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## Madame Bovary Feminism Movement in Literature

To begin with, to describe her globally, Emma Bovary is a bourgeois woman from the 19th century, and she suffers from being a woman. Because of this suffering, she questions the gender that is attributed to her. It is true that in the novel, Emma Bovary is reduced to the state of object, victim of patriarchy and dependent on men, yet she is not passive. She does not succeed in crushing the patriarchal structure, but she tries to resist. Actually, she is not resigned to fate, which in her case, condemns her to be a woman. She seeks to emancipate herself and to get out of the constraints that are imposed on her, by adopting certain male attitudes and behaviors.

In my presentation, I will focus on all the feminist aspects of Emma Bovary, which make her a much more complex heroine, than this image of a fragile, naive, melancholic and materialistic woman that we tend to attribute to her. First, I will analyze the full awareness of her misfortune, then, the masculinity of her character, and finally, the refusal of her fate as a woman. [slide] All of these parts will answer to the question: is Emma Bovary a feminist heroine?

First of all, Emma Bovary is fully aware of her misfortune of being a woman, which already makes her character more interesting. She is aware of the injustice of the difference in treatment between men and women, and of the limits imposed by femininity. Actually, in the 19th century, a woman could only leave the family home by marrying, that is why Emma decides to marry Charles. Therefore, it is her feminine condition which compels her to marry, even if she does not love this man. Moreover, once married, Emma knows that she can not leave her husband or leave as she would like, since it was not acceptable at the time.

For example, we can see this awareness in this passage from the novel, Part Two, Chapter 8, where she mentions with envy Rodolphe's freedom, during a conversation with him. Emma says to Rodolphe: 'you are not to be pitied', and 'you are free', which make us understand that she knows very well that Rodolphe's freedom is due to his male gender. [slide] There is another passage where Emma describes this inequality between men and women, from Part Two, Chapter 3 of the novel, where she claims that: 'a man, at least, is free' and 'a woman is always hampered'. It puts on emphasis the fact that she perceives this female misfortune as inevitable, that from birth, women are marked by the seal of dependence.

Indeed, we can see that when Emma is pregnant, she dreams of having a boy, so that her own child could at least escape the misfortune of femininity. The narrator evokes precisely that: 'this idea of having a male child was like an expected revenge for all her impotence in the past'. At the end of this passage, we can see that when Emma realizes that she gave birth to a girl, she faints because she knows perfectly well that this girl will be struck by the misfortune of femininity too. As a consequence, this fatality of femininity affects Emma doubly, because not only must she be a woman, therefore not be free, but her own child is exposed to these same misfortunes.

Then, there is a masculine dimension in Emma's character, which she develops herself, partly with her clothes. [slide] For example, we can see that in this passage from the novel, Part One, Chapter 2, when Charles shares with Emma a meal at Bertaux. Indeed, her outfit is described as masculine, since it's specified that she's dressed 'like a man'. [slide] This precision, 'like a

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man', is also present in another passage from the novel, Part Two, Chapter 2. In this passage, we can see that Emma's bond with Rodolphe gives her a feeling of freedom. Therefore, she dresses like a man to express this feeling.

Finally, there is a last passage where Emma dresses like a man, in Part Three, Chapter 6, when she is at the masked ball with Leon. Actually, she wears a man's outfit, as it is described: 'She wore velvet breeches, red stockings, a club wig, and three-cornered hat cocked on one side'. [slide] To give you an idea, her outfit would look kind of like this, according to all the details stated about her outfit in this passage (except for the colors, of course).

But Emma Bovary's masculinity is not limited to her outfit. In fact, the masculine side of her character is also portrayed in her behavior, her attitude. For example, in this passage from Part Two, Chapter 7 of the novel, we can see that when Emma helps her husband to bleed Monsieur Boulanger's man, the latter is surprised that: 'Madame Bovary had never fainted', and he states 'That is extraordinary for a lady'. This passage denounces the fact that fainting is perceived as being a weakness and a women thing. Then, since Emma does not pass out, it makes us understand that she clearly refuses the weakness of her feminine condition.

This rejection of feminine weakness is also shown in the way Emma manages her relationships. Indeed, in this passage from Part Three, Chapter 5 of the novel, it is specified that concerning her relationship with Léon: 'he was rather becoming her mistress than she his'. Thus, Emma, manly, takes control of the relationship, refusing the traditional fragility and submission of women.