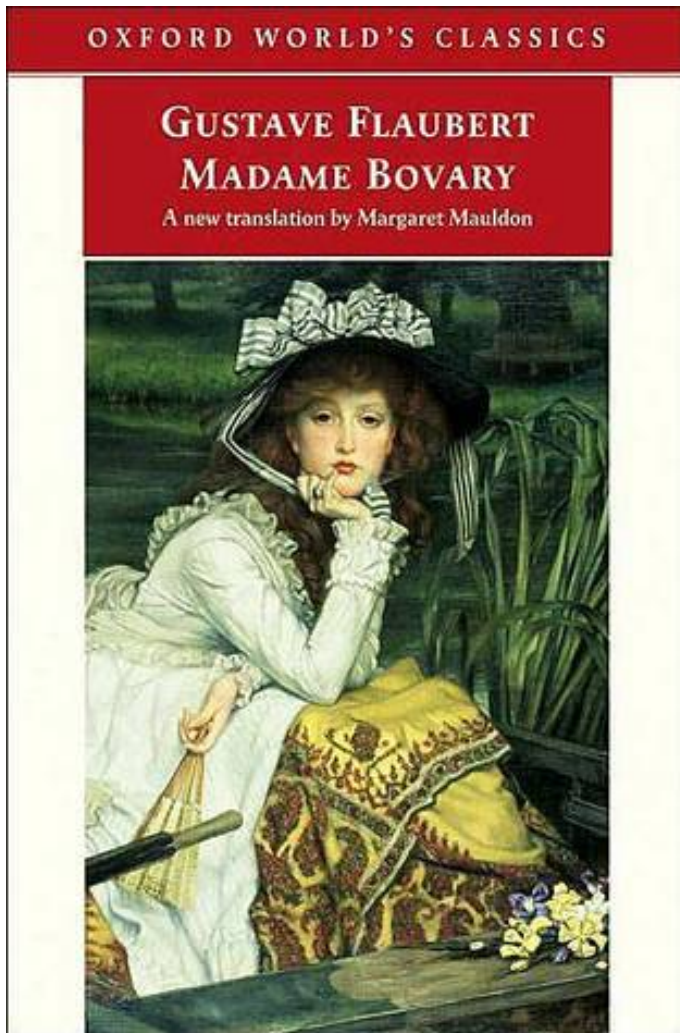

Gustave Flaubert

Madame Bovary



Title: Madame Bovary

Author: Gustave Flaubert

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Description

When Emma Rouault marries Charles Bovary she imagines she will pass into the life of luxury and passion that she reads about in sentimental novels and women's magazines. But Charles is a dull country doctor, and provincial life is very different from the romantic excitement for which she yearns. In her quest to realize her dreams she takes a lover, and begins a devastating spiral into deceit and despair.

Flaubert's novel scandalized its readers when it was first published in 1857, and it remains unsurpassed in its unveiling of character and society.

Insightful reviews

Riku Sayuj:

Madame Bovary & The Science of Adultery

Some universal features stand out when we talk of the human mating system.

1. First, women most commonly seek monogamous marriage—even in societies that allow polygamy. Rare exceptions notwithstanding, they want to choose carefully and then, as long as he remains worthy, monopolize a man for life, gain his assistance in rearing the children, and perhaps even die with him.
2. Second, women do not seek sexual variety per se. There are exceptions, of course, but fictional and real women regularly deny that nymphomania holds any attraction for them, and there is no reason to disbelieve them. The temptress interested in a one-night stand with a man whose name she does not know is a fantasy fed by male pornography. Lesbians, free of constraints imposed by male nature, do not suddenly indulge in sexual promiscuity; on the contrary, they are remarkably monogamous. None of this is surprising: Female animals gain little from sexual opportunism, for their reproductive ability is limited not by how many males they mate with but how long it takes to bear offspring. In this respect men and women are very different.
3. But third, women are sometimes unfaithful. Not all adultery is caused by men. Though she may rarely or never be interested in casual sex with a male prostitute or a stranger, a woman, in life as in soap operas, is perfectly capable of accepting or provoking an offer of an affair with one man whom she knows, even if she is “happily” married at the time. This is a paradox.

It can be resolved in one of three ways:

1. We can blame adultery on men, asserting that the persuasive powers of seducers will always win some hearts, even the most reluctant. Call this the “Dangerous Liaisons” explanation.
2. Or we can blame it on modern society and say that the frustrations and complexities of modern life, of unhappy marriages and so on, have upset the natural pattern and introduced an

alien habit into human females. Call this the “Dallas” explanation.

3. Or we can suggest that there is some valid biological reason for seeking sex outside marriage without abandoning the marriage—some instinct in women not to deny themselves the option of a sexual “plan B” when plan A does not work out so well. Call this the “Emma Bovary” strategy.

The “Emma Bovary” strategy.

It takes two hands to clap, as the old saying goes among men when blamed for being adulterous by nature.

And knowing the evolutionary logic, we have to ask: **What’s in it for the women?**

For the males it is obvious enough: Adulterers father more young. But it is not at all clear why the female is so often unfaithful. Birkhead and Møller, in their experiments, rejected several suggestions: that she is adulterous because of a genetic side effect of the male adulterous urge, that she is ensuring some of the sperm she gets is fertile, that she is bribed by the philandering males (as seems to be the case in some human and ape societies). None of these fit the exact facts. Nor did it quite work to blame her infidelity on a desire for genetic variety. There seems to be little point in having more varied children than she would have anyway.

Birkhead and Møller were left with the belief that females benefit from being promiscuous because it enables them to have their genetic cake and eat it—to follow the Emma Bovary strategy.

A female needs a husband who will help look after her young, but she might be unlucky and might find all the best husbands taken. Her best tactic is therefore to mate with a mediocre husband or a husband with a good social position/job/inheritance and have an affair with a genetically superior neighbor.

This theory is supported by the facts: Females always choose more dominant, older, or more “attractive” lovers than their husbands; they do not have affairs with bachelors (presumably rejects) but with other females’ husbands; and they sometimes incite competition between potential lovers and choose the winners.

Baker and Bellis, in their experimental results, do not claim to have found more than a tantalizing hint that this is so, but they have tried to measure the extent of cuckoldry in human beings. In a block of flats in Liverpool, they found by genetic tests that fewer than four in every five people were the sons of their ostensible fathers. In case this had something to do with Liverpool, they did the same tests in southern England and got the same result. Like birds, women may be—quite unconsciously—having it both ways by conducting affairs with genetically more valuable men while not leaving their husbands.

In short, the reason adultery is so common is that it enables a male to have more young and enables a female to have better young.

[One of the most curious results to come out of bird studies in recent years has been the discovery that “attractive” males make inattentive fathers. Nancy Burley, whose zebra finches consider one another more or less attractive according to the color of their leg bands, first noticed this, and Anders Moller has since found it to be true of swallows as well. When a female mates with an attractive male, he works less hard and she works harder at bringing up the young. It is as if he feels that he has done her a favor by providing superior genes and therefore expects her to repay him with harder work around the nest. This, of course, increases her incentive to find a mediocre but hardworking husband and cuckold him by having an affair with a superstud next door.]

In any case, the principle—marry a nice guy but have an affair with your boss or marry a rich but ugly man and take a handsome lover—is not unknown among female human beings. It is called having your cake and eating it, too. Flaubert’s Emma Bovary wanted to keep both her handsome lover and her wealthy husband. It might not always work out along the evolutionary plan...

~ adapted wholesale from Matt Ridley’s discussion of adultery among birds in [The Red Queen: Sex and the Evolution of Human Nature](#)

Ahmed:

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Richard Reviles Censorship Always in All Ways: BkC153) Flaubert, Gustave, [MADAME BOVARY] (tr. Lydia Davis): Classic novel, deathless. Sorta like a literary zombie.

Rating: 3* of five

The Book DescriptionAs if one is really necessary. Well, here it is:

A literary event: one of the world's most celebrated novels, in a magnificent new translation.

Seven years ago, Lydia Davis brought us an award-winning, rapturously reviewed new translation of Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way* that was hailed as "clear and true to the music of the original" (*Los Angeles Times*) and "a work of creation in its own right" (Claire Messud, *Newsday*). Now she turns her gifts to the book that redefined the novel as an art form.

Emma Bovary is the original desperate housewife. Beautiful but bored, she is married to the provincial doctor Charles Bovary yet harbors dreams of an elegant and passionate life. Escaping into sentimental novels, she finds her fantasies dashed by the tedium of her days. Motherhood proves to be a burden; religion is only a brief distraction. In an effort to make her life everything she believes it should be, she spends lavishly on clothes and on her home and embarks on two disappointing affairs. Soon heartbroken and crippled by debts, Emma takes drastic action with tragic consequences for her husband and daughter.

When published in 1857, *Madame Bovary* was deemed so lifelike that many women claimed they were the model for its heroine. Today the novel is considered the first masterpiece of realist fiction. Flaubert sought to tell the story objectively, without romanticizing or moralizing (hence the uproar surrounding its publication), but whereas he was famously fastidious about his literary style, many of the English versions seem to tell the story in their own style. In this landmark translation, Lydia Davis honors the nuances and particulars of a style that has long beguiled readers of French, giving new life in English to Flaubert's masterwork.

My Review Realism à la Balzac gets a hefty infusion of Romanticism. The novel will always be very important for this reason. It was Flaubert's trial for obscenity, due to his authorial refusal to explicitly condemn Emma Bovary for adultery, that opened the floodgates of "immoral" realistic fiction. If anyone needs any further reason to read the book, it's also got some juicy Faustian bargaining in it. Plus everybody dies. (Srsly how can anything about this famous book be a spoiler? Don't complain to me about it.)

So the review is really about this translation by Lydia Davis. She's alleged to have done a fabulous, marvelous job.

Uh huh.

Then, in sudden tenderness and discouragement, Charles turned to his wife, saying:

"Kiss me, my dear!"

"Leave me alone!" she said, red with anger.

"What is it? What is it?" he said, stupefied. "Calm yourself! Don't be upset!...You know how much I love you!...Come to me!"

"Stop!" she shouted with a terrible look.

(Part II, ch.8)

Literal translation isn't always the best. Can you, like me, hear the nails and smell the sawdust as this wooden edifice is erected? Can you, like me, feel the uncertain sway of the uneven floorboards as we ascend ever farther up Flaubert's towering if creaky scaffolding?

A well-furnished mind has *Bovary* in it. Unless you want to slug through the mannered 19th-century French, or have a high tolerance for sawdusty English prose, I'd say do the Cliffs Notes and call it good.

DeLaina: this can be one of many books that has had a profound impression on my life. The moral? be at liberty with what you may have and the place you are!!! Mme. Bovary fritters away

her complete lifestyles with suggestions of, "If in basic terms X may happen, THEN i'll be really happy" and but she by no means is. She will get every thing she thinks she desires basically to determine she's nonetheless now not content. I learn this whereas i used to be engaged and on the time, thought, "Well, i will be happier whilst i am married, yet as soon as I am, then lifestyles could be fabulous". After many years i discovered myself taking part in an analogous function as Mme. Bovary: "Once i will get pregnant and feature kids, then i will be happy"; "Once i am not pregnant and ill anymore, THEN i will be able to be happy"; "Once we get out of this condominium and into our house, then i'll without doubt be happy"; "Once the newborn begins dozing during the night, i will certainly be happy"; "Once the infant is out of diapers...etc. etc. advert nauseum...literally! I are looking to be content material with my circumstances, no matter what they could be, and Mme. Bovary is a reminder of what occurs to people who are not able to discover contentment within the journey, and are always looking another unsatisfying destination.

Garima: Her too-lofty dreams, her too-narrow house. We meet and greet different types of people; we greet and skim differing types of books. final year, I had the excitement of assembly Ms. Jane Eyre. along with her modest goals and dignified living, it used to be effortless to just accept and love her. She used to be faraway from ideal yet there has been infrequently a specific thing i might have replaced approximately her. A fictional personality of literature exemplifying the virtuous aspect of genuine existence yet she was once now not alone. there have been another characters surrounding Jane who definitely struck a chord with me however the track therefore created used to be no longer a calming melody. The smug methods of Reed cousins and the vindictive streak in Bertha Mason's love symbolized an uncongenial international which held inside it afflictive yet proper stories. in a single such tale this year, I met Emma. yet shouldn't a guy recognize everything, excel at a number of other activities, begin you into the intensities of passion, the refinements of life, all its mysteries? but this guy taught her nothing, knew nothing, needed for nothing. He notion she was once happy; and he or she resented him for that settled calm, that ponderous serenity, that very happiness which she herself introduced him. The Bored and Beautiful, Madame Bovary. all of us most likely recognize her. That naive little woman who doesn't savor the toy in her arms simply because one other baby owns a man-made yet glittering tiara. That reckless younger girl who jots down a listing of inordinate whims that may culminate right into a wonderful fortunately Ever After whilst time comes. That unlucky mature girl who eventually realizes the vacuity of her air castles while it's too late. Emma whereas unmarried had mind's eye and anticipation; Ms. Bovary whereas married had perversity and passion. It used to be tough to like and settle for her yet that's accurately what I did- with a bit aid from Flaubert's fantastic writing and a bit support from the realm round me. Love and its vicious pleasures don't spare anyone. these pleasures whilst grew to become within out, occasionally take the form of everlasting sufferings too. the variation in all probability lies within the vacuum created out of being in love and the belief of being in love. either might be deadly yet i need to think that the latter is anything that's absolute to make someone delusional approximately oneself and everybody around. Emma attempted to shape a derisory bridge from her suggestion too, in a wish to arrive an unknown vacation spot she frequently learn in her books yet finally she suffered too. the place may possibly she have realized this depravity, so deep and so dissembled that it was once nearly incorporeal? Why, from this society only. A society which prospers upon exhibiting its pretentious happiness and insists on concealing the perpetual sadness. A society which regularly invent methods of piling

up the debt upon someone else whereas donning the sham of welfare. A society the place one other Madame Bovary, Emma's mother-in-law, silently accepts her fateful marriage. Amidst these kinds of lies, it's no ask yourself that Emma realized anything which used to be no longer worthy studying at all. Flaubert, via his omniscience narration hasn't handed any judgment or jumped to futile conclusions here. He has easily acknowledged how humans behavior their lives while materialism involves the leading edge of one's mind. Love is going to hell in such cases. She was once the loved of each novel, the heroine of each drama, the obscure she of each quantity of poetry. Ah! The irony.

Shannon: Why are the entire "great classics" lead by way of famed woman heroines all too usually approximately own freedom via technique of sexual compromise resulting in abject distress and supreme demise? I detect it is a correct depiction of tradition and times, even if why are Bovary and Moll Flanders the memorable matriarchs of vintage literature? See my remark at the Awakening for comparable frustrations. Why aren't there extra works approximately powerful girls creating a distinction of their personal lives if no longer these in their households and communities? Why should not we having younger ladies learn a piece or 2 portraying a robust lady who does not prove having an affair, committing suicided, or differently screwing up her personal existence and the lives of others as she sinks to the ground the place she necessarily belonged? the place are the strong, sentient heroines who may make feminists glance somewhat clever and/or inspirational?

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