

Women's rights come to a halt : madame bovary

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As soon as Eve was created from the rib of Adam, women have been struggling to achieve the same rights as men. As time has gone on, women have been able to make great strides in the way they are compared to men, in particular the Industrial Revolution and realism period lead to great equality strides for women. As the Industrial Revolution, and realism began to emerge in the 19th century, women were starting to develop their own ideas and opinions on how to behave.

In Flaubert's novel, *Madame Bovary*, he warned women that if you step outside of your gender roles, only bad things are bound to happen, thus working to stop women's rights. Throughout the novel, gender roles are clearly set for both men, and women. Men are seen as more capable, worthy, and just overall better humans compared to women. Women have little to no say in how their lives are ran, which is clearly shown when Emma's father decides that "'If [Charles] asks for her,' he said to himself, ' I'll give her to [Charles].'" (16) Emma's father is the one who gets to choose his daughter's fate, rather than her. Even when wedding arrangements are being made Emma has no say in the matter because " Emma would, on the contrary, have preferred to have a midnight wedding with torches, but old Rouault could not understand such an idea. "(17) Women are depicted as being incapable of making life choices, so they need to be behind a man who is able to be their voice and make decisions for them. Women have also been put into the position of being a housewife.

The role of a woman is to care for her home, husband, and children. When Emma wants to step out of her gender role, she then asks "'Have I not my house to look after, my husband to attend to, a thousand things, in fact,

many duties that must be considered first? ” (74) That then brings it to her attention that she must stick to the way society is structured for women. When Madame Bovary decides to follow her gender role she does so by “[taking] interest in the housework, [going] to church regularly, and [looking] after her servant with more severity. (75) Even the way to dress, and how a homemaker represented herself was determined by society as “a good housewife does not trouble about her appearance. ” (75) Emma fulfills her role as a woman by imitating the ideal housewife, which is to be religious, and to care about everyone other than herself. There is nothing more imperative than to please your husband, if you wish to play your role in society, in which Emma did so by making sure that “ when Charles came home he found his slippers put to warm near the fire.

His waistcoat now never wanted lining, not his shirt buttons, and it was write a pleasure to see in the cupboard the nightcaps arranged in piles of the same height. ” (75) It was seen that a woman was put on this Earth to please her husband, and children and by not doing so was simply unacceptable. Children are also a big part of a woman's life, because children can only be produced by a women, and it is their duty to care, and love them.

As Emma was trying to convey the perfect woman “ she declared she adored children; this was her consolation, her joy, her passion, and she accompanied her caresses with lyrical outburst which would have reminded any one but the Yonville people of Sachette in ‘ Notre Dame de Paris’ ” (75) When Madame Bovary would fulfill her duties as a wife, “ the housewives [would admire] her economy, the patients her politeness, the poor her charity. ”(76)

Proving that when you behave, as how you should you will be recognized as a good person.

The way to behave as a woman is clearly defined, and it is stressed how important it is to do what you are told. As the role of a woman became very evident in the time of realism, it was crucial to not stray away from the guidelines put in place by society. Emma Bovary had little regard for how to behave, and it was evident in the way she conducted her personal life. Madame Bovary cheated on her husband with two different men, and virtually hated Charles. She also takes it upon herself to handle the family finances, which would normally be a man's job.

Emma throws herself into a secret relationship with Leon, and after only knowing him for a short amount of time " she was in love with Leon, and sought solitude that she might with the more ease delight in his image. "(76) Just by falling in love with another man, sets Emma Bovary apart from her social class. Not only does Emma fall in love with Leon, but also in the later part of their relationship she deceives Charles and makes it possible to sneak away from her home to go to be with Leon.

Emma complains about losing her talent on the piano so Charles tells her ' If you liked,' he said, ' A lesson from time to time, that wouldn't after all be very ruinous. ' ' But lessons,' she replied, ' are only of use when followed up. ' And thus it was she set about obtaining her husband's permission to go to town once a week to see her lover. At the end of a month she was even considered to have made considerable progress. (184) Emma has no regard for how husband may have felt about Emma's second life, and to even have

a life outside of your home life is completely stepping outside of your gender role.

Madame Bovary also has another affair with a man named Rodolphe. This affair was purely superficial as far as Rodolphe was concerned, but to Emma it was more than that. Once again, she is betraying her husband and falling out of her gender role. Emma loves Rodolphe and every time they see each other, she is ready to show only affection towards him. Even after when Charles had a terrible day of attempting to fix clubfoot of Hippolyte Emma still chooses to be with Rodolphe, so much so that " when Rodolphe came to the garden that evening, he found his mistress waiting for him at the foot of the steps on the lowest stair.

They threw their arms round one another, and all their rancor melted like snow beneath the warmth of that kiss. " (131) As the relationship with Rodolphe progresses, Emma begins to have no concern to how she acts in public. Due to the adultery happening in Emma's life she begins to resent Charles even more than one thought possible. She begins to enjoy being an adulterous woman, that when she reflects upon her life she reveled in all the evil ironies of triumphant adultery.

The memory of her lover came back to her with dazzling attractions, she threw her whole soul into it, borne away towards this image with fresh enthusiasm; and Charles seemed to her as much removed from her life, as absent forever, as impossible and annihilated, as if he had been about to die and were passing under her eyes. (130) All of her happiness comes from one man, and she is only content when she is shying away from Charles, and not

being a proper woman. Finances were also left up to the men, since they were the breadwinners of for their family.

Emma Bovary defies the norm, when Lheureux talks her into taking power of attorney. He tells Emma that "[Charles] would do better to give it over to some one else- to you, for example. With a power of attorney it could be easily managed, and then (you and I) would have our little business transactions together. '" (179) She fooled Charles into letting her have that power by "[quoting] technical terms casually, [pronouncing] the grand words of ' order', ' the future', ' foresight' and constantly [exaggerating] the difficulties of settling his father's affairs". 180) Emma takes Lheureux up on his offer, in order to be able to go behind her husbands back more efficiently, and to also prove that no gender role will be set upon her. Due to Emma defying every restriction put against her as a woman, she is punished on every account. Madame Bovary is left with no hope by the end of the novel, which causes her to poison herself with arsenic. Emma, and Leon are doomed from the start. Leon is a rather shy man, and she is a rather taken woman. Even while they are together Emma becomes discontent in the relationship.

Though "[s]he was in love with Leon, and she sought solitude because it allowed her to revel in thoughts of him at leisure. His actual presence disturbed the voluptuous pleasure of her reveries. Her heart palpitated at the sound of his footsteps, but her agitation always began to subside as soon as he appeared, and she was left with nothing but deep astonishment which eventually turned to sadness. " (76) Rather than truly being in love with Leon she merely is in love with the idea of Leon.

Madame Bovary's relationship with Leon falls to pieces, as she becomes dissatisfied with him, and jealous over him when he was forced to spend time with Homais rather than her. The relationship was a wreck to begin with, and Emma's punishment is basically an unhappy ending with the one she dared love. The same goes for her relationship with Rodolphe, it was disastrous. From the very start, Rodolphe was only attracted to Emma physically. When he first came saw Emma his immediate reaction was " Poor woman! She's gasping for love like a carp gasping for water on a kitchen table.

A few sweet words and she'd adore me, I'm sure of it! She'd be affectionate, charming [...] Yes, but how could I get rid of her later? " (92) Rodolphe was never in the relationship for the long haul, even though he could clearly see that Emma was. When it was time for Emma and Rodolphe to run away together " he wished to have two more weeks before to arrange some affairs; then at the end of a week he wanted two more; then he said he was ill; next her went on a journey. " (139) He would just make excuses, because he knew that he really did not love Emma.

The relationship takes a turn on Madame Bovary and it ends up changing her. Instead of being the free, and independent woman she tried to portray "[Rodolphe] made her into something compliant and corrupt. She remained under the influence of a kind of idiotic infatuation, full of admiration for him and sensuality for herself, a blissful torpor; and her soul, sinking into that intoxication, shriveled and drowned like the Duke of Clarence in his butt of malmsey. " (134) Emma puts all of her happiness in this unaccepted

relationship that ultimately leads Rodolphe to break things off with her, leaving Emma broken.

Lheureux also punishes Emma, in the way that the draper fools her into becoming in so much debt that she would never be able to pay it all back. The draper takes advantage of gender roles, by assuming that women are ignorant fools when it comes to finances. Throughout the whole novel, Lheureux offers Emma many gifts that she accepts. She is unaware that a hefty bill will come for her, that she must pay back. When the bill finally does come Emma pities herself, and she still goes to borrow even more money from the notary. No amount of pleading with Lheureux could get her off the hook.

As Emma comes to bargain with the draper the conversation went as " But if I bought you several thousand francs- a quarter of the sum- a third- perhaps the whole? " " No; it's no use! " And he pushed her gently towards the staircase. " I implore you, Monsieur Lheureux, just a few days more! " She was sobbing. " There! tears now! " " You are driving me to despair! " " What do I care? " said he, shutting the door. (208) When she finally loses control of all of her money, she resorts to prostitution, and even begs Leon, and Rodolphe for the money she owes. When she cannot get the money, her life is put into despair.

Suicide is her last resort, in which she poisons herself. Each time Madame Bovary decided to become more independent and to make her own decisions, it always came back to haunt her. Both of the adulterous relationships come to ruins, and she completely obliterates all of the household money. Flaubert's sent out a warning to readers, that if you <https://assignbuster.com/womens-rights-come-to-a-halt-madame-bovary/>

behave as Emma did, trying to step outside of your gender role, then you will be punished rather than rewarded. By showing a punishment, it led women to stay conformed, and to not go out and advance women's rights.