his healthy glow, and his radiant smile, he's generous, gregarious, greedy, hedonistic, trivial, shallow, fond of gadgets and sex with non-threatening women, infantilized by fashion and marketing. He reads the liberal paper as it suits his lifestyle, uses connections to get a well-paid government job and sells off his wife's properties cheaply, and struggles to afford the life he dreams. Though he tried to be a caring father and husband, he could never remember that he had a wife and children while following his passions. There are constant clashes between the moral Levin and immoral Stiva in affectionate and angry ways. Anna can be seen as a martyr in her struggle for sexual freedom in a hypocritical, conservative, elite society to which she belongs. The predicament of different families runs as a parallel plot and gets connected to the main plot of Anna's life.

Emma's childhood has been referred to in *Madame Bovary* including her convent days, death of her mother, and life with her father on the farm. Even Charles' childhood and adulthood provide the start of the novel. It is Charles' mother who finds the first wife for him and Emma's father who finds Charles a suitable husband for Emma. However, there is no reference to childhood in *Anna Karenina*, though the novel is basically about families. On her initial appearance, Anna is a married woman with a son, brother, friends and has a high status in society. Levin who represents Tolstoy is shown as orphaned from an early age, but his brothers have a lasting influence on him. Vronsky's world is dominated by his mother's presence, a society lady who kept extramarital affairs during her life as a wife and a widow. Vronsky 'hardly remembered his father and had been educated in the Cadet Corps' (55). All these factors contribute to the evolution of their characters.

Emma and Anna's relationship with their children is also an underlying factor in analyzing their nature. Emma shows less maternal affection than usual with her daughter Berthe. She left her infant daughter under the care of a wet nurse in preference for her lover and later brings her back

home when she temporarily thinks of her maternal duties. On another occasion, she is emotionally upset and even pushes the girl aside resulting in her being bruised. Emma claims her innocence but Charles calms her down when she acts frantic and shaken. When Emma decides to elope with Rodolphe, she planned to take Berthe with her, but later dismissed the idea altogether. At deathbed, she acts kindly towards Berthe and Charles.

Concept of Sexuality and Motherhood

Emma's failure as a mother and wife is mainly due to her romantic ideals of life. Her indifference towards Berthe resulted from the fact that she wished for a son. This evokes feminist thoughts in Emma, who believes that a male child will have the privilege of power that is missing in her life. Rooks (2014) comments that for Emma, 'the lover becomes the symbolic substitute for the child and the child the symbolic substitute for the lover' (3). Emma's explicit lack of maternal instinct towards Berthe and her dramatic bestowment of maternal affections towards her lover Leon is evident on many occasions. Emma's vision of courtly love and viewing herself as a martyr of love started by devouring the prohibited novels during her convent days. Rooks (2014) also observes how the novel portrays the dissolution of the boundaries between child and lover through various characters' interaction with Berthe. While Emma ignores her child most of the time, her sporadic and keen attention towards Berthe is evocative of her fervent passions for her lovers (4). Emma's behavior is filled with both girlishness and eroticism which resulted from the romantic novels that she read.

A striking instance of the shifting transpositions of lover and child in the novel is shown through the representation of Emma's mock prince, the orphaned servant boy Justin (5). Justin's sensual yearnings towards Emma, her care for Justin when he faints reveals sensual seduction, and even her seducing gesture during her suicide attempt, all prove her character that was highly over-governed by sensuality and sexuality. Justin's status as an orphan is also manipulated in his relationship with Emma. His lack of motherly love and care is substituted in his yearnings towards Emma and remains an ambivalent relation of child/lover who desires for mother/beloved. Justin becomes the boy child that Emma wishes in fulfilling her romantic ideal (5). Emma who desires a son thought that 'he would be strong and dark; she would call him George; ...having a male child was like an expected revenge for all her impotence in the past. A man, at least, is free; he may... taste of the most far-away pleasures. But a woman is always hampered...always drawn by some desire, restrained by some rule of conduct'(74). Her desire to compensate for the liberty and freedom she lacks in life to fulfill through giving birth to a son was strong in Emma's mind. Rodolphe's remark about Emma's name further complicates the issue related to her identity crisis: 'Madame Bovary! why all the world calls you thus! Besides, it is not your name, it is the name of another!' (131). By pointing at her lack of identity, the subordinate status of her gender, and his skills as a seducer and womanizer could easily make Emma a prey for his fancies. Berthe's plight at the end of the novel, being orphaned, living with her poor aunt, and working in a cotton mill, reflects the truth of suffering being born as a girl.

Flaubert (2003) also presents other forms of ideal motherhood in his novel. Senior Madame Bovary is one such example. She represents the most caring and loving mother for Charles, who took major decisions for him and is shown as almost a constant presence in his life. This close attention to Charles also derives from her disappointments in her marital life, as her husband

Monsieur Bovary neglected her while involved with all of the village harlots. Her once 'lively...expansive and affectionate' qualities transformed into obstinate pride and 'dumb stoicism' (6). This was compensated by her through her son, Charles, whom 'she always kept him near her...told him tales, entertained him with monologues full of melancholy gaiety, chatting and fondling in endless baby-talk' (7). As Charles gets married, she cannot accept her son's wife taking all his attention from mother to wife which results in her verbal fights with Heloise and Emma. Thus, both Charles and his father as men contribute to the indifferent attitude shown by women in their lives, who lack the expected love and care they dream in their life. Also, Charles' first wife Heloise comes very close in her character with his mother, being older than him, jealous of his visits to Emma's house, and constantly bossing and controlling him. Emma is even devoid of the blessing of having a son to fulfill her heart's desires that takes her to lovers and being labelled as 'femme fatale.' Flaubert also portrays Madame Homais as a parody of the ideal mother and her lack of sexual appeal is a linking factor in presenting her as an appropriate mother (Mandelker, 1994). Thus, we find an inverse relation, where motherhood and sexuality are concerned.

Anna's relation with her son Seryozha is one of pure love, care, and affection. The major driving factor why she shows reluctance to get a divorce from Karenin, even after he agrees to it, could be the love for her son. She visits him secretly on his birthday with a gift at Karenin's house, while she was living away in a country house with Vronsky. She hugs and cries when she sees him. At the same time, she shows little affection for her infant daughter, Annie, with Vronsky. This shows her later feelings towards Vronsky that he loves her only as a duty more than out of love. Surprisingly, it is Karenin who takes care of her after Anna's death. As seen in Emma's case, Anna's status of having a son would have empowered her emotionally, as her husband was a cold and irrational man. Although children's presence in the novel appears only in the background, the parent-child relationship is also a theme in the novel.

How Emma and Anna treat their relatives and people around them is also striking. In Emma's case, she has only her father from her side. She could not tolerate Charles' mother's behavior most of the time. Emma behaves well with people and shows the utmost care in treating everyone with humility that attracts men towards her. This is one of the main reasons Charles got fascinated when he met her on the farm for the first time. Later, Rodolphe also notices the same in her and taken over by her beauty and soft nature, decides to seduce her. Leon and Emma have conversations showing common interests that bind them together. Justin gets infatuated by Emma's beauty and care. When Emma temporarily decides to be a dutiful housewife, she even treats the villagers with great affection that makes them happy.

Anna is fair in her relation and treatment with her brother Stiva and his family. Even she behaves well with Levin, any other relatives, and in the society when she has to keep Karenin's status in the society. Later, her relation with Vronsky makes her feel less caring about societal views and criticisms. She even moves to Italy and a country house in Russia to be away from people. Later, she doesn't even care about the society that is evident in attending a ball where she is stared at with disgust by people around her. Towards the end of the novel, Anna's thoughts are evident about the crowd on the streets and fellow passengers on the train that demonstrates her attitude towards people.

Role of Husbands in Protagonists' Fate

Charles belongs to a middle-class family, whose father is a former army surgeon and his mother having remarkable control over him, in choosing his first wife and involving in most of his family matters. Charles struggled throughout his life, being an incompetent student at school, college, and later professionally as a doctor too, he was a failure. His first marriage with a widow lady, older than him, also made to view himself as a second-rate character. This could be the reason he was fascinated with the beautiful, convent-educated, well-mannered Emma, whom he considered a blessing and gift in his life. His imperfection that he realized and failure in meeting Emma's romantic view about marital bliss, can be seen as the major factor that led him to overlook Emma's faults and adultery. As readers, we wonder whether he is so naïve to take Emma's affairs with men so lightly. Perhaps, it was a mask to conceal his own inadequacies, in terms of class, status, beauty, profession, etc for which Emma's expectations were high. Unlike stereotyped men we come across in reality and fiction, he at times pushes Emma into relationships with men, when he asks her to accept Rodolphe's proposal for a horse ride, leaving her at Rouen for attending opera in Leon's company and again sending her to Leon to fix legal papers.

In Anna Karenina, Alexei Karenin is so formal and duty-bounded. A dry, analytical attitude defines his personal and professional life. He was an orphan who grew up with a lack of parental care and love that reflected in his character and relation with his wife and son. He seems to fill the vacuum by compensating for this lack of parental warmth, by progressing in professional status and honor, being a self-made man. His indifferent nature towards life paved way for Anna in searching for real love in her real relationship with Vronsky. Karenin, as a husband is compromising with Anna in her relation with Vronsky, lest society should know about it. Hence, in the case of Emma and Anna, we find some sort of commonality in the character of their husbands in giving them a silent agreement for extramarital relationships and adultery.

Attending a ball change the life of both protagonists. Emma sees something very similar to her romantic vision of life for the first time when the Marquis d'Andervilliers invite them to attend the ball at his La Vaubyessard chateau, something extraordinary. This episode is a defining moment in Emma's life. She sips champagne and waltzes with an anonymous viscount, while Charles spent his time dozing and watching the guests playing whist. Emma is transported away from her realist Normandy countryside life to the court of Marie-Antoinette and fantasy worlds of Scott or Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. Her future life becomes a quest for meeting similar romantic images in reality and adds to her frustration whenever she fails to meet them.

Anna meets Vronsky initially at the train station and soon at a ball where she appears in a black dress rather than red, the archetypal colour associated with femme fatale. Vronsky first dances with Kitty, who looks gorgeous. When Anna appears in a black dress, Kitty finds that the colour suits Anna very much. Vronsky bows to Anna and she refuses to respond which surprises Kitty. Later, Kitty finds both Anna and Vronsky dancing together and she looks glorious and ecstatic. After this incident, Vronsky enters the mind of Anna and he follows her to St Petersburg from Moscow and ends up in their new affair. The mutual attraction between Anna and Vronsky is more abstract than physical, the attraction for personality than sexual fantasy (Tolstoy, 1999).

Men in Emma's life are numerous. Charles whom she first meets as a married man, becomes her husband, after the death of his first wife. Then, the long line of men follows as Rodolphe, Leon,

Justin, and vulgar clerks she visits a disreputable restaurant after a masquerading ball, completes her life as an immoral woman. We rarely find Emma to be truly repentant or shameful for her immoral acts, and even her suicide is due to the financial crisis rather than realization of her sins and immorality. Charles who lived with Emma for long years seems to have identified her romantic yearnings at least after her death. He organized a grand funeral for Emma in a Romantic ceremonial manner, similar to the one she dreamt of for her wedding. While Leon and Rodolphe are least affected by Emma's death and they sleep comfortably on the night of her funeral, Justin who is Emma's secret admirer, weeps like a child on the grave, at night. Charles' own death, of a broken and aching heart, with a lock of Emma's hair, clasped in his hand, reminds us the gestures of a romantic lover whom Emma probably met in her romantic novels. The only man in Anna's life out of matrimony is Vronsky. Karenin identified Anna and Vronsky's feelings for each other from its onset, unlike Charles, who was blind to Emma's adultery. While all Emma's lovers desert her, Vronsky stays with Anna until the last moment. Anna is never portrayed as passionate about sexual life, but she seeks instead a spiritual fulfillment through love. Anna's dilemmas are a result of this expectation. Vronsky feels his life meaningless after Anna dies and decides to devote his remaining life to the Slavic cause. Karenin's stepping down from being a rational, responsible government minister to a lonely and confused man is least expected. He becomes the foster father for Annie, Anna, and Vronsky's daughter.

Charles' feeling towards Emma is one of blind trust. He always tried to see the positive side of Emma's behavior and relations with other men. Finally, his knowledge of her adultery completely breaks him down. But still, he concludes that what happened in his life is 'the fault of fatality!' (286). In a way, Emma and most of the characters who suffer alongside her are preys or victims of cruel fate. Karenin's attitude towards Anna is also striking. Though he always shows coldness in their relationship, he is at times ready to compromise for the sake of her happiness (Selden, 2005). He is giving her the chance to have affair with Vronsky, provided it is kept a secret from society. When Anna suffers during childbirth, he is kind and ready to pardon her guilt. Later on, he shows a willingness to grant her divorce and after her death, he takes care of her infant baby girl in Vronsky. Charles and Karenin's professional failure or breakdown, along with personal loss of marital bliss affects them badly. Emma's beauty is physical, whereas Anna's elegance is more of a spiritual nature. Emma is often described as an unlikely character, whereas Anna is seen as a tragic one. Both protagonists start noticing the defects and unlikely nature in their husbands after they are infatuated with men with whom they develop extramarital relations. This eventually makes them blind towards the virtues that their husbands had and vices in their lovers, resulting in their doom.

The tragic end of both protagonists shares some common features. They commit suicide as a form of liberation from their depressing existence. Emma consumes arsenic, while Anna throws herself under the train. Emma expected a peaceful death in sleep through eating arsenic that shows her romantic vision even at death. However, reality gave her a painful and agonizing death. Flaubert portrays her death as a punishment for her sinful immorality. Anna takes an independent decision and acts alone while deciding to throw herself under the train. She wishes to escape the hollowness of people around her. Tolstoy presents Anna's life as a candle that was illuminated and then extinguished forever, signifying that her life had light and truth. There is foreshadowing of the tragic fate of both protagonists in the novels. The lurid song of a blind

beggar is symbolic of the moral degeneration that happened with Emma who end her life due to financial crisis. Anna's entry into the action is in the backdrop of a man who dies at the train station that foreshadows her death later at the train station. The fall and death of Vronsky's horse Frou-Frou also foreshadow his beloved Anna's fall and death.

The ending of both novels is also striking. The plot does not end with the death of protagonists, similar to the way they are absent at the beginning of the novel. In *Madame Bovary*, even after Charles' death, the story progresses in depicting Berthe's plight, and most important of all is the success of Homais and his family. When he is awarded the cross of the Legion of Honour for his community services, which seems ironical about the blind beggar whom he expels from the area and lack of connection with Charles after Emma's death. *Anna Karenina* ends with the representation of political and national changes in Russia. Levin's half-brother Sergei Koznyshev, who is an intellectual and writer, focuses on liberating the Serbs, Montenegrin's, and other Slavic groups from the Muslim rule of turkey, a cause that seems to occupy the entire Russian nation. The question of the meaning of life contemplated by Levin, Sergei, and Vronsky is discussed. Vronsky concludes that life has no meaning and decides to fight in the Serbian war. Failure in gaining intellectual achievement makes Sergei focus on a public, patriotic cause. Both Vronsky and Sergei cannot find good in actual relationships with living humans. Levin displays his opposition to the war and expresses skepticism about Russians being unanimously behind it. He experiences religious enlightenment and recognizes that living for God and goodness is the answer to his questions about the meaning of life. He became more social and proved to be an ideal husband and father, thus ensuring a happy family life.

Common Motifs and Metaphors

Madame Bovary divided into three parts, represents an agricultural metaphor, as the background of the novel is provided mostly by Normandy countryside. Also, the triple stages involved in farming, viz, sowing, reaping, and garnering are evident in the plot development, where part one introduces the characters, especially Emma and her passions, part two progresses in her active romantic life, and part three showing her tragic end and life of people associated with her. Each character's life proves the proverb 'As you sow, so shall you reap' to be true. In *Madame Bovary*, there is a reference to the peasants and agricultural community, where Emma initially lived on a farm. Even after moving to Yonville, Emma comes across a peasant community. There is a reference to an agricultural fair, during which Rodolphe declares his love for Emma, meanwhile a speech on morality is made by the bureaucratic official at the fair. The regular cycle of seasonal and agricultural activities that is governed by repetition, monotony, and routine, reflects in the boredom experienced by Emma who always wanted to escape the countryside.

In *Anna Karenina*, many chapters are devoted by Tolstoy in describing Levin's interests in experimenting with new farming methods, his stay at the estates, and Anna's stay at the country house. Tolstoy presents the city as a static, artificial place in the novel. Meek (2012) identifies that the majority of the characters who spend much time in Moscow and St Petersburg, barely describes these cities, whereas the countryside is described in exquisite detail. Farming, hunting, and similar activities are narrated in detail. Levin expresses his apprehension regarding why European agricultural reforms do not work in Russia. Being a devoted farmer and a passionate philosopher, Levin achieves a clear vision and balance of faith and happiness. He can understand

the real Russian spirit through his close contact with Russian peasants and soil. Finally, he achieves an idea of faith-based on growth and cultivation. In both novels, city life represents artificiality and results in pretensions, whereas life in the countryside is natural and provides solace.

Religion is a theme that has significance in both novels. In *Madame Bovary*, Emma has religious reveries at times, whereas it is only temporary and fleeting. Religion fails to provide Emma with her actual spiritual need and it could provide her only surface comforts. The instance of conversation between Emma and a priest also reflects the superficial nature of religion among the bourgeoisie. Flaubert also presents the religious view that despises theatre as irreligious by the priest and Homais defending it, when Charles takes Emma to the opera in Rouen. At the deathbed, Emma receives a sacrament from the priest and acts kindly to her husband and daughter. Religion is an aspect contemplated more by Levin in *Anna Karenina*. Prior to his wedding, Levin goes to the church for confession as per the custom. During confession to the priest, he expresses his doubts about the existence of God which Tolstoy wants to highlight through Levin. Levin is presented as a deeply soulful person, in his passion for farming and marriage. However, his ambivalence towards religion is evident although he has the spirituality that faith demands, he is skeptical of its dogma and rituals. He believes that social institutions often replace actual spirituality. The theological and moral significance of forgiveness is evident when Karenin readily accepts Anna's deathbed plea for forgiveness for both her and Vronsky. It is also obvious in Levin and Kitty's mutual act of forgiving for their past actions and decisions. Finally, Anna begs God's forgiveness before committing suicide.

Examples of Realist Fiction

Flaubert is regarded as one of the forerunners of literary modernism by the contemporary intelligentsia. Roger Clark in the introduction to the novel remarks that 'Flaubert's novel, with its teasing narrative patterns, its kaleidoscope of constantly shifting viewpoints and its sustained exploitation of free indirect discourse,...its black humour and subtly ironic undertones, its artfully wrought web of images,... inspired a clutch of modern fictions' (vi). With his simple and straightforward style, Flaubert vividly portrayed the life of the French bourgeoisie in his novel. Tolstoy is regarded as a master in his realistic treatment of fiction. His novel can be seen as a panoramic view of Russian society and the problems faced by it during the 1870s, focusing on the hypocrisy of the Russian elite class. It appears as a meditation of themes like society, religion, family, and the philosophy of life. In Meek's (2012) observation, it is the portrayal of a clash between an old world of rigid religious codes, duels, fixed gender roles, and strict class division and a new world of divorce, separation, custody battles, women's self-determination and uncertain moral rules. It also reflects William Dean Howells, the father of American realism, championed Tolstoy as part of his stand for realism.

The narrative style, point of view, and tone applied by the authors are noteworthy. In *Madame Bovary*, the majority of the novel has an omniscient third-person narrator who tells the story. The narrator takes an objective stance while focusing mainly on Emma's experiences. At times, an unusual mix of objective observations of her behavior and subjective accounts of her thoughts and feelings are evident. There are instances where the reader focalizes the plot through Emma, and a tone of sympathy and ironic contempt is visible throughout the story. In *Anna Karenina*,

Tolstoy employs an unnamed, omniscient, detached, third-person narrator who presents facts and inner thoughts of principal characters like Emma and Levin in detail. Their feelings, attitudes and mental states are vividly portrayed. Though impersonal, a sympathetic tone is maintained by the narrator, focusing on facts and feelings, without making authorial commentaries on the fate of the characters.

Conclusion

Men and their roles are also analysed alongside the female protagonists in discussing the idea of 'femme fatale' in both novels. Different types of male characters are presented in both novels with diverse temperaments, and how they react to various situations are also scrutinized in analysis. Social conditions decide most of their actions where men are not victimized for adulterous actions although they are equal partners in this sinful act. It is the woman who is always labelled as corrupt, immoral, and outcast. How they end up their life is also shown as a righteous way to end their life. However, it is the society that pushes the women to act in a challenging way, as they are prevented from enjoying the pleasures of life, that are taken for granted by men.

The plots of both novels also reveal that most of the characters become pure victims of circumstances. Even in the case of the protagonists, the irony of fate that pulls and pushed them into the wide chasm of doom, untimely labels them as 'femme fatale.' Does this lead to contemplate whether 'homme fatale,' is a concept of historical amnesia/dementia? In social as well as the literary world, 'homme fatale' is barely discussed and analyzed which is a mirroring of the patriarchal power in both realistic and fictional world. Some sort of ambivalence prevails in the actual intention of the authors in presenting their protagonists who are generally considered to be 'femme fatale.' The readers may wonder whether it is awe, respect, love, or pity that shapes their feelings towards these characters.

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