

CHAPTER IV

THE ANALYSIS OF SOCIETY IN MADAME BOVARY

Since literature represents life in which life is a social reality, so that the discussion of society in literary product must be closely related with the society in real life.

In the Theory of Literature, it is stated that “the relation between literature and society is usually discussed by starting with the phrase, derived from De Bonald, that literature is an expression of society” (Wellek and Warren 95). It can be assumed that literature depicts some aspects of social reality, here is the social reality at the time and place where Flaubert lived.

In order to get a better understanding about the adultery and suicide that Emma Bovary committed, it is necessary to get to know about the French society in 19th century at the time when Flaubert lived. In Madame Bovary, Flaubert wrote about a woman from middle-class that is so-called bourgeoisie, who strove to be in higher position. The analysis of French society at 19th century and a bit of French history will make a good contribution to the analysis of the romantic longing of Emma Bovary that would bring her to commit adultery and suicide. The analysis of the real French society will clarify the matter of bourgeoisie society where Emma

lived as well as the contribution of the church and the people surround her; it will show how bourgeoisie society bored her.

A. The French Society In General

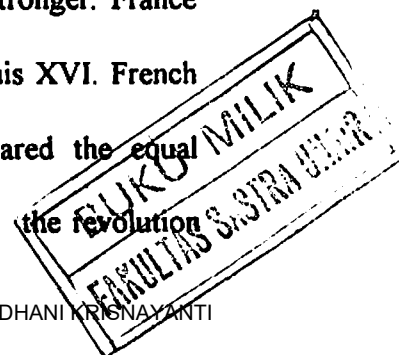
France is the largest nation in Western Europe and the most powerful country in Europe. French civilisation, represented by its language, art, literature, music, philosophy and manner set a standard that other countries followed. Most people in France are the members of Roman Catholic Church, but there are also many Protestants, Jews, Muslim, and other religion. At eighteenth century church had a very close relation with the government at the time.

French people are very busy; they balance their hard working by spent their spare time in a cafe to chat, while the young people get together with their companions to share the latest topics. The scene are also included in Flaubert's Madame Bovary; the conversation in the afternoon between Homais the apothecary, Charles and Emma Bovary, Leon, and others in the inn.

Some people in France enjoy to see the very old and the very new places. Almost all of French history can be traced through some monument, church, or ancient ruin. The city is full of museums, churches, and monuments such as Louvre Museum, Notre Dame Cathedral, and The Arch

of Triumph. In Madame Bovary, it is ironic that the sacred and beautiful place such as the cathedral was used by Emma and Leon to do the improper thing such as the flirtation and the beginning of the adultery that they would commit.

French is composed from a mixture of different people from many lands. There were hundred years wars with many conflicts followed; the intruders from Germany and Muslims from Spain, for instance. The first years of French history is ruled by the kings. In the 16th century a religious revolt known as the Reformation was spreading across western Europe. The unity of the Roman Catholic was challenged by the growth of the new Protestant religion. For nearly 30 years there were civil wars between the two opposites. There were many kings ruled France one by one. There were good kings who ruled France wisely, but there were also the bad kings whose rules made the people suffer by the purchasing of their property using people's money. The wise king was such as Henry IV (1589) who ruled France with the wisdom and gave the Protestants freedom of worship within certain cities. There were also indecent kings that brought France into destruction. As the result, the demands for reform grew stronger. France sank deeply in debt under the power of Louis XV and Louis XVI. French Revolution (1789) did away the special privileges. It declared the equal rights of all people and set up a limited monarchy. After the revolution



France still underwent many intrigues which involving Napoleon; there were also Restoration and many kinds of republic that went with a different kind of style. Later on, Flaubert tend to use the historical remembrance of Napoleon, and the philosophical remarks of Voltaire in order to show how boring Homais speeches.. It is a contrast since the heroic of Napoleon was depicted in an Homais'clichee.

In every country, there were people who were neither noble nor wealthy but who were not farmers. This class, usually lived in rural villages or more often in the growing towns. At the top of non-noble group were the people who were very influential such as great financier, wealthy merchants, important lawyers, and government officials. In Madame Bovary, there are sort of people, such as Lheureux (the financier/money lender who encouraged Emma to fall into debt), Homais (the apothecary who had a limited intellectual and poorly educated but his speeches cliché, full with self esteem and demonstrated all the limitation and prejudice of the new bourgeoisie), and Maitre Guillaumin (a lawyer whom Emma asked for help when she had to pay the debt). The bourgeoisie could afford the best education, they could travel, and they could show up in the society of the leaders. Bourgeoisie in Oxford Companion to English Literature for the term of economic refers to the "social and economic class embracing merchants, entrepreneurs, and townsmen who

derive income from commercial and industrial enterprises. In France, the term referred originally to the inhabitants of the walled towns in the Middle Ages. Those who belong to bourgeoisie society occupied an intermediate position in the economic and social scale between the landlord and peasantry (p. 302). Some were wealthy enough to live like a great nobles, sometimes marrying into noble families and acquiring landed states, such as Rudolphe was described by Flaubert in Madame Bovary. He was Emma's first lover who lived on his estate near Yonville. Though they could live properly, their status was the same as those who were poor. As stated in the Modern Times : The French Revolution to The Present, "The legal status of the bourgeoisie, however, was the same as that of the poorest peasants and town labourers; they were simply commoners. Above them in the social scale was the privileged class of nobles" (Hayes & Faissler 11). The superior position of aristocracy in 18th century society is hard to be comprehended. The aristocrats believed that their noble birth so far set them apart from other people. They would have shocked by the remark that all men are created equal. The wealth was inherited land estate, some other noble had more modest wealth, and some were no better than more prosperous peasants. The great nobles surrounded the kings and were everywhere regarded as the leader of the society, but even the poorest aristocrat claimed superiority to all non-nobles. Flaubert's Madame

Bovary represented those condition in a way that Emma Bovary, who came from bourgeoisie society, strove to be in higher position, such as Marquis d'Andervilliers, a nobleman who invited the Bovarys to a ball at La Vaubyessard, his chateau which Emma Bovary would not forget it.

If in eighteenth century there were many bourgeoisie class working in the industrial cities as the results of industrial revolution between 1830-1870, in the middle of nineteenth century the bourgeoisie class was likely to be in full charge of his own business.

In term of literary, France could be the one that set the standart of literary. In eighteenth century, there was the era of enlightenment which emphasis the power of human reason, and natural law. At the era, Voltaire and Rousseau was the prominent philosophers. Voltaire wrote many literary forms such as letters, poems, plays, and attacks on the wrong of the day. His ironical writing had attack the social custom of the time. Rousseau mostly wrote about criticism of society were based on belief that all men have a right to equality with others, and have the right to be respected citizens of the country in which they live.

The last years of eighteenth century and the first years of nineteenth century was the age of Romanticism. The romantic writers no longer thought the world as a great power operated by natural laws of science and society. They revealed the beauty of nature, they emphasised the

importance of human emotions and feelings, and their writings mostly related to religion. The romanticism era declined when the era of realism took place in literary writing. French revolution (1789-1799) and the reign of Napoleon (1804-1815) impressed the writers at that time to achieve as much as Napoleon achieved with his swords. Realism mostly dealt with the dullness of society. By the twentieth century, the writers avoided writing about the dullness of realism; they wrote about the joy of life.

B. The Society in Madame Bovary

Madame Bovary is a novel that Flaubert intended to portray the dullness of middle-class society, that is bourgeoisie society. Just like the other people from middle-class society, Charles was sent by his mother to attend the medical school without intelligence and willingness. He was the model of bourgeoisie society who can afford the best education; he came to get the medical education without considering whether he himself like or not. When Charles married Emma Bovary and after a while moved to Yonville, the mirror of French society was depicted closely in a real way. In France, the bourgeoisie lived in a small town or rural villages such as Yonville and Tostes. Yonville was a town market in the centre of farming district, not far from Rouen.

Yonville l'Abbaye (so called from an old capuchin abbey of which not even the ruins remain) is a market-town twenty-four miles from Rouen, between the Abbeville and Beauvais roads, at the foot of a valley watered by the Rieule, a little river that runs into the Abdelle.....where there are a few trout that the lads amuse themselves by fishing for on Sundays. (p.53)

The situation of Yonville was very ordinary. Yonville was just monotonous, routine, and boring as was Tostes, the first place Emma lived after married. People from middle-class society used to come to Lion d'Or' Inn, the chemist's shop of Monsieur Homais to have a talk together and share the information about the actual topics. Mostly the talks was taken by Homais whose talks was very boring and cliché and imitating the philosophers in very limited intelligence. Homais, with whom Bovary had corresponded before deciding to move to Yonville, was man that always wanted to impress people by his knowledge and sophistication, although in fact he did not understand much of it. Homais felt that it was his duty to underestimate church, therefore he was posed himself in the side of the best philosophers of the world. Voltaire and Rousseau in Madame Bovary became model of speech for Homais who is boring and cliché. It is depicted in the dialogues stated below :

"My God ! mine is the God of Socrates, of Franklin, of Voltaire, and of Beranger ! I am for the profession of faith of the 'Savoyard Vicar', and the immortal principles of '89!". (p.59)

"If Madame will do me the honour of making use of it", said the chemist, "I have a library composed of the best authors, Voltaire, Rousseau, Delille, Walter Scott,.....(p.64)

The religious society in Madame Bovary was depicted in such a controversial way, but indeed, it was the way how the church behaved at the time. The close relation with government finally made church had a distance with its people. There were sign that the hold of churches over the people was weakening. Flaubert revealed Church in sort of a religious institution which had no understanding of its parishioners. The church was represented by the existence of Abbey Bournisien. He was a good-natured and simple man but lack of intelligence, perception, or understanding. He accepted and defended all the dogmatic and outmoded aspects of official church thought and never dared to question anything. He had no understanding of the real needs of the parishioners. He represented the ignorance and inadequacies of the rural clergy in Flaubert's time and served as a contrast to Homais. His lack of attention was shown when Emma tried to tell him about the need of spiritual help; but the priest was more focused his attention to the children

who were misbehaving instead of Emma despair. When Emma sighed in despair, the priest thought that she was having a physical illness, and advised her to go home and have a cup of tea. He did not have time to perceive Emma's problem; he even could not recall Emma's question.

"My God ! My God !", she sighed.

"Do you feel unwell ? It is indigestion, no doubt ? You must go home, Madame Bovary; drink a little tea, that will strengthen you, or else a glass of fresh water with a little moist sugar".

"Why ?" And she looked like one awaking from a dream.

"Well,.....I thought you felt faint", then bethinking himself, "But you were asking me something ? What was it ? I really don't remember ". (p.87)

a For the bourgeoisie society in France, the social status had an important rule in one's relation toward another. When Emma Bovary failed to get the money she needed to pay her debts, and finally suicide, the Bovary was down in the poorest condition. Homais, who were formerly the closest friend of Charles, now avoiding him, he declared that there was a big gap in their social position.

Thus, in brief we can say that Emma's failure in accepting her own position who came from middle-class society , as well as her

psychological demand to get something romantic caused her live ended in a tragic way. The society in which Flaubert depicted the story was in general closely related with the French society where he lived. After all, we can see that the dullness of bourgeoisie society through the revealing of the boring conversations and the commonplaces of the society and the fantasy of living in higher position that finally contributes the pattern of live of Emma Bovary. It's a pity that Emma Bovary finally should die because of the failure in reaching the dreams of romantic live and living in a higher position.