

Madame bovary and techniques in fiction

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1. Conceptions: The Origin of a Story

Gustave Flaubert in all probability got the idea for Madame Bovary when he and Louise Colet became lovers, in which the novel was written at the time of the affair. When Flaubert and his mistress first started to have the affair, they wrote love letters to each other as any other lover would. The letters that Flaubert would write were similar to the journals the authors use to help stimulate ideas for their novel. (TIF, 10) Flaubert in all wanted to expose the whole aspect of having affairs and encompassing mistresses.

Putting the setting at his birthplace made him more comfortable with the area allowing him to have the full coverage of the city such as knowing all the streets and the back roads that Madame Bovary uses. (Flaubert, 261) The more familiar the area is the more realistic it would seem, such as where the houses were located. The whole aspect of the city is not imaginative but more practical.

The characters in Madame Bovary resemble Flaubert and his family in many ways, for instance the elder Mrs. Bovary as Flaubert's mother. They both have are widows in their future life, and they have the sense of protectiveness of their children. Since Flaubert's father is a doctor, he had to incorporate that characteristic in Charles Bovary. However, I think the greatest resemblance between the characters of the novel and Flaubert's family is Flaubert and Madame Bovary because they both have nostalgia for Paris. As Flaubert places himself in a woman's place you can see his true self coming out. As they both want the pleasurable sensual feeling of love and to some extent, becomes a drug, where they are addicted and cannot find the

end. Madame Bovary and Flaubert both have two lovers. Madame Bovary's downfall was the amount she spent on her lovers which leads her into debt and Flaubert engaged in his studies and focused on his writing.

2. Beginnings

The beginning of the novel Charles is in school but is held back. It is not if it is the most horrific, or a quiet pleasurable moment in his life, but it would be the most rememberable moment in his life because he is at a school away from his family and he would be ridiculed consistently. At first, it seems as if Flaubert is starting from the beginning of Charles life because all the focus is on him but once he marries Emma, it is all about her. I do not understand why Flaubert started out this way because Charles is not the main character but is only an unimportant character that is just here from the beginning to the end.

It does not seem as if the novel was placed in such historical or momentous occasion because the author does not insinuate anything. All he does say that Emma admires Joan of Arc and worships Mary of Scots. (Flaubert, 32) In most part, the reason why the novel is not based off an important event is that the characters have nothing to do with the occurrence. It all has to do with the characters, their emotions, and their daily wrong doings. The novel is not like Ann Frank, where the whole story is based off a historical incident but it is more like the novel itself has its own history.

The " envelope" now makes the beginning of the novel more understandable. It is as if he is there from the beginning until the end.

Although he is in every one of the life situations, it does not directly involve him. Through all the pain and heartache, Charles remains the same. The book *Techniques in Fiction* explains why Flaubert included the early years of Charles and why they prolonged the ending. It was so show Charles stupidity from the beginning to the end and he still wonders why life has put him through all this. He still is unable to acknowledge that his wife has put him through all this pain and that " Only fate is to blame". (Flaubert, 302)

Charles as a schoolboy is not any different from Charles as an adult. Both have the sense of idiocy all through out the novel. As the other school children ridicule him, it has not changed in his adult years. Emma is derides Charles not in his face as the school children did but in a secretive sort of way by having an affair with other men and by breaking the sacred vows of marriage.

I would have to say that the novel is low beginning because it makes us more comfortable to get into the story and it does not have an intense moment where it makes us uneasy such as a melodramatic storm. (TIF, 50) Having included Charles and his early school years makes us at ease and more familiar to the story line on what is going to happen when.

3. Style and Speech

" Every writer, by the way he uses the language, reveals something of his spirit, his habits, his capacities, his bias." (TIF, 55) The way Flaubert wrote revealed himself, the good and the bad, through the characters and events. He depicted himself through Madame Bovary, showed the world his real self

and not just a façade. His need for love, compassion and the fond of the arts were shown to the readers as Madame Bovary.

The uses of metaphors are in the most common way unlike Alexander Theroux's novel *The Wogs* where he uses a profuse amount of metaphors in one paragraph. Flaubert uses the metaphors to clarify or to detail something, " we would throw them [caps] under the bench so hard that they struck the wall and raised a cloud of dust..." (MB, 2) To make the scene seem more interesting Flaubert would transition very well from writing without any literary devices to adding metaphors without a notice. This did not make the novel seem awkward at all but make it flow through very nicely.

The way Flaubert added any dialogue made it as if any person would say such thing or he would make it seem so poetic it would seem so romantic. Flaubert made Charles' dialogue seem so dull like his character and Emma is so versatile. She would speak one way to Charles and another way to the pharmacist. Flaubert would make each of the characters had their own way of speaking as if the characters were alive and had their own personality and style.

Flaubert follows the outline in *Techniques in Fiction* not perfectly but it does seem as if he tried. I know the outline was not used when Flaubert wrote this novel but it just shows how well of an author he is. The principles stated in the *Techniques in Fiction* are followed by Flaubert in *Madame Bovary*. There maybe a slight exception but that is very rare and most of the time the outline is followed.

The manner in which Flaubert uses attribution is as the book puts it, where each character should have its own way of talking. The dialogue is not he said, she said because the dialogue is with emotion, " she exclaimed in surprise." (MB, 120)

4. Characterization

The characters display a certain consistency, even though they are subject to change. Like Charles is the kind of character that remains the same throughout the entire novel, unlike Emma who is the kind of character that is all innocent in the beginning and then come to a bigger city, becomes brash. Only Emma is the character that changes but the rest of the minor characters remain the same.

The way the characters are depicted in the novel is not that descriptive but they are portrayed in the way they talk amongst themselves or by the way the other characters see them. The way Emma is first described for the first time when Charles first sees her. " Her hair was divided into two sections by a fine part running down the middle of her head; ..." (MB, 13) Charles is described by the author as " a country boy, about fifteen, taller than all of us". (MB, 1) When the characters meet each other the description runs in the thought of their heads.

The use of expression, habits, gestures and movements are used very selectively for each character to make them seem alive. "... he had outbursts of anger, followed by plaintive moans of infinite sweetness and the notes that pored from his bare throat were full of sobs and kisses." (MB, 193) The

expressions are used mostly describe the feelings for each other and their passionate quarrel or when Emma gets annoyed of Charles.

Just off the dialogue, the behavioral status of the characters can be shown such as Emma and her attitude towards her husband Charles. " Ah, he carries a knife in his pocket, like a peasant." (MB, 88) It can also show the love for the lovers in the affair. Just of the dialogue the characters show if they respect and love the other person or if they just show off as if they actually do care but they really do not.

The way each of the characters speak is as if they have a mind of their own. Flaubert would make each of the characters had their own way of speaking as if the characters were alive and had their own personality and style. Emma would talk with hate to Charles and Berthe but with respect and compassion to the apothecary, the pharmacist and especially the men she is fond of, Rodolphe and Leon.

They each have a different personality so it would just make sense if they talked differently. The attitude that each character has towards themselves is honorable. Emma has that sense of respect but also an impression of arrogance, the way she would end up in debt even after the bills had been loaned to her.

They do not quarrel but they get along by going to their neighbors houses at night after dinner, or in Emma's case, to her lover's house. The way she has to go to his house secretly by following " the walls that ran along the water's

edge". (MB, 141) The character past comes in the beginning of the novel to show us what their personality is going to be like when they are introduced.

5. Point of View

The point of view tells us from which perspective is the story being told.

There may be ten different characters that means there would be ten different perceptions. The author has to decide in which perspective they would like the story to be told from because each of the characters has a different outlook and opinion on the predicament. There might be a character that is almost invisible that can see everything, feel the characters emotions and clarify those sensations into the story, like the narrator in Madame Bovary.

6. Background; Setting; Place; Milieu

As the story is placed in France during time that Gustave Flaubert is in, makes the story seem more reasonable since that Flaubert actually knows what is happening during the time. It is as if he has had some personal experiences. At first Charles is in a school because the country did not have the education that his parents wanted. It went on from there, the setting is still in France but it went from the country to a city back to the country and back to the city. Once Charles got his professional degree, he moved in to a village sort of place, Tostes, where he married an old widow. Then he goes to a farm where Emma lives. They marry and stay at Tostes until there is a proposition in Rouen. The couple only stays in Tostes for about 2 years. That

is where the rest of the story is, where Emma transforms from an innocent farm girl to a lust driven woman.

7. Narrative Style: Time and Pace in Fiction

Flaubert told the story in a very reasonable fashion. He did not speed up quickly and leave out details nor did he go too slow and let each scene drag on. Each scene was perfectly proportional to the amount of dialogue and the narration. Each scene shows what is happening and is not leaving anything out like behavior, attitude, etc. Each scene coincides with each other; it does not seem out of place compared to the other. Flaubert also does not have the narrator state something and the character does it, but he lets the readers find out eventually. It does not seem as if Flaubert made a plan or had a certain strategy on how to write the novel. Out of the four techniques that most authors use to sum up the storyline, Flaubert uses several separate scenes with narration going along with it. Having too much dialogue would dull the novel a little because the novel is mostly about Emma and the emotion she has.

Time is very effective in the novel because it uses flashbacks in the beginning of the novel not confusing the readers and each time Emma remembers her life in Les Bertaux but as a mere remembrance. (MB, 44) The time scale is very effective in the sense that the story takes place in many years and it is not all cluttered up in to one day like Classical Literature. Having the time in that way helps build up the story and make it go on easily without any awkwardness.

The novel is written in a present past tense, where the action has already taken place when the narrator is describing the scene, " But Charles replied that they were leaving the following day". (MB, 198) if it was all in present tense it would not make sense because the setting and time is in the past around the late 19th century. Having it in the present past makes it seem more like a movie in the reader's mind, making the story more imaginative.

8. Plot and Story

Some people would say that the plot and the story are interchangeable but the plot is the only thing the readers are interested in because it brings in suspense while the story is the whole account where it has all the minor details and a whole cluster of facts.

The classical approach to writing a plot is to have description and background information, then to have the rising action in which the problem will derive from and after all that, the crisis. From there the character realizes there is a problem and then the catastrophe. Now here is the Madame Bovary plot summary in the classic approach. Emma is country born but reared in the city. She later marries a prosperous doctor but the only problem is that she does not love him. They move to Rouen and his practice is even more affluent. She realizes that she has feelings for her neighbor's younger roommate. One day she meets a very charming man and soon they start to have an affair. Things get to intense and he leaves. She secretly has an affair with her neighbor's roommate. She spends more and more money on him and their " home". Soon she is too in debt and she must pay it all back

to the "loan officer". She does not have enough money by the deadline so she decides to kill herself.

Now the practical solution for a plot seems more reasonable than the classic approach that Aristotle had conceived. There is a problem, the crisis deepens, then the problem is recognized and after that, the world is changed, for the better or for the worse.

It is somewhat ironic that Emma has cheated on her husband and she has hit a dead end, she has nowhere to go and her status has been stripped from her, no wonder she decided to kill herself. There is no explanation for Charles to treat her like a goddess even what she has put him through.

When Emma first felt something for Leon, which was the first sign that something was going to happen. Whenever Charles gives something to her, she acts as if it is not good enough for her but she keeps on spending money on herself and not anyone else, even her own daughter.

When Madame Bovary dies, it was a bit of a shock because she wanted to live in riches and show Rouen what she really is about, but after her scandal came public, that must have put a deep hole in her reputation. There was not a real surprise end because Charles says numerous times that he could not live without Emma and when he did die of grief, it was sad for them to leave their daughter as an orphan.

This novel definitely had a double plot because of the affairs and the debt she keeps digging deeper into. When she had her first affair with Rodolphe, I was sure that she was going to get caught but she was saved. That did not

stop her though. She had feelings for Leon and she made sure that they would spend time together at least once a week. Each time she lied, she had to lie again to cover up the previous lies and all she ended up in was a huge web of lies that she got confused in.

Flaubert did not complete all of the checkpoints in Techniques in Fiction because they all do not apply to every novel but they include every novel. Each novel has a different genre and each genre has different expectations. In each genre, there are sub genres and they require to have certain things.

9. Organic Form and Final Meaning

Flaubert is an emotional person who does not give a care about the world and what they think about him and his novel. He never wrote the book for the shameless readers but the idealists who have the sense of modernization. His views of the "modern" world are quite different from the idealist that the world really was not modern but it was only in our heads and that technology has increased world knowledge. His writing techniques and the need for perfection; The methods in which he reaches perfection is not of normal people, he boasts out loud for hours until it sounds the way he needs it to sound. He wanted to be known for his perfection and not how he modernized the world. Gustave Flaubert is a realist who is infatuated with perfection and style.

Flaubert wanted to show society what they were really about but he did not want to make it complicated by explaining it so he showed it through his characters. He wanted to make an impact on culture and not just another

reading book. One of the reasons why this novel is faithful is because he grew up at the height of the romance movement and that is how the people of civilization behaved. Gustave believed that the personality and style of the author must vanish into the book and the book must not lose its originality. He deemed that style was impersonal and it is unique in the sense that expressing things are intensified in color.

Who would think that to take the dreariest setting, the prettiest characters, and the most common to would make a masterpiece? All of these symbols: the knife, the silly cap, cigar case, all encompassed who Charles really was, a lowly doctor with no individuality. The way Flaubert included the "small, ignoble Venice" of the river in Rouen and the pimples on his first wife's face was like "the budding of spring" made the scene more interesting making his style more impressive and ideal. The way Emma sees Charles as the dorky village doctor, and how the children say as unromantic, clearly shows the lack of respect she has for him, his entire life is devoted to her. To show that even cared he forgave her lover saying that it was destiny that choose its path. The way Flaubert embraced Charles and his affection to his daughter Berthe has included a bit of himself and his care for his motherless niece.

Madame Bovary is a historicist fallacy because the readers judge the book because of the time it was written in and what the time and setting is. Flaubert did not want deal with the lawsuits and the modernization of France. All he wanted to do was put out in words what societies doing. His need for

perfection really made him strive for the perfect sound. He would work for hours on days until he could find that one word that drove him crazy.