

BEYOND EMMA BOVARY'S LIFE STYLE IN MADAME BOVARY

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Abstract

Madame Bovary is a controversial novel in 19th century of French. It tells about the rebellion of a woman toward the traditional culture which is the social status are divided by birthright. Emma Bovary is a farmer daughter. She married to a doctor to get a better life. This article discuss the reasons beyond Emma's life style and the struggles on how she tries to achieve it. The problem are analyzed using *Sociology of Literature* by Alan Swingwood and *Theory of Leisure Class* by Thorstein Veblen. Swingwood's theory describe about the relation between the sociology and literature. Veblen describes about the materialist perspective that shapes the society. From the reasons and struggles, it is known that beyond Emma's life style is modernism.

Keywords: Madame Bovary, Modernism, Consumerism, Sociology of Literature

Abstrak

Madame Bovary merupakan novel yang kontroversial pada abad ke sembilan belas Prancis. Novel ini menceritakan tentang pemberontakan seorang wanita terhadap budaya tradisional yang membedakan setatus social berdasarkan hak lahir. Emma Bovary merupakan seorang putri petani. Dia menikah dengan seorang dokter untuk mendapatkan kehidupan yang lebih baik. Artikel ini membahas tentang alasan dibalik gaya hidupnya dan caranya bagaimana dia berusaha menggapai keinginannya. Permasalahannya di analisa menggunakan sociology og Literature oleh Alan Swingwood dan Theory of Leisure Class oleh Thorsthein Veblen. Teori Swingwood menjelaskan tentang hubungan sosiologi dan literature. Sedangkan Veblen menjelaskan tentang sudut pandang material yang membentuk masyarakat. Dari alasan dan usahanya, diketahui bahwa dibalik gaya hidupnya terdapat modernisme.

Kata Kunci: Madame Bovary, Modernisme, konsumerisme, sosiologi sastra

Introduction

Madame Bovary is a novel full of controversy. Emma's character reflects Flauberts view of the borgeoise life style in 19th century. These 150 years old classical novel touches the moral boundaries and pictures that world living is not naive. On 1857 Flaubert is being sued as an immoral and unreligious writer for his work. (Flaubert, 2010:506). In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert makes his views on marriage, love, and sexuality quite clear. During the trial, the prosecution argued that Emma Bovary's joy in committing adultery was reprehensible, and that reading Flaubert's work would inevitably lead to the decay of public decency. Its controvercy and its realistic portrayal attracts me to make this novel my object of study.

The main problems of the study are Emma's reason to move up her social status and Emma's effort in increasing her social status. Whether she is not satisfied about her new life and how she will do it. Emma dreams of romantic relationship which is full of passion that she does not get from her husband. She also dreams of wealth that she cannot

reach as she is a second class person. Her dreams for being surrounded by passionate love and wealth suffers her.

Method of Research

This research is conducted using the qualitative research. The type of data applied in analyzing *Madame Bovary* is qualitative data. The study uses close reading technique in collecting data concerning sociology issue. The primary data are taken from the novel itself, *Madame Bovary* written by Gustave Flaubert, in form of quotations. The secondary data are taken from books, dictionaries, unpublished thesis, the biography of the author and the other resources. All of the data were obtained from the library of faculty of letter, library of Jember University, some personal collection, and from internet. This research uses Alan Swingwood's and Thorstein Veblen's theory as the main references in getting better understanding of the topic.

Result of Data Analysis

Emma Bovary's life style is the life style that is practiced by the higher class society. It requires a lot of

money and sources such as gown, furniture, and food. The higher class society practice such life style in order not to survive but to show their prosperities, wealth, and power to the other. The reasons why she practices such life style, are because she has dreamt it as a teenager, she bores with her monoton life, and she doesn't get the passion in her marriage with Charles. Money, and those luxurious things she buys, bring her happiness. She also wants to be respected by the other for being noble. She doesn't like the fact that she is a daughter of a farmer. Her struggle to get what she wants is by corrupting her husband's money and making a lot of debt that she can not pay. for Emma, life has so many choices to choose. If she wants to be a noble, why her birthstatus becomes problem? Emma is a dynamic person who loves the fast development of the city. City's lifestyle suits her taste. She likes to try new things such as watching opera. Emma's actions show the beginning of modern era. She rebels the tradition and can keep up with the latest trend that for society are unappropriate. Her modern life style is her own choice, thus she has to take every consequences for her actions.

Discussion

Emma Bovary's Life Style

In the beginning of the story, Emma Bovary is described as a young woman who wear a finest dress. It is showed that she has high taste and does not mind to spend a large number of money. "A young woman in a blue merino dress with three flounces came to the threshold of the door to receive Monsieur Bovary, ..." (Flaubert, 2002:13). Veblen mentions that spending money on dress has advantage over most other methods of putting one's pecuniary standing (Veblen, 2005:68). Someone's appearance is the easiest way to show other his or her social status. People observe other by their first glance: their dress, their shoes, their style, and their mobile phone. Spending money on dress is the obvious way and more universally practiced than any other way of consumption. Being fashionable is a must for her. She has shown her high taste of life style since she lives in the village.

"Mademoiselle Rouault did not all like the country, especially now that she had to look after the farm almost alone." (Flaubert, 2002:13). Emma is also described that she hates countryside, especially her home, which she has to manage her father's farm almost by herself. She hates doing the same task everyday: looking after the farm. She dislikes the silent, the quietness of the night. Contact with other people is limited. She has to walk miles away to find civilization in the nearest village. She also hates the fact that she is a peasant, the second lowest class in her social hierarchy. The crowded city excites Emma. She loves to be at the party. She enjoys meeting new people, especially the higher class people, and their passion about everything. It is also full of art. Beautiful works of art can be seen in every corner of building in city. She thinks living in the city and dressing and behaving like them can give her the true pleasure and happiness.

As a teenager, her father put her in the convent. At first, she enjoys staying there. But eventually, she hates it,

she cannot stand the smell of the altar and the light of the candle instead of attending a mass. She enjoys watching a picture of suffering people in her book. She shows the character of an adventurer since young. She admires Mary Stuart and other unhappy women. "At this time she had a cult for Mary Stuart and enthusiastic veneration for illustrious or unhappy women." (Flaubert, 2002:25). The nuns in the covent describe her as a girl who does not shows any respect to the community. She does not believe in the mysteries of faith and being undisciplined. As a teenager she already shows the character of a rebel.

Living with the nuns is the life full of peace. It is static life where the development is slow. The nuns protect its traditional value and culture and pushing away the modern life outside the chapel. It has reason though, to teach people not to depend on money and power, since it is does not last long. However Emma is dynamic person. She loves the modernity and the idea of trying things she has read in novel as teenager. For her, power and wealth is the only way to reach a true happiness. These are the ingredient to survive in modern era, since the existence of God is questioned and science takes place religy from human faith.

Emma reads the magazines to experience a piece of glory that high class people experience. As Veblen said, the wealth as power must be put in evidence (Veblen, 2005:17), those magazines shows the wealth and power which other people have, especially the high class. It exposes how luxury their life. From the finest clothes they wear, best tailor they hire, the latest fashion they use, the latest opera performing. All of those required extra france, and a job as a docter in a village cannot afford all of it.

For her, Paris is a wonderful city. She even buy a map of Paris. She pictures herself travelling around the city. The city full of party and ball, people who spend their money as a princes and princesses. Emma admires the life of bourgeois people. She wants to live like them, in the middle of noblemmen. She thinks that to be alive full of luxury and prosperities will give her soul true happiness.

No man being ashamed f anything but the appearance of poverty (Swingwood, 1972:88). The world that Emma lives is the opposite of the world she reads in magazines. She feels that the world beyond her reach will bring her true happiness. She is disappointed with her current life. So the idea of wealth can bring her happiness poison her mind and affect her lifestyle.

Emma Bovary's Reason in Raising Her Social Status

Swingwood mentions that for bourgeoisie society, marriage is only a tool to increase social status or prosperities value, and for middle class society, marriage is something sacred (Swingwood, 1972:190). Eventhough Emma comes from middle class society, she is longing for luxurious life that she has read in the novels. She wants to experience love full of passion, dancing in the ball until morning, wearing pretty gown, in other word wants to experience the life of bourgeoisie. That is why she marries a doctor so she can escape from the boring life in the farm. However her marriage is not like what she expect. She feels bored with her marriage and starts to falls in love with somebody else.

In the end of September, The Bovary are invited to a ball by Marquis d'Andervilliers to Vaubyessrd. He was a politician who is also Charles' patient. Madame Bovary admires the richness of nobleman's prosperities: the Italian building, the marble floor, the garden, the big portrait of noblemen, the dining room, the smell of delicious food and tropical fruit she never taste before. All of them make Emma so excited and happy. The luxury touches Emma's heart and stay there. "But a considerable element of prescriptive expensiveness is observable also in consumption that does not in any appreciable degree become known to outsiders—as, for instance, articles of underclothing, some articles of food, kitchen utensils, and other household apparatus designed for service rather than for evidence." (Veblen, 2005:47). House, floor, dining room, food, are thing that human need in life. They are designed to ease human life, not to show human's wealth. But, as the civilization grows and culture develops, the standard of living and taste are also formed. Italian building is designed to gain honor from other people instead of protection of the weather. Marble floor is designed to give a plus value to a house. Portrait of noblemen is to show how great and powerful they are. Delicious food and tropical fruit give special taste and gain honor from other people since delicious food spoil our tongue and tropical fruit is rare to find.

After the ball and being home again, remembering the ball experience becomes her occupation. She misses the music, the dance, the excitement she feels, and the luxury she admire of. She thinks by memorizing it will bring her back to that time. If the articles of consumption are costly, they are felt to be noble and honorific (Veblen, 2005:30). By spending a large amount of money on the musician, the food, the decoration, and the preparation to hold a wonderful ball, the host is expected a big respect from the guest. The hosts like to be honored, to be judge as a wealthy man. Emma wants to be a part of this. Power to rule other people will be on her hand if she has all his money and status.

Emma's Effort in Raising Her Social Status

Conspicuous consumption is the act of purchasing and using certain goods and service. Not in order to survive, but rather to identify oneself to others as having superior wealth and social standing (Veblen 2005:30). To erase the boredom she felt, Emma spoils herself by purchasing things. Seeing herself using the best products make her happy. She feels herself as if she is noble. She buys an antic praying table, she spends 14 Franc a month for lemon to clean her nails. She buys scraft and silk dress from Lhereux. She also changes her hair style. Emma thinks a woman who was sacrificed herself is worthy to be pleased.

People is no longer ashamed of prostitution and corruption (Swingwood, 1972:188). Moral and norm can be put in second level after luxury and pleasure. Emma does adultery with Monsieur Rodolphe. He is a handsome rich man, a type of man that Emma is longing for. Emma sees him as a strong and romantic man. He makes her happy.

Dress becomes the spiritual needs for Emma. She buys the best tailored gown not for the purpose covering her body from the weather, but to please her lover and to get respect from other. This is the easiest way to display the

social standing at the first glance. Emma wants to be a part of those people she met at the ball and of those people she reads on magazines. She copy those people's lifestyle and apply it on her life so that she can feel a bit of happiness she always dreamt of.

The lifestyle Emma tries to fulfilled will not be successful without help. In this case, her help is Lheureux. He lends a great amount of money to Emma and offering so many things that Emma could not resist. Emma becomes dependent on him. Slowly her debt increases, she is fooled by him and multiplies the debt. She cannot live anymore without those luxury things. Wealth and property becomes a measure of social standing, and this principle is not apply on good and service that are visible to other but also to the goods and services that is not designed for evidence (Veblen, 2005:2005:47). Emma actions of purchasing a lot of time from Lheureux show her pecuniary taste that become standard year later in society. Emma's effort to climb the social hierarchy is not only by wearing beautiful dresses, which is easiest way to display the social standing, but also by using goods that is designed for service rather than for evidence such as underwear, kitchen utensil, and also household apparatus.

Her ego to put wealth, property, and social standing above all, lead her to a fall. Vablen's theory happens here with no control from Emma. She increases her standart of taste but cannot control her willings. She cannot balance the income and the outcome of her livelihood needs.

Lheureux tricks Emma, he does not want Emma to pay full of her debt. He makes Emma to sign other two bills. When Charles find out about one debt, Emma said she doesn't want to trouble him with household things. Charles, who is confused, asking help to Lheureux, who is willing to help if Charles agree to sign two bills, seven hundred Francs each, and pay them in three months.

Beyond Emma Bovary's Life Style

For each person, life has different meaning. One may question themselves for having miserable life. Other may enjoy their blissful life. Life can be a pleasure or a burden depends on how a person sees this life. For Emma's point of view, life is a choice. She thinks that she can choose which life she wants to live in. Life is full of choices that people may choose as they like and she choose not to accept her current life because it turns out does not suit her. Emma is a dynamic person. Her willings to change and improve her life is strong enough to make her unconcern about norms, morality, and God. That is why the life in village bores her, and her husband also bores her. She hates his daily activities and his constant schedule, which make her feel she is only a part of Charles' routine. City promises her so many things she adores. With the quick development, city suits her taste. Staying there with all its luxury and party is her dream. It leads her to move to the town where it is closer to the city. Emma is also fashionable. Her wardrobe is full of the best quality clothes. The life of the city suits her well since she can meet many new people to show off each other's wealth. Wearing the best clothing is the easiest way for her to be the person she always want to be: high class society. Emma is also passionate. Being Charles wife does not make her

happy anymore. She hates her dull husband, and hates his boring routine task everyday. She thinks Charles marry her only for fulfilling a custom, not because he is crazy in love with her. Emma is only a dessert to complete his menu of life. So she searches for a new activities that will give her passion and thrill that she is longing for. It leads her to do an adultery.

”Aesthetic modernism describes a series of sometimes radical movements in art, architecture, photography, music, literature, and the applied arts which emerged in the three decades before 1914... Modernist art reflected the deracinated experience of life in which tradition, community, collective, identity, and faith were eroding.” (par 1, www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Modernism)

The novel takes place when the modern era is about to begin. So many inventions are produced, creating a certain trend in a certain society. In this beginning of modern era, people are forced to be dynamic, moving and developing along with the development of city. Trying a brave thing but risky is good for the improvement of a country. Science and money is the new way to rule the world. People believe in what they think rational, so does Emma. She enjoys living in a city, trying new custom and culture. Things feel different from her countryside. In the city everybody dress nicely, speak up whatever in their mind, a place where life is everywhere.

The modern idea washes her brain. Money is her everything. Modern era gives a positive thing to some people, and negative thing for some other. For Emma, she cannot control her willing. She choose to spoil herself means she is ready to be bankrupt. Everything she does is her choice to deal with life.

Conclusion

Emma is the marker of the beginning of modernism era, the era of realism. She represents the modern society in France.

In modern era, many people dare to rebel the tradition for the better living and way of life. Changing the social status are one of the rebellions of the tradition in modern era. In order to climb the higher social status, consuming the best quality of goods becomes a must. Emma Bovary, who tries to climb the higher social status represents the idea of modernism. Inside, Emma is a modern women. She is modern without realizing it herself. Her action is out of her consciousness. She struggles to climb the higher social status because of her modern way of thinking, even though at the time social status is birth gift. She feels that she deserves to be a higher class society. Modernity is her life style. Beyond her life style is her modern way of thinking to rebel the traditional idea. Her point of view is the modernism.

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