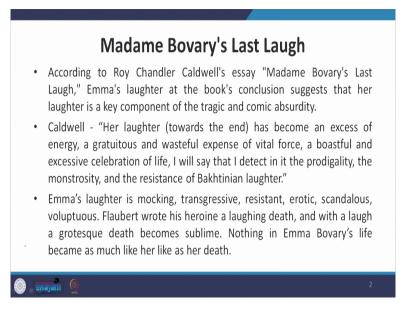
Narrative Mode and Fiction Prof. Sarbani Banerjee Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Indian Institute of Technology – Roorkee

Lecture – 31 Tragedy and Comic Absurdity in Novel - IV

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Narrative Mode and Fiction. We are talking about Tragedy and Comic Absurdity Novel in the context of Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary.

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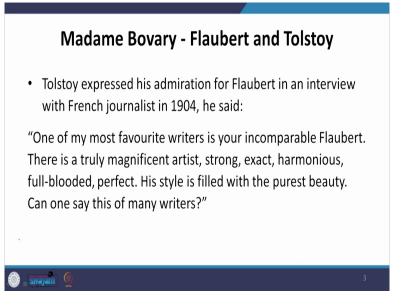
So, according to Roy Chandler, Caldwell's essay Madame Bovary's last laugh Emma's laughter at the books conclusion suggests that her laughter is a key component of the tragic and comic absurdity. A Caldwell would say I quote her laughter towards the end has become an excess of energy gratuitous and wasteful expense of vital force, a boastful and excessive celebration of life.

I will say that I detect in it the prodigality the monstrosity and the resistance of Bakhtinian laughter unquote. Emma's laughter is mocking transgressive, resistant, erotic, scandalous, voluptuous. Flaubert wrote his heroines in a laughing death where she laughs she scuffs at everyone at the conditions of life. And she is coughing at the field life that she has led. So, she mocks pities and almost laughs and cries at herself.

And at the society that could not contain her with a laugh a grotesque death becomes sublime. So, the unbearable conditions of living become more bearable in death. In death there is some kind of relief and some pressure once again that was building up throughout the narrative being released at death. Some beauty that was lost throughout the narrative in the course of the narrative is recuperated through Emma's death.

A sense of sublime is recuperated gathered back. And so, nothing in Emma Bovary's life became as much like her as her death. The death, the way she cannot live the way she wants to live but she dies a very theatrical, very histrionic, dramatic kind of death. And it is very striking the way she dies and that is that embodies that justifies her character in a way.

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So, Tolstoy expressed his admiration for Flaubert in an interview with a French journalist in 1904, where he said, I quote, Flaubert one of my most favourite writers is your incomparable Flaubert. There is a truly magnificent artist, strong exact, harmonious full-blooded, perfect. His style is filled with the purest beauty. Can one say this of many writers unquote.

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Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina

- In the essay 'Anna Karenina: Tolstoy's Polemic with Madame Bovary', Priscilla Meyer does a comprehensive analysis of the parallels present between the two texts.
- Boris Eikhenbaum agrees with other French critics who found traces of Tolstoy's study of French literature in Anna Karenina, though he emphasizes the complexity of Tolstoy's struggle with the tradition of the "love" novel.
- George Steiner long ago concluded that "all that can be said is that Anna Karenina was written in some awareness of its predecessor."

In the essay Anna Karenina, Tolstoy's Polemic with Madame Bovary a Priscilla Meyer makes approaches or attempts Priscilla Meyer attempts a comprehensive analysis of the parallels. The analogies between the two texts Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina. So, another formalist, Russian formalist, Boris Eikhenbaum agrees with other French critics that find traces of Tolstoy's reading of French literature in Anna Karenina.

Although, he emphasizes although Eikhenbaum emphasizes the complexity of Tolstoy's struggle with the tradition of the love novel. So, George Steiner concludes that all that can be said is that Anna Karenina was written in some awareness of it is predecessor.

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Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina Meyer adds, "The novel renders judgement on her—she [Emma] has transgressed both heavenly and human law—but she has our compassion

- transgressed both heavenly and human law—but she has our compassion inasmuch as we are forced to contemplate society's culpability in the adulteress's unresolvable predicament."
- As Tony Tanner puts it, "the tension between law and sympathy holds the great bourgeois novel together."
- In Shakespeare's mythologized culture, marriage brings harmony, but in nineteenth-century society, marriage is the mythology that the novel of adultery demythologizes.

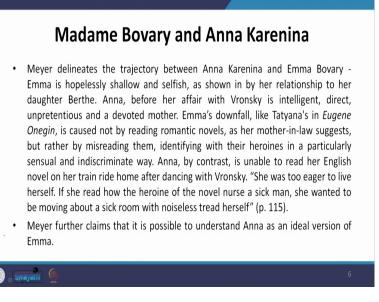
And Priscilla Meyer would, I quote the novel renders judgment on her referring here to Emma. So, she has transgressed both heavenly and human law. But she has our compassion

in as much as we are forced to contemplate society's culpability in the adult traces, unresolvable predicament unquote. As Tony Tanner puts it, the tension between law and sympathy holds this great bourgeois novel together.

So, the reader moves back and forth in her mind thinking about the laws legalities. How this woman is so, outrageous so, transgressive? How richly she is betraying her husband? And then one cannot but sympathize with this charming lady this charming attractive character that Emma is. So that is the splendour, that is the masterpiece hat is Madame Bovary is in Shakespeare's a mythologized culture marriage brings harmonies to at the end comes the grand marriage.

Which refers to reconciliation which refers to some sort of climax. But in 19th century society marriage is the mythology that a novel such as Madame Bovary, is trying to decipher and kind of unpack marriage as an institution. As the Flaubert is saying through this writing, so, much for a marriage.

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So, Meyer delineates the trajectory between Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary. Emma is hopelessly shallow she is selfish, shown I mean the way we see her through the relationships she shares with her husband and even her daughter Berthe. Anna before her affair with Vronsky is intelligent, direct unpretentious and a devoted mother. So, Emma's downfall like Tatyana's in Eugene Onegin is caused not by reading a romantic novels. So much as it is caused because of misreading them. Identifying with the heroines in a particularly sensual and indiscriminate way she tries to become those bookish heroines. Anna on the other hand is unable to read her English novel on the train ride home after dancing with Vronsky. She was too eager to live herself, see Tolstoy. If she read how the heroine of the novel nurse a sick man.

She wanted to be moving about a sick room with noiseless tread herself. So, Meyer further claims that it is possible to understand and as an ideal version of Emma.

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Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina

- "Emma admires and imitates luxury; Anna already has it. Emma wants passionate, aristocratic, dashing lover, but finds only imitations of one; Anna gets Emma's wish in Vronsky. Emma wants to be the heroine of a novel; Anna is seen as one by her peers. Emma fantasises eloping to Italy with pseudo-aristocratic Rudolphe (who clinches his teeth in predatory passion); Anna and the truly aristocratic Vronski (of the even "regular" teeth) do in fact elope to Italy."
- This is to suggest how Tolstoy isolates and distills the moral and psychological aspects of adultery for a young married woman, purifying it of the concern with the social status and material luxury that obsesses, through positing an intelligent, self-aware heroine.

We see that Emma admires and imitates luxury. Anna already has it Emma once passionate, aristocratic, dashing lover but finds only imitations. The fox, the fake ones, the fake substitute for Paris, the fake substitute for an aristocratic lover and so, on. Anna gets Emma's wish in Vronsky. Emma wants to be the heroine of a novel and I seen as one by her peers. Emma fantasises eloping to Italy, with pseudo aristocratic Rodolphe.

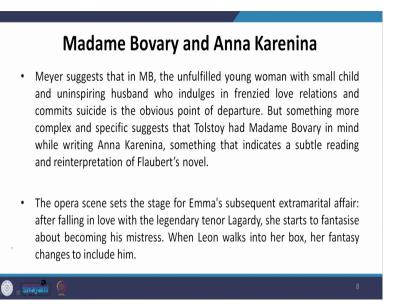
Whereas Anna and the truly aristocratic Vronski do in fact elope to Italy. So, we see some continuation, some adaptation, some influence some inspiration. That has gone from Madame Bovary, to make another great work, a timeless work such as Anna Karenina, by Tolstoy. So, this is to suggest how Tolstoy is working towards isolating and distilling the moral and psychological aspects of adultery for a young married woman.

Making it a simpler and more palatable for his readers. The more conventional readers purifying the process of adultery, the act of adultery of the concern with the social status and

material luxury that obsesses. And so, as a result, we have what we have as a result of this distillation? This purification is a more intelligent, self-aware heroine in Anna than Emma could ever be.

Emma was much more unaware if she was clueless. She was just flowing with the flow doing what she wanted to do very impulsive?

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Meyer suggests further that in Madame Bovary the unfulfilled young woman with small child and uninspiring husband who indulges in a series of frenzied romance or wishes. And finally commits suicide is the obvious point of departure. But something more complex and specific suggests that Tolstoy did have Madame Bovary in mind when he was portraying the character Anna Karenina.

And so, we see in the opera scene where Emma's the opera scene in Madame Bovary sets the stage for Emma's subsequent extramarital affair after falling in love with the legendary tenor Lagardy. She starts to fantasize about becoming his mistress. And what he gets a as a substitute as a surrogate is a surrogate experiences Leon who walks into her box and her fantasy, thereby changes and includes him.

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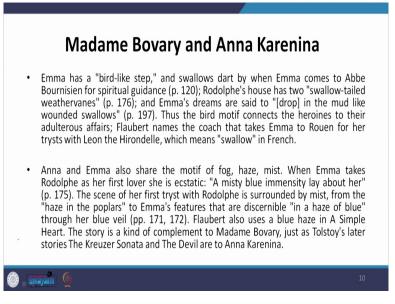
Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina

- Tolstoy gives Anna various motifs that Flaubert had given Emma in order to describe her. The relationship between Vronsky and his racehorse Frou Frou is designed to parallel his relationship with Anna; Emma and Rodolphe's relationship starts when they ride his horses together.
- The horses and heroines are linked by a bird motif: In Tolstoy's novel, after Frou Frou falls, she begins "fluttering on the ground . . . like a wounded bird," while Anna in the stands is described a few pages later as "fluttering like a caged bird" (pp. 218, 223).

So, Tolstoy gives Anna various motifs that Flaubert had given Emma in order to describe her. So, the relationship, for example, between Vronsky and his racehorse Frou, Frou is a designed to parallel his relationship with Anna. Emma and Rodolphe's relationship starts when the ride his horses together. So, horses and heroines are linked by a bird motif in a Tolstoy novel after Frou Frou falls.

She begins, as Tolstoy describes. She begins fluttering on the ground like a wounded bird, while Anna in the stands is described a few pages later, as fluttering like a caged bird. On the other hand, coming back to Madame Bovary we have Emma described.

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So Emma has bird like step on the other hand, in Madame Bovary, we have Emma who has a bird-like step and swallows dart by when Emma comes to Abbe Bournisien for spiritual

guidance. So, Rodolphe's house has two swallow-tailed weathervanes and Emma's dreams are said to drop in the mud like wounded swallows. So, this imagery of those follow the records in the novel.

The bird motif connects the heroines to their adulterous affairs to the complexity, psychic complexity that they are going through. Flaubert names, the course that takes Emma to Rouen for her trysts with Leon the Hirondelle which means swallow in French. So, the imagery of the swallow bird keeps coming back. Then the motif of fog he is missed is something that both Anna and Emma share.

So, when Emma takes Rodolphe as a first lover, she is ecstatic. A misty blue immensity lay about her. The scene of a first tryst with Rodolphe is surrounded by mist from the haze and the poplars to Emma's features that are discernible in a haze of blue through her blue veil. Flaubert also uses the blue haze in his other work. A simple heart, just as Tolstoy later stories such as the Kreuzer Sonata and the devil are a compliment of Anna Karenina they draw on Anna Karenina.

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The Realism of "Madame Bovary"

- Jonathan Culler in his essay ' The Realism of "Madame Bovary" The argument for historical reality of the representation depends on Emma Bovary herself as representation of a historical reality, as representation of the historical situation of women, for whom possibilities had been expanded through the declaration of the rights of women of 1792 and various incipient feminist developments, but who, with the bourgeois reaction and the Second Empire found that essentially not much had changed, especially for provincial women.
- The title, Madame Bovary, applies to three women in the novel, as a way of defining Emma by a pregiven role. She is already a repetition in this world where nothing changes. And Flaubert's powerful representation of her ennui and sense of entrapment—however meaningless the posited alternatives might be—carries great weight for readers.

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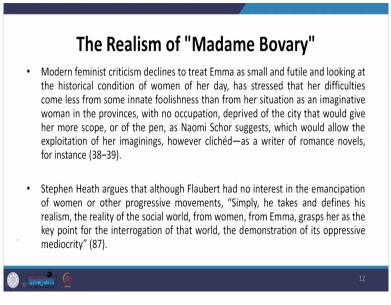
Jonathan Culler in his essay the realism of Madame Bovary suggests that the argument for historical reality of the representation depends on Emma Bovary herself, as a representation of a historical reality as a representation of the historical situation of women. For whom possibilities had been expanded through the declaration of the rights of women of 1792. And various incipient feminist developments but who with the bourgeois reaction.

And the second empire found that essentially not much had changed, especially for provincial women. The title Madame Bovary like we have already discussed in our earlier lectures, applied. I mean it symbolizes some kind of incarcerations. Almost the title that tries to contain the heroine is a prison and at the same time, this title moreover applies to three women in the novel as a way of defining Emma by a pre-given larger identity or role.

So, Emma in the process of becoming Madame Bovary is a reputation in this world, where nothing more should be expected. Nothing will change for her traditionally speaking and Flaubert's powerful representation of her ennui. Her sense of entrapment carries great weight for the readers. The meaninglessness that she tries to chase through her the alternative identities that she tries to chase through her meaningless ventures.

They all shape the layered character that Madame Bovary is so, modern feminist criticism declines to treat Emma as small and futile.

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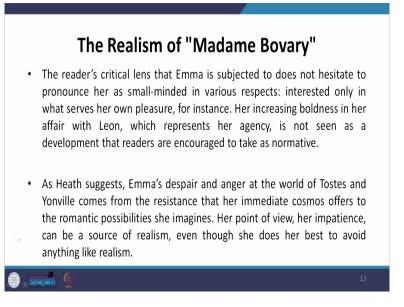
And in fact, the feminists look at the historical condition of women of her day of Emma's day when she was made by created by Flaubert. And the stress that her difficulties come less from some innate foolishness than from her situation as an imaginative woman in a provincial situation. Who has no preoccupation, who is deprived of the city life, which could give her more scope obviously?

And she is even deprived of the pen literacy in a serious sense as Naomi Schor would suggest. So, being literate having access to pen to writing would allow a woman like Madame

Bovary to exploit her imaginations, her excesses. However, cliched they could very well have been translated into some romantic novels. She could have very well become a writer of romance novels, for instance, instead of transforming into an adulterous.

So, Stephen Heath argues that although Flaubert had no interest in the emancipation of women or other progressive movements. Simply he takes and defines his realism. The reality of the social world from women from Emma grasps her as the key point for the interrogation of that world. The demonstration of it is oppressive, mediocrity. So, Emma is through and through a kind of a comeback on this oppressive mediocrity.

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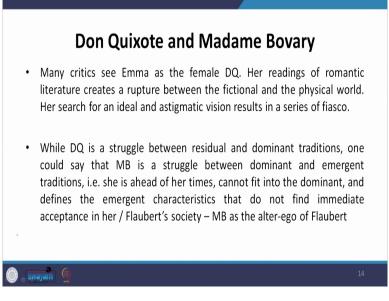


The reader's critical lens that Emma is subjected to does not hesitate to pronounce her at times as a small-minded woman in various respects. Someone who is interested in who serves only her own pleasure for instance. So, her increasing boldness in her affair with Leon where she can exhibit her agency is not seen as a development that readers are encouraged to take as normative.

So, although she becomes an agent by the time, she has an affair with Leon that is non-normatives that is an agency in a woman considered as exceptional animalist and not part of what the social values. The gendered values taught women at that point in time. So, as Heath suggests, Emma's despair and anger at the world of Tostes and Yonville will comes from the resistance that her immediate cosmos offers to the romantic possibilities that she imagines.

So, her point of view, her impatience can be a source of realism, although she does her best to avoid anything like realism. So, it is maybe her impatience is being generated as a result of the way her society is. Some critics, like I said like Heath, would say that the inspiration is not coming straight from the books she read. But it is a kind of a resistance it is a way of getting back at a reaction to the limits. The limitations that provincial society impose on free-minded woman, such as Emma.

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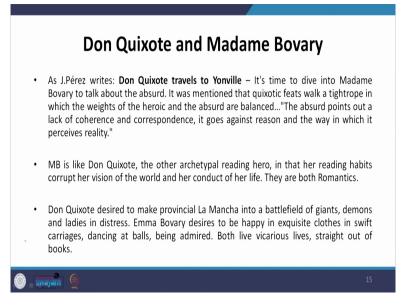


Many critics see Emma as the female Don Quixote that is a very popular and common way of looking into her, her readings of romantic literature creates a rupture between the fictional and the physical world. Her search for an ideal and the astigmatic vision that she develops results in a series of fiasco. Just like in the case of Don Quixote. While Don Quixote is a struggle between residual and dominant traditions.

One could say that Madame Bovary is a struggle between dominant and emergent traditions. So, in other words, she is ahead of her times, Mis ahead of her times and she cannot fit into the dominant values of our society, the society where she is created. And she defines the emergent characteristics that do not find immediate acceptance in either her society or the society where Flaubert is sitting and writing as a result of this novel.

As a result of writing, this novel Flaubert is dragged into legalities he has to face law he is booked by law.

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So, Madame Bovary can be seen as an alter ego of Flaubert. So, J. Perez writes that it is time to dive into Madame Bovary to talk about the absurd. It was mentioned that quixotic feats walk a tightrope in which the weights of the heroic and the absurd are balanced. The absurd points out a lack of coherence and correspondence. It goes against reason and the way in which it perceives reality.

Madame Bovary in many ways, Madame Bovary in many ways is like Don Quixote who is another archetypal reading hero, who has greatly influenced the subsequent literary traditions. That followed after Cervantes quintessential novel. The two characters Madame Bovary and Don Quixote their reading habits, corrupt their vision of the world. And their conduct of life and they are both out and out through and through romantics.

Very romanticized vision of the world and they suffer because of that. Don Quixote desire to make provincial La Mancha into a battlefield of giants, demons and ladies in distress. Emma Bovary desires to be happy in exquisite clothes in swift carriages, dancing at balls being admired. Both live, vicarious lives, straight out of books. And they live by some hyperbolic definitions of life.

Something that cannot be matched up with the provincial environment where they are born. So, they want to outgrow the canvas of the provinces where they belong and become something else.

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The idealized world Emma proposes has a better chance of success than that of Don Quixote. Because the reality that she seeks is timeless. It is part of a collective imaginary, of a desire that both men and women of all ages of history have longed for. So, although we see them as transgressive as mad as people full of excess, unacceptable tampering with social values. They represent the collective imaginary, the collective desire that people across time and space Harbor in them.

So the reality, the idealized world's reality response to a need common to any society in the world. So, when we look at an idealized world, we realize that it is so, important to have such a world at least a vision of such a world and the need of such an idealized world. Even if it belongs to someone's fantasy is common to any society in any given period of time. So, Madame Bovary is ideal is fully identified from the position of a lazy indolent and unoccupied life, which creates a brilliant mirage.

Confusing true with fantasy, true with a dream. And that prevents Emma from accepting the reality the concrete reality as it is. Emma is deceived by what is nothing but illusion. (Refer Slide Time: 25:28)

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So, Emma's role in the novel is to embody the form fatale to represent doom wherever she goes. Even though the decisions she makes lead only to her self-destruction. She is, not destroying others, she is not destroying the society, life carries on only she is gone after she commits suicide. The society goes on in her absence her family lives. So, she has only inflicted destruction to herself, not to anyone else.

Although, her death does affect her husband and even indirectly, her daughter between the work of Cervantes. Cervantes, Don Quixote and Flaubert, Madame Bovary we see two chaotic worlds emerging with a clash of realities is what makes up the entire narrative and makes up the protagonist. The grain of their character lies in that alterity that alternative those alternative possibilities the posited.

Emma demands of the world to give her what she lacks? What she needs in order to achieve her happiness? And this is a little unlike Don Quixote who has an unusual strength for reality, to bend before him. So, he is Don Quixote, like I have already said in our discussions of Don Quixote earlier that he is also representing the thinking man. So, he has the strength to bend reality before him in a continuous tug-of-war between reality and fantasy.

The world of Renaissance and the world of romance so, as Deleuze us explains and I quote nonsense is what opposes meaning in a simple relationship with it. To the point that the absurd is always defined by a defect of meaning a lack unquote. So, we see that our reading would be very limited. Our reading of such a timeless great characters written by Cervantes and Flaubert would be flawed if we were to juxtapose them.

Vis-a-Vis the conventional notions of good, bad, right, wrong, sanity, insanity. It is a very simplistic understanding to oppose such characters with immense possibilities. It would be a wrong way of judging or reading them. If we said that they are simply anomalous. They are not the way the society, if is the not the way the society prescribes, if we try to define them in terms of the should nots the have-nots.

We need to appreciate what they have? What they can become? What they want to become? What and also empathize with what they cannot become thereby? But they cannot what they strive to be but cannot be? So, they have their own parameters, their own vision, their own way of existence and alternative meaning of life. So, it would be very it would be a sort of injustice to read such timeless great characters as Don Quixote and Madame Bovary.

Through the prison through the lens that is offered by our prosec world or quotidian mediocre standards of existence. With this I am going to stop today's discussion today. And we will meet again with a new text and a new reading in our subsequent lectures in our next lecture. So, we will meet again with new text and new readings, new perspectives in our next lecture. Thank you.