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**Woman Between Oppression and Rebellion in Daniel Defoe's Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress (1724), and Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary (1856).**

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To my husband, Hamza, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement.  
This work is also dedicated to my parents, who have always loved me unconditionally and  
taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve.

To my dear friend Hanane.

**Brinda Ait Ali**

Dedications

To my dear family

To my friends

**Lilia Hamitouche**

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**Abstract:**

This dissertation is a comparison study the of women's situation under oppression and their rebellion against patriarchal society through the works of Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) and Gustave Flaubert's *Madam Bovary* (1856). This comparative study has been achieved by applying Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory developed in her book *The SecondSex* (1949). This theory allows us to study these two literary works in relation to oppression and rebellion. The two authors have portrayed the oppression practiced on women; they have depicted how women are dominated by men. They have described also how these women rebel and seek for independence. This research has been divided into two chapters. The first chapter is entitled women's oppression, where we provided the reader with useful information about the idea of women's oppression and how it is shown through the different female characters of the two works. Then, in the second chapter we have studied the same female characters and the way they rebel against the oppression of men. Both novels depict women's struggle to be independent in a society that aspires to leave them stranded. Finally, we come to conclude that women as a subject of oppression are always seeking for rebellion to reach equality with men, but they are always seen as the weak and inferior sex compared to men.

**Key words:** oppression, feminism, patriarchy, resistance, women, rebellion.

## **Introduction:**

Women are one of the most oppressed groups of people among all civilizations and nations in the world. Throughout history, women have been abused, oppressed, and discriminated by the other sex. In fact, they were treated as inferior to men and seen as object through almost all civilizations and human history. They have undergone several social, economic and political inequalities which are regulated either by religious or cultural values. Women did not have access to education and professions within the patriarchal society. They kept a low profile and rarely spoke about social, intellectual, and economic aspects. The traditional role of women in society was bound to the domestic sphere. They were supposed to run the household and take care of their children and husbands.

Women's rebellion and oppression are narrated and introduced through different literary productions. Our work is concerned with the study of different aspects of women's oppression and the forms that their rebellion takes in Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857). The two authors successfully show the social and economic issues of women. They portray women's battle with social oppression and women's response to patriarchal structures.

The novel *Madame Bovary* written by Gustave Flaubert tells the story of a woman who is constantly experiencing dissatisfaction with her life as a result of the social inequalities women faced in the nineteenth century. The protagonist's lack of control over her life is also a pattern which is seen in Daniel Defoe's protagonist. The novels highlight women's conflicts and resistance in a patriarchal world through the two characters.

This study is based on Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory included in her book *The Second Sex* (1949). It aims to describe the oppression experienced by the female characters in both novels under study. In addition, it examines the different forms that the female characters adopt to rebel and resist oppression. Furthermore, the application of feminist theory in this study is an attempt to address the issues of inequality, women's oppression, and patriarchy that are reflected in these works, as well as to establish justice and equality between men and women.

## **Review of Literature:**

Both Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) have been subjects of a large criticism that has been carried out from different perspectives. *The Fortunate Mistress* has been studied by many scholars.

Yann Tholoniati in his article entitled *Daniel Defoe's Roxana: Puritanism and its Subversion* (2019) argues that the protagonist's behavior is characterized by pride. Though, the material necessity extenuates her lapse into willful prostitution. He claims that countless of unfortunates have faced her financial plight when her husband abandons her. Roxana according to him is a material symbol of her distress, he adds that she stands between two evils; the temptation to seize her landlord's offer and her resulting qualms<sup>1</sup>.

Jillian Baily, in his article entitled *The Dangerous Women of the Long Eighteenth Century* (2019), argues that Daniel Defoe's novel *The Fortunate Mistress* is an interesting novel, however it is full of contradictions, when relating to the novel's name. Roxana is presented as a self-serving and dangerous woman, because she is a mistress and a rebel who has abandoned her children. He claims that Roxana represents a woman who is left in poverty because of her dependence on her husband to get financial stability.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, Gaudi Delgado Falcon, in his essay about *Misogyny in the Representation of Women in the Eighteenthcentury novel*, argues that Defoe was aware of inadequateness of the laws during his time regarding women's rights in matrimony. In fact, he advocated for the education of women and defends them. He added that Defoe wrote this work in a period when every literary work was misogynistic. when he draws his heroine Roxana, he subordinates her to a man, he creates a woman who becomes a mistress who lives under the misogynic norms of a patriarchal society<sup>3</sup>.

Flaubert's work has been criticized by numerous scholars. The first critic Agustina Hesti, in her thesis entitled *The Contrastive Study between Fantasy and Reality of Emma's life as seen in Flaubert's Madame Bovary*, argues that Emma's head is full of fantasy and romantic dreams about life. During her study time, she forms and fills her mind with several romantic perceptions and illusions which are unachievable for a young woman of her economic status. Those perceptions and ideas inevitably become an illusion and remain a dream. Emma's inability to accept her reality and her obstinacy leads to her total failure.<sup>4</sup>

Frank N. Magill, in his book *Masterpieces of World Literature* (1952). Argues that *Madame Bovary* was among the first novels to emerge from France, and it provoked considerable debate among contemporary readers and critics. Some readers were shocked by the portrayal of value destruction and romantic adultery. While others saw the moral of the novel, and praised Flaubert's skill and honesty in treatment.<sup>5</sup>

Generius Blomen, in his thesis *Realism in Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary* (2001), argues that Flaubert would use coincidence selectively and carefully. He lets the world punish Emma. Apparently, she does not want the society to punish her. She punishes herself by making suicide<sup>6</sup>

### **Issue and Working Hypothesis:**

It appears from this review of the literature that both *The Fortunate Mistress* and *Madame Bovary* received many criticisms, and as far as we are informed, no work gathering the two works has been conducted. In this dissertation, we aim to study women's oppression in male dominated societies and how these women try to resist in order to reach their freedom. This research is a comparative study about women's oppression and rebellion that deals with the two works from a feminist perspective, relying on Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory included in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) that aim to bring equality between men and women. Despite the fact that the two works were written in different times and different places, they have in common their representation of women's oppression and rebellion. The two authors give voice to women to show their struggle and perseverance to free them from the patriarchal oppression.

### **Methodological Outline:**

This dissertation studies women's oppression and rebellion in Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857). In order to explore this universal and feminist theme in these novels, this dissertation is divided into four sections. The first will be devoted to a general introduction, which gives an overview about the issue raised and the second section will introduce the method, such as Simone De Beauvoir's feminist concepts developed in her book *The Second Sex* (1949). The materials part will provide the summaries of the two novels under study.

The third section states the results of the research study. The discussion section contains two chapters. In the first chapter, we will explore the female character's oppression and subordination by the patriarchal society in both works. The second chapter will study the resistance and the rebellion of these female characters against their society. Then we will conclude with a general conclusion to sum up the main point of the work.

### **End notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Tholoniatt Yann, *Daniel Defoe's Roxana: Puritanism and its subversion.* (France, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Baily Jullian. *The Dangerous Women of The Long Eighteenth Century: exploring the female character in Love in Excess, Roxana, and A Simple Story*. (Tennessee state university, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Falcon Gaudi, *Misogyny in The Representation of Women in the Eighteenth Century*.(2019).

<sup>4</sup> Hesti Agustina. *The Contrastive Study between Fantasy and Reality of Emma's life as seen in Flaubert's Madame Bovary*.(2000).52.

<sup>5</sup> N. Magill Frank. *Masterpieces of World Literature.America*.(1952).69.

<sup>6</sup> Blomen Generius,*Realism in Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary*.(2012).85.

## **Method and Materials:**

### **1-Method:**

- **Summary of Simone De Beauvoir's Theory of Feminism:**

This part of the dissertation aims to highlight the theoretical basis of our work. In fact, to achieve our purpose in discussing the issue treated in our research paper, we will try to apply some concepts of Simone de Beauvoir's theory *The Second Sex*.

Simone de Beauvoir is a French modern feminist, existentialist, philosopher and novelist, and one of the most influential authors in Feminism. Her works became the basis of the modern women's movement. Her book *The Second Sex* (1949) is considered as one of the most important works of feminism that has dealt with the experience of women throughout history. Her theory is based on the relation between men and women in different perspectives of life such as the cultural, social and biological. She was inspired by the French philosopher John Paul Sartre and the French writer Albert Camus and even the feminist theorist Virginia Wolf. Through her feminist revolution, she aimed at exploring the issues of gender differences and women rights and interests.

In the introduction of her work, De Beauvoir seeks to answer the question: "what does it mean to be a woman?"<sup>1</sup> Because there is still a controversial debate over this subject, she demonstrates women's position in the patriarchal society being oppressed and subjugated, and always described as the other in relation to men. This is expressed in her famous quote "One is not born but rather becomes a woman"<sup>2</sup>. Through this citation, she wants to underline that women are not born oppressed, but they are subordinated and marginalized by their societies to take the second position after men. In this context, de Beauvoir claims, "man is the norm and standard in the society, whereas woman is sex; woman is regarded as inferior to man and she is frequently coupled to play conventional roles"<sup>3</sup>. She adds:

To emancipate woman is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to man, not to deny them to her; let her have her independent existence and she will continue nonetheless to exist for him also; mutually recognizing each other as subject, each will yet remain for the other an Other.<sup>4</sup>

As a proponent of woman's equality and liberation, De Beauvoir believes that in order for a woman to define herself to herself, she must begin with "I am a woman"<sup>5</sup> and she must recognize many of these social norms to achieve liberation.

Moreover, in the chapter entitled *The Mother*, De Beauvoir highlights how women are trained to believe that motherhood is what defines them<sup>6</sup>. She claims: “a new existence is going to manifest itself and justify her own existence, she is proud of it”<sup>7</sup>. At the beginning of the chapter, she reveals how the position of mother is promoted. A woman becomes important only when she expects a baby, because everyone takes care of her, she says: “at present she is no longer a sex object or servant, but she embodies the species she is the promise of life, of eternity, her friends and her family respect her, even her caprices became sacred.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, becoming a mother is another way to receive love, care, and attention. In some way, men convince women to accept motherhood.

Furthermore, in the chapter *The Independent Woman*, Simone de Beauvoir asserts that woman’s professional success and her financial independence are the only ways to her emancipation. she asserts: “Woman wins concrete autonomy because she has an economic and social role”.<sup>9</sup> So, if they can support themselves economically, they can do much more powerful things for the improvement of their status and of the whole society. They can achieve a form of liberation.

## **2- Materials**

- **Summaries of the two Works**
- **The Fortunate Mistress (1724):**

*The Fortunate Mistress* is Daniel Defoe’s last novel and the second where the protagonist is a woman. The novel deals with women’s oppression during the eighteenth century in a patriarchal society that depicts a culture which denies women’s basic independence and oppresses them through marriage, pregnancy, and unequal rights in work-place and personal life. In fact, the novel highlights women’s conflicts and resistance in a patriarchal world through the character of Roxana. The story is about Roxana’s hardships and her fighting for her personal liberty .Roxana has seen a life of destitution with her children because her husband abandoned her after he destroyed his fortune. She finds herself in a quandary that she needs to solve. She then decides to be a courtesan to her landlord in order to protect her family and herself from poverty. She finds herself involved in a series of transgressive activities in order to reach her goals. At first, she accepts to become a mistress to the landlord, then the French prince, and the Dutch merchant and so many others. She decides to live and enjoy her own, and she refuses any conventional marriage because of her traumatic experience with her first husband. Her main objective is

to gain a maximum of wealth and her personal liberty as a sort of rebellion and resistance against society.<sup>10</sup>

- **Madame Bovary (1857)**

*Madame Bovary* is the story of Emma Bovary, a young girl who thinks she can find in marriage the romantic bliss that she had dreamed of. But, the mediocrity of her husband Charles and her entourage in Tostes, then in Yonville, made her lose all energy. She then threw herself into the passion she had for Léon, a young notary's clerk. After Leon's departure, she meets Rodolphe, who soon abandons her to her. She then finds Leon again, but she launches into luxurious expenses, and soon, burdened with debts, fatigue and remorse, she commits suicide with arsenic. Charles Bovary soon followed her into death, leaving little Berthe orphaned.<sup>11</sup>

- **Biographies of the Two Authors:**

- **Daniel Defoe's Biography:**

Daniel Defoe was born in London in 1660 as the son of middle class parents. He is a British novelist, trader, journalist, pamphleteer and spy. He has been seen as one of the earliest proponents of the English novel. At the age of fourteen, his parents sent him to the famous academy at Stoke Newington. In 1692, he developed into a sharp economic theorist and started to write eloquent, amusing and audacious tracts on public affairs. He was often in trouble with the authorities, and spent a period in prison.

Defoe produced more than three hundred works; *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) was his most famous novel. He wrote also *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana or The Fortunate Mistress* (1724). His novel *Roxana* (1724) is a less popular among other writings. It could not come out to reader after many years, because the issue which is discussed on the novel is not suitable to the time when it was written.

Daniel Defoe died on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1731 probably while in hiding from his creditors. He was buried in Bunhill fields, London.<sup>12</sup>

- **Gustave Flaubert's Biography:**

Gustave Flaubert was born into a Catholic Bourgeoisie family and Protestant ancestry. He was born on December, 12<sup>th</sup> 1821. He spent a joyless childhood, marked by the dark environment of his father's office apartment of the hospital of Rouen. Flaubert's works include *Madame Bovary* (1857), *Salammbô* (1862), and a weighty historical novel about the war between Rome and Carthage: *A sentimental Education* (1869), And others...

His last years were clouded by the disappearance of his friends, financial difficulties and health problems. He died suddenly on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1880 at Canteleu, in the hamlet of Croisset, struck by a cerebral hemorrhage. His burial in the monumental cemetery of Rouen takes place on May 11, 1880, in the presence of many important writers who recognize him as their master. Those writers are Émile Zola, Alphonse Daudet, Edmond de Goncourt, Théodore de Banville or Guy de Maupassant<sup>13</sup>

**End notes:**

<sup>1</sup> De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009). 25.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* 330

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid* 862

<sup>5</sup> *ibid* 25

<sup>6</sup> *ibid* 597

<sup>7</sup> *ibid* 612

<sup>8</sup> *ibid* 619

<sup>9</sup> *ibid* 813-862

<sup>10</sup> [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roxana:\\_The\\_Fortunate\\_Mistress](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roxana:_The_Fortunate_Mistress)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/bovary/summary/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Daniel-Defoe>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/m/madame-bovary/gustave-flaubert-biography>

**Results:**

In this part of our dissertation, light will be shed on the results reached through the comparative study of the English and French literature through Daniel Defoe's novel *The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) in the light of Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory developed in her book *The Second Sex* (1949).

The comparative study of the two novels has shown that even if the two works were written in different places and different periods of time, they share similarities in perspectives and aims which are women's struggles in a patriarchal society and how they resist oppression and discrimination. The analysis of both works shows that both Defoe and Flaubert aim to liberate women from male-dominated society which maintains control over women and the patriarchal oppression over them. In fact, both authors show their sympathy and solidarity toward women through their writings against a society that privileges men in all domains and relegates women to a lower status.

The first chapter of the discussion section entitled Women's Oppression in Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunate Mistress* and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, has explored the female character's oppression by the patriarchal society in both novel, relying on Simone De Beauvoir's theory and concepts developed on her book *The Second Sex* (1949) . In *The Fortunate Mistress*, the analysis has focused on Roxana's struggles with men's oppression and domination that affect her life and prevent her to live her freedom. She was not allowed to occupy the public sphere, because she is viewed powerless and useless for the society. These Prominent aspects are also portrayed through Madame Bovary's protagonist Emma Bovary.

In the second chapter discusses women's rebellion and analyses the two female characters' reactions and their rebellion against their society's dominations, by using different ways of resistance against these patriarchal values such as the rejection of marriage, adultery and transgression. Though Roxana and Emma search their own freedom by doing all what their societies reject.

## **Chapter One: Women's Oppression in Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunate Mistress* and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.**

In this chapter, we will explore the theme of oppression against women in Patriarchal Society in both Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857). Thus, we are going to rely on Simone De Beauvoir's feminist perspective in order to reinforce our research paper. De Beauvoir has mentioned in her book concepts which deal with women's struggles with oppression in their societies under man's domination. Within the two cited novels, the female characters share various features concerning their representation such as sex objects, birthing bodies and mothers.

In her book *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone De Beauvoir fights against the idea of the importance of biological differences between the sexes; she writes that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."<sup>1</sup> In fact, social and psychological educations create the most important differences between the sexes. In this process, the unequal relationship of power is essential. Although women, like all human beings, are originally independent. However, they are forced by men to become "the other"<sup>2</sup>.

Correspondingly, those conceptions are mainly present in Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857). Both novels share parallels on their themes. In fact, Patriarchal oppression over women and the representation of women as sex objects commonly appear in both novels.

- **The Representation of Women in a Patriarchal Society:**

The representation of women in the patriarchal society is one of the affinities shared in both Daniel Defoe and Gustave Flaubert's novels. Both novels' female characters are portrayed as being inferior to male characters which are privileged and given a special position according to their society.

In Defoe's *The Fortunate Mistress*, the author shows Roxana's struggles with her husband and the way she describes him as being foolish, less intelligent than her and totally incompetent to manage the financial affairs. He also refuses to listen to her advice as she begs him to change his ways and be more responsible to his work and his family. As she claims: "I attempted several times to persuade him to apply himself to his business; I put him in mind how his customers complained of the neglect of his servant on one hand, and how abundance broke in his debt..."<sup>3</sup> This statement shows Roxana's attempts to convince her husband to be more responsible in his business, but he refuses to take her words in a serious way, because a man cannot listen to a woman's advice about business, and this

reflects society's view of women as a second class citizens. Women are reserved for household and private sphere. As a result, Roxana suffers from her husband's inadequacies because she is under his care and supervision. She is then oppressed, and all of her problems revolve around marriage and man's control; she describes the unfortunate match with her husband saying;

like other young people of our sex, I chose him for being a handsome, jolly fellow, as I have said; for he was otherwise a weak, empty-headed, untaught creature, as any woman could ever desire to be coupled with: and here I must take the liberty, whatever I have to reproach myself within my after-conduct, to turn to my fellow-creatures, the young ladies of this country, and speak to them, by way of precaution.<sup>4</sup>

The previous statement shows the way Roxana regrets her marriage with her husband, by giving advice to other women for not falling into the same trap as her. She also blames herself for choosing her husband for his beauty, and ignores the most important criteria which are wisdom and responsibility, so that is the major cause of her downfall. Additionally, she is not given control of her husband's money, because she does not have the right to rule the family finance. In her book *Her Bread to Earn* (1993), Mona Scheurmannin claims "if Roxana were in charge, the business would not fail...These accounts set up the dynamics of the novel, focusing the reader's attention on Roxana's helplessness even in the face of her own good business sense"<sup>5</sup>. This shows that Roxana with her intelligence is able to rule a business better than her husband. However, her inability to control her own life and her choices make her incapable for doing other charges except households. Though, she is not in charge of the business sphere. Consequently, Roxana's failure is not due to her husband's foolish attitude, but to the fact that she is not given control of her own fortune and her life.

Furthermore, Roxana has no control over her destiny, because she depends on men in her life. At first, her father gives her legacy to her brother who then promptly loses it all and goes to prison. Then, her fool husband ruins his business and disappears. This shows the discrimination over women, and the social position that is given to them by their families and societies.

Roxana has never been projected as an important figure by the patriarchal values. In this context, Simone de Beauvoir has demonstrated how women are marginalized, and

hegemonised by patriarchal ideology by claiming: “to say that woman was the other is to say that a relationship of reciprocity between the sexes did not exist: whether earth, mother, or goddess, she was never a peer for man; her power asserted itself beyond human rule: she was thus outside of this rule. Society has always been male; political power has always been in man’s hands”<sup>6</sup>. That’s mean that there is a hierarchy made between men and women where men are the standards and women are the subordinates.

Additionally, Roxana finds herself powerless without the presence of a man in her life in a society where a woman who is left without a man is meaningless, and powerless. She used to support her foolish husband and used to be loyal to him just to avoid the society’s critics about a disloyal and unsatisfied woman toward her irresponsible husband. Now Roxana’s situation is more difficult, she has no one to turn to for help. Amy, Roxana’s loyal servant who does not accept to let her alone, she takes the children to the sister of Roxana’s husband, at first the aunt does not accept, even after Amy is falsely telling her that Roxana is going mad and they take her to the asylum. However, her husband takes them in charge, and finally accepts to manage the situation.

The landlord is the only person who can save Roxana from her distress. He lets her live in his house without paying the rent. However, in order to help her, he wants her to be his mistress. Amy tells Roxana that if she sleeps with him, he will help her financially. Roxana has no other options to keep herself alive and she finds herself totally dependent on him and then she is obliged to fulfill all his requests. As Saint Paul argues: “The man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man... Neither was man created for the woman; but the woman for the man... For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church”. This statement means men always hold a powerful position and have certain superiority over women so that, they control them physically and mentally.

Roxana changes her social status from wife to whore and mistress in order to fulfill men’s need and improve her economic conditions in a patriarchal society, where there is no place for women. As Simone De Beauvoir argues “Poverty is the strongest incentive; a temptation, against which no virtue is powerful enough to stand out to survive”<sup>10</sup>. Roxana then accepts to trade her virtue and lye with a man without any engagement. She accepts to be named a ‘whore’ rather than a wife to a new man.

Roxana’s dependency on men pursues after the Landlord’s death. She feels herself powerless without the presence of a man in her life, and that makes her future totally insecure. Thus, the French prince gives Roxana money while his visit to offer condolences, because he feels bad about the death of the jeweler as he was killed on the road to visit him.

Roxana tells the prince that she has to leave Paris and go to England because her financial position is still insecure. However, the prince does not want her to leave, he begs her to stay while praising her beauty, and promises her to provide her financially, then she accepts to stay. The prince and Roxana have a secret relationship; she officially becomes his mistress to improve her financial security and have more wealth to survive. We can argue that the prince and Roxana have mutual interests; both of them want something from the other. Both the landlord and the prince use her to feed their desires, but she overlooks it because she is totally dependent on them to survive. Roxana is weak without the presence of the man in her life, and that is not her choice but the choice of her society which considers her and women in general the weaker sex.

To sum up, Roxana does not stop proving to her society her weakness and her dependency on men in her life. She does not stop meeting rich men and becoming their mistress for exchange of money. So, that makes her a woman of pleasure who is in need of money. In consequence, men look at her in a pity way.

Likewise, in *Madame Bovary*, Emma Bovary, the protagonist, is a provincial girl who is dissatisfied with her life due to the social inequalities that women face. She was unhappy in her marriage and dissatisfied with her restricted lifestyle and lack of control over her life.<sup>11</sup> the title of the novel thus constitutes an important clue. *Madame Bovary* the title focusing on the surname of her husband underlines how much Emma is as if dispossessed of herself. She is totally defined by her title of wife and she loses this first name that distinguishes her and makes her a being in its own right. It is as if absorbed by this environment which is governed by customs and rules. She has identity only through her husband; even her lover Rodolphe underlines this dispossession by pointing out that Bovary is the name of another, he says, "why the entire world calls you thus! Besides it is not your name; it is the name of another!" Herepeated, "of another!"<sup>12</sup>. It must also be noted that Emma shares this name with Heloise Bovary, the first wife, and Charles's mother.

Simone De Beauvoir asserts that women's emancipation to men can only be achieved through her economic independence and her professional career<sup>13</sup>, but in this peasant society public life remains forbidden to Emma. It is inconceivable that she can have a direct influence on the outside world by exercising professional responsibilities that will give her real autonomy. The only paid activities that are allowed are those of the housewife. Since the beginning we notice that the education of women and men are completely different.

Charles studied to become a doctor, and later he exercised his profession. In the following passage, we notice the desire of his mother to see him a well-educated man:

She dreamed of high station; she already saw him, tall, handsome, clever, settled as an engineer or in the law. She taught him to read, and even, on an old piano, she had taught him two or three little songs. But to all this Monsieur Bovary, caring little for letters, said, "It was not worthwhile. Would they ever have the means to send him to a public school, to buy him a practice, or start him in business? Besides, with cheek a man always gets on in the world."<sup>13</sup>

Contrary to Emma, who is raised in a convent, her education is different from men's education, because she was educated to become housewife, not to serve society. She got a religious education in order to transmit the principle of Catholicism to her children. The purpose of this education is not the acquisition of book knowledge, but rather that of forming wives and mothers, taught to run a house to direct the servants. The education Emma received does not help her to discover the outside world, and therefore she will not be able to face the problems of life, nor to solve them. Simone De Beauvoir claims: "...her wings are cut and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly."<sup>14</sup>

Jobs are crucial in Beauvoir's view of women's freedom. Women can assert themselves as individuals and as members of society through activity and production. Unfortunately, Beauvoir still sees that having a husband or lover along with a job serves as a double burden for women.<sup>15</sup>

Emma was disappointed by her marriage. She discovered that the reality differs from books and all her dreams vanished in a society that condemned her to be inferior. She is not able to travel over the world or to live her life the way she wants. Emma did not expect much in her life, as long as this education did not allow her to explore life outside her home. She was condemned to assume marriage and motherhood. Hoping for a change in the status of women was a dream. According to Simone De Beauvoir, the lower status of women compared to men is due to their dependence on men and their status as housewives. Thus, Simone De Beauvoir sums up the role of the woman as follows:

Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition: the clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day. The housewife wears herself out marking time: she makes nothing, simply perpetuates the present ... Eating, sleeping, cleaning – the years no longer rise up towards heaven, they lie

spread out ahead, grey and identical. The battle against dust and dirt is never won.<sup>16</sup>

Emma engages in narcissistic behaviors in response to her inability to live up to her own expectations of what her life should be.<sup>17</sup> Emma, in the beginning of the novel, describes her schooling at the convent as being entranced with novels that “were solely concerned with love affairs, lovers and their beloveds, meek as lambs, unbelievably virtuous”<sup>18</sup>. Through these novels, Emma is exposed to the kind of life that eventually became her aspiration. However, within her middle-class bourgeois society in which women is expected to be content, she was never able to fully obtain that life. What is more, the men who would become Emma’s lovers were able to search for and arguably achieve that kind of life. Rodholphe is a man who owns his own land with a hefty income and can take up many lovers without being condemned by society<sup>19</sup>. Léon is able to travel to Paris and actually play out his dreams of “masked balls and laughing girls”<sup>20</sup>. Emma is not able to travel and does possess lovers; however, she is never really free to do so because of her status as a middle-class woman in the nineteenth century.

Emma is conscious about the injustice of the difference between men and women, and Rodholphe’s freedom is due to his male gender. She mentioned that being a woman imposes many limits on her.

Simone De Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex* (1949), fights against the idea of the importance of biological differences between the sexes; she writes that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”<sup>21</sup> This means that nature does not necessarily correspond to culture. To be a woman is not to be born with the female sex is to be classified in a certain way in society. One becomes a woman from a birth that does not give her the same chances as a man since she must be at the service of man and children. This idea is described in the following passage where Emma describes this inequality between men and women:

A man, at least, is free; he can explore each passion and every kingdom, conquer obstacles, and feast upon the most exotic pleasures. But a woman is continually thwarted. Both inert and yielding, against her are ranged the weakness of the flesh and the inequity of the law. Her will, like the veil strung to her bonnet, flutters in every breeze; always there is the desire urging, always the convention restraining.<sup>22</sup>

From the passage above, we can understand 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. 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, Emma is doubly affected, because not only must she be a woman and therefore not be free, but her own child is exposed to these same misfortunes.<sup>23</sup>

- **Sexual Objectification of Women :**

Women objectification is also an outstanding theme in both novels. Both Roxana and Emma are presented as sex objects; they are described as being sexually submissive. In both works the female characters are considered as sexual partners without regard to their humanity. As Simone De Beauvoir claims in her book *The Second Sex*; "she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female; this word is enough to define her from a man's mouth."<sup>24</sup> This statement explains women's status which is devoted just for having sexual relationships with their partners in order to have kids.

In *The Fortunate Mistress*, Roxana's husband does not treat her properly, he considers her just as a mother for his children or a housekeeper, and a sexual partner who must satisfy his sexual needs, and not as a lover and a wife. She must obey him, otherwise she is not a good wife and she is not competent for the private sphere. According to the patriarchal ideology, a woman can only be one of the two things; if she obeys the patriarchal rules she is a virtuous woman otherwise she is an unpleasant woman, this is why Roxana must obey her husband for satisfying all his needs and have to live in the discriminatory manmade culture on basis of sex, where women are viewed primarily as an object of male sexual desire.

Additionally, the fake marriage of Roxana and the landlord is an exchange of benefits, he takes advantage of Roxana's weakness to get her on his disposition. He tries to solve her financial problems for exchange of her body, he wants her to be his mistress. Amy, Roxana's servant tells her that if she sleeps with him, she will be saved from poverty. Roxana refuses at first, but she no longer accepts since she has no other option. The landlord does all his best to make Roxana feel comfortable, in order to go ahead with their relationship. They finally begin a sexual relationship and she becomes officially his

mistress. This is how women are seen, just a body, sexual objects and a production machines, they are just for men's desire and to fulfill their biological needs.

Furthermore, the landlord treats his mistress kindly, he always praises her by saying pretty words to her in order to attract her attention and make her fall for him, to get all what he needs. The landlord clearly uses these words to make Roxana do whatever he wants, by using kindness. Equally important, Defoe evokes the situation of Amy when she suggests to Roxana to sleep with the Landlord instead of her, like a sort of sacrifice and loyalty to her mistress, to show the delicate situation that Roxana lives when the landlord wants to have a relation with her. Amy accepts losing her virtue instead of Roxana to make her feel comfortable in her relationship with the Landlord.

After the death of the Landlord, a large number of rich men want to get close to Roxana for her beauty, among them the French prince. Roxana takes the advantage and continues her courtship with him, she then becomes his mistress and her only pleasure is to earn money not only to survive but also to thrive. Roxana's fear from poverty and her need for money makes her continue trading her virtue even when she is fortunate.

To sum up, the concept of sexual objectification of women occupies an important role in the feminist Theory. Women's sexual abuse had a great impact on the eighteenth century's lower class women, since most of them were obliged to give up their virtues, they have no other option for earning money, and rich men find their pleasure on having relationships with women outside marriage. They act like they own them and they probably do whatever they want with them. Roxana abandons her children to be a mistress to the Landlord, the prince and the merchant and they all want to own her.

According to De Beauvoir, as a girl develops physically, each new stage is perceived as traumatic and separates her from the other sex. As the girl's body matures, each new stage society reacts in an extremely hostile and threatening manner. De Beauvoir talks about the process of becoming flesh, which is the process by which one realizes and perceives himself as a sexual, physical being that is exposed to another's gaze.<sup>25</sup>

Emma's physical beauty plays an important role in the novel. There are many descriptions of her body, hair, and clothing. It is the center of intention of men starting with Charles who is seduced by her beauty then her lovers, Leon and Rodolphe, who wanted at all costs to have her body, they took advantage of her weakness and her desire to live the love that she read about in the novels and could not find in her marriage.

Emma meets Rodolphe Boulanger, aristocrat, single who loves women, he decides to seduce Emma for her beauty but also out of boredom, he is a man who has experience in

love, he used Emma to satisfy his sexual needs, unlike Emma who was crazy in love with him and she easily gives in to his desires. Once Rudolph was satisfied with her, he ran away and left her a letter that stuck her in bed for several days, Emma was just like any other mistress for him. The fact of being perceived as a body had already been analyzed by Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*:

She becomes an object; and she grasps herself as object; she is surprised to discover this new aspect of her being: it seems to her that she has been doubles.<sup>26</sup>

We can see that Emma's gender role may affect her life's trajectory even more than her social standing. Emma is frequently portrayed as the object of male's gaze: her husband's, Rodolphe's, Leon's, Emma's has only sexual control over the men in her life. When she searches desperately for money, she has to ask men for it, and the only thing she can use to persuade them to give it to her is sex. The fact that she has no other ways to earn money because she is a woman, is a result of the misogynistic society in which she lives.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, Emma is oppressed by patriarchal French society during the 1800s. Indeed, Emma was a victim of every man she has met in her life, beginning with her husband Charles and ending with her lovers who used her to satisfy their sensual desires.

#### **End notes :**

<sup>1</sup>De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009). 25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid 233

<sup>3</sup>Defoe, Daniel. 1724. *The Fortunate Mistress*.( UK,Oxford world's classics, 2008).10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 7

<sup>5</sup>Shermannin, Mona. *Her Bread to Earn*. (UP of Kentucky, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009).105.

<sup>7</sup>ibid 133.

<sup>8</sup>ibid.

<sup>9</sup> ibid

<sup>10</sup><sup>3</sup>Defoe, Daniel. 1724. *The Fortunate Mistress*.( UK,Oxford world's classics, 2008).27

<sup>11</sup> C. Giesler Audrey, *Madame Bovary Syndrome: The Female Protagonist Plight* (Eastern Kentucky University, 2020).52.

- <sup>12</sup> Flaubert Gustave.1857. *Madame Bovary*. (Paris, France: Folio Classique.2001).194.
- <sup>13</sup> De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009).713.
- <sup>14</sup> Flaubert Gustave.1857. *Madame Bovary*. (Paris, France: Folio Classique.2001).7.
- <sup>15</sup> De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009).45.
- <sup>16</sup> De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009).254.
- <sup>17</sup> C. Giesler Audrey, *Madame Bovary Syndrome: The Female Protagonist Plight* (Eastern Kentucky University, 2020).
- <sup>18</sup> Flaubert Gustave.1857. *Madame Bovary*. (Paris, France: Folio Classique.2001).34.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibed 114.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibed 105.
- <sup>21</sup> De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009).13.
- <sup>22</sup> Flaubert Gustave.1857. *Madame Bovary*. (Paris, France: Folio Classique.2001).76.
- <sup>23</sup> <https://edubirdie.com/examples/the-elements-of-feminism-in-madame-bovary/>
- <sup>24</sup> De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009).523.
- <sup>25</sup> <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/bovary/character/emma-bovary/>
- <sup>26</sup> De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009).365.
- <sup>27</sup> <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/bovary/canalysis/>

## **Chapter Two: Women's Resistance in the Fortunate Mistress and Madame Bovary:**

In this chapter we are going to shed light on women's resistance against their societies in Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunate Mistress* and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, examining the way the characters of Roxana and Emma are rebelling against male dominated cultural values, which are bounded by patriarchal rules and marriage institution. Simone De Beauvoir asserts that patriarchal society imposes its laws on women, working through the intermediary of religion and customs in order to maintain them in a secondary position<sup>1</sup>. So, for challenging this established patriarchal system the characters of the two novels resist and protest by breaking the general rules and assume all the consequences.

- **Roxana's Different Ways of Rebellion :**
- **The Rejection of Marriage:**

The rejection of marriage was one of women's forms of resistance in the late eighteenth century, because they were dominated and manipulated by using marriage institution. Though, Roxana's perspective on marriage and the status of women accurately reflect the reality of the eighteenth century life. A wife has no right to give her opinion. All what she possesses belongs to her husband, and if she works and earns money, that also is his. A wife could do nothing without her husband's permission.

Roxana experienced a hard matrimonial life. She was manipulated by her husband now she refuses any engagement with men; she chooses her personal liberty and to celebrate her freedom instead. Roxana chooses to become a strong independent woman, who does not need men's controls. She realizes that all her problems revolve around marriage and man's domination.

Roxana learns her lesson after only one failed marriage. Thus, she does not want another risky marriage, she said: "I had no inclination to be a wife again, a had such bad luck with my first husband.." <sup>2</sup>

By the character of Roxana, Defoe describes women's resistance by rejecting all sorts of marriage to rebel against the society and to feel free and independent. In this regard, Simone De Beauvoir claims:

Woman, integrated as slave or vassal into the family group dominated by fathers and brothers, has always been given in marriage to serve the interests of other males. In primitive times, the clan or paternal gens treated her almost like a an object: she is part of payments to which two

groups mutually consent; her condition was not deeply modified when marriage evolved into a contractual form.<sup>3</sup>

From this statement, we can understand that woman does not represent herself as a single being, but rather a group of individuals. This makes her condemned and responsible of a group of her family members, not only about herself. Roxana is one of these victims who sacrificed her own freedom to satisfy her family's choice, a decision she came to regret after being bound to an irresponsible man.

In the beginning of the novel, Roxana describes her unfortunate life with her husband and expresses her regret for her choice to marry him by advising women who read her to not marry a fool by saying ;

If you have any regard to your future happiness, any view of living comfortably with a husband, any hope of preserving your fortunes, or restoring them after any disaster, never, ladies, marry a fool; any husband rather than a fool. With some other husbands you may be unhappy, but with a fool you will be miserable; with another husband you may, I say, be unhappy, but with a fool you must; nay, if he would, he cannot make you easy; everything he does is so awkward, everything he says is so empty, a woman of any sense cannot but be surfeited and sick of him twenty times a day.<sup>4</sup>

The statement above shows that Roxana regrets her engagement with an empty-headed man who doesn't have any soul of responsibility, a husband who deprives her from her personal liberty and from living a life that she desires. She finds herself with five children at her young age with a fool and irresponsible husband who destroys the family's fortune. In this statement, Roxana gives advice to the readers and women in particular to not marry a fool as she did. She denounces the danger by marrying her foolish husband, and the consequences that she faces in her life. According to Roxana, marriage is not the main goal for an independent woman; she does not require a man in order to achieve her aspirations. Woman is not a deficient creature to be completed and controlled by a husband. Marriage is a choice that a woman could do or not, and not an achievement for a successful life. Thus Roxana's marital life serves as a current illustration of this concept.

Roxana deserves peace in her life with her own fortune and not a life of hardships with a foolish man. She is an intelligent woman who can rule a business and make a successful

achievement alone, however, her engagement to Brawer was not a wise decision as it results in a loss of autonomy and control over her own wealth and life.

Roxana does not only want to be an independent woman but also forced by the conditions. After her husband's failure and his abandonment, she is left to endure the trial of life. Then, she resorts to courtship with wealthy and powerful men to get through her situation for exchange with her body. At first, she accepts to become a mistress to the landlord rather than becoming a wife to a new man, identifying that she "rather chooses to give up her virtue than giving up one's natural right by marrying"<sup>5</sup>. Roxana, then, lives with the landlord without any official engagement even with his efforts for being nice to her and with all the strong chemistry between them. However she chooses to be not more than a mistress. The landlord thinks at first that Roxana's rejection of his proposition is all a matter of money, because she believes that she would not be financially free and she will be obliged to share his fortune with another person, he also thinks that maybe she had already promised another man to marry with him, he finally understands that she is troubled by her need for personal freedom, she is scared about the idea that she will be a man's own. She presents her view about marriage: "is nothing but giving up liberty, estate authority, and everything to the man, and the woman was indeed a mere woman ever after that is to say, a slave".<sup>6</sup>

She believes that marriage is nothing but giving up her personal liberty and an end to her emancipation, and as a result, she is deprived of many aspects of life. She does not want to be a marionette to man; she wants to do all what she desires and not what her society wants her to do. In this context, Roxana resists the patriarchal values by rejecting marriage, which seeks to dominate women and restrict their roles in society, and deprives them from managing themselves. She attempts to enjoy her freedom by breaking society's norms.

After the death of the Landlord, the French prince tried to be closer to Roxana by offering her money and precious gifts, and eventually asked her to be his wife. Roxana not only refused to engage with the landlord, but also with the prince despite all his wealth and the high status that he has, but she still worries about her personal and financial liberty. Even with all her attachment and the adultery things she does commit with him she still prefers being a mistress and growing her wealth by earning a fortune from the prince.

Roxana's argument against marriage continues with the Dutch merchant, she also refuses to marry him even when he promises to allow her to rule his money as her own, and have no control over her and her money. Roxana does not trust him, because she is certain that the offer should not be made, and if it should be, the merchant can easily change his mind because Roxana would become his property, she claims:

If I should be a wife, all I had then, was given up to the husband, and I was to be under his authority only; and as I had money enough, and needed not fear being what they call a cast of mistress, so I had no need to give him twenty thousand pounds to marry me.<sup>7</sup>

This explains Roxana's refusal of the merchant; she understands that despite his words and good intentions, the only way for a woman to be equal to a man is being single. Moreover, Roxana's refusal of marriage is evident when she replies to her friend Sir Robert Clayton saying:

I know no state of matrimony, but what was, at best , a state of inferiority, if not of bondage; that I had no notion of it; that I liv'd a life of absolute liberty now; was free as I was born, and having a plentiful fortune, I did not understand what coherence the words honor and obey had with the liberty of a free women; that I knew no reason the men had to engross the whole liberty of the race, make the women notwithstanding any disparity of fortune, be subject to the laws of marriage.<sup>8</sup>

The above statement shows that Roxana categorically refuses the merchant's suggestion, because she is in love with her liberty, especially when she is demoralized and loses her faith in the institution of marriage because of her traumatic experience and the failure of her previous relationships this convinces her that she no longer wishes to become a wife again. Roxana draws a comparison between wives and mistresses saying:

A wife is treated with indifference, a mistress with a strong passion; a wife is looked upon, as but an upper-servant, a mistress is a sovereign; a wife must give up all she has; [...] whereas a mistress makes the saying true, that what the man has is hers and what she has , is her own; a wife bears a thousand insults, and is forced to sit still and bear it, or part and be undone; a mistress insulted, helps herself immediately, and takes another.<sup>9</sup>

As a mistress, Roxana thinks that when there is no legal bonds, so neither her partner can ruin her financially, nor his ruin affects her, because the legal bound between her and her husband proved to be destructive.

To conclude, Roxana participates in a desperation shared by many women of her time. While other women may have solved their problems differently than she did such as entering into bigamous marriage to secure financial stability, Roxana chooses to become a mistress to reinforce her financial security and this is her biggest achievement.

- **Roxana's Adultery and Transgression:**

The second form of resistance in *The Fortunate Mistress* is expressed through Roxana's engagement in adultery and her transgression of social and moral norms. While Roxana is involved in a series of relationships outside marriage with several men and become a woman of pleasure as a sort of business and trade for her body for financial affairs, also to prove her strength and freedom to the society. Roxana justifies her transgressed acts by using her traumatic experience of poverty and her fear of re-experiencing it as an excuse. She does not even judge herself or have remorse about her sinful acts. In other words, she accepts to be a whore, so that to rebel against her society. She considers herself free for doing whatever the patriarchal society refuses.

At first, Roxana accepts to have body connection with the landlord for exchange with financial affairs and that was in spite of her, because she was unable to do it at first but her conditions and Amy's persuasion leads her to lie in bed with him, Amy says:

O madam, there's abundance of charity begins in that vice; and he is not so unacquainted with things as not to know that poverty is the strongest incentive; a temptation against which no virtue is powerful enough to stand out; he knows your condition as well as you do. Well and what then? Why then he knows too that you are young and handsome, and he has the surest bait in the world to take you with.<sup>10</sup>

She finally decides to become a whore saying "as necessity first debauch'd me, and poverty made me a whore as the beginning; so excess of avarice for getting money, and access vanity, continued me in crime"<sup>7</sup>. This statement shows that Roxana's fear from poverty makes her a prostitute. She does not want the relationship at first as it was mentioned before and she went through it only because she was obliged to, as she has no

other option. She believes that she does a sin, because her conscience outweighs her desire, but later she fully enjoys the relation as she gets all what she desires. Both the landlord and Roxana have their spouses alive and still under their names, what makes their relationship a form of transgression.

Amy is the one who encourages Roxana to commit adultery; she is the one who convinces her to lye in bed with the landlord. She even offered to do it for her when she refused. Roxana uses Amy as an excuse to her adultery to avoid remorse. At the same time she blamed herself for accepting to do the sin. She does not blame the Landlord for his acts towards her, because “he did nothing, but what he thought was lawful”<sup>11</sup>. She blames herself “I did what my own conscience convinced me..., was horribly unlawful, scandalous, and abominable.”<sup>12</sup>. This shows Roxana’s struggles with a deep internal conflict concerning her moral transgressions. She repeatedly cites her destitution and poverty as the driving forces behind her actions, using them as a form of justification “I am a whore Amy, neither better nor worse, I assure you.”<sup>13</sup> Roxana’s transgression does not reflect society’s moral values, so that is why it is considered as a rebellion.

With the landlord’s death, Roxana becomes wealthy enough to live peacefully and independently. However, her trauma of poverty always pushes her to do more and more transgresses affaires to have more relations in order to win money because of her fear to experience financial crises once again. She starts then another affair with the Prince after a few days of the landlord’s death, but this time her goal is not to survive; her desire is bigger than having some money, but to thrive and grow her wealth and her social status.

Roxana is so lucky, because her beauty yet attracts rich and successful men even after all the life hardship that she experiences, and after all the children that she gave birth to. Roxana continues her adulterous relationship with the prince, she enjoys the relation, but this time more or less inner struggles not like her relation with the landlord. Her conscience always finds a way to disturb her happiness to find herself on remorse again, but she always finds a way to justify it by her past, and finds an excuse to convince herself by doing the best choice to avoid remorse.

Roxana’s worry is not only about her sin, but also about the prince’s sin and their responsibility for their child’s future and the impact of their adultery on him. She says:

Since this, and when I have looked back upon these things with eyes unprocessed with crime (...) I have often wondered with what pleasure or satisfaction the prince could look upon the poor innocent infant.<sup>14</sup>

Another factor that heightens her sense of guilt is the presence of her husband and daughter. Their existence serves as a constant reminder of her wrongdoings, making her feel deeply uncomfortable about her actions. Not only did she steal another woman's husband, but also abandoned her own children. These memories bring back pain of her past and the miseries she endured. Although she was ashamed of her transgressions, she chooses to emotionally detach herself from them.

Roxana's adultery does not stop on the Landlord and the French prince, she continues her courtship with men having relations with them for money. Though her fears from poverty and her trauma make her pervert and all what she asks is money.

- **Financial Independence:**

Roxana's desire to succeed is not driven by pleasure, but by a need for stability and self-reliance. In her view, women must achieve financial independence to avoid being subjected to male dominance. She firmly believes that when a woman relies on her husband for financial support, she becomes vulnerable to control and submission. Roxana aspires to stand strong on her own in a society where women are especially exposed to poverty due to inadequate social protection. When her husband first abandons her and leaves her in destitution, she finds herself in a deeply distressing and uncertain situation. She says:

The house, that was before handsomely furnished with pictures and ornaments, cabinets, pair-glasses, and everything suitable, was now striped, and naked, most of the goods having been seized by the landlord for rent, or sold to buy necessaries; in a word, all was misery and distress.<sup>15</sup>

Her conditions are worse that she decides to manage it and find solution. So, she chooses to become a mistress in order to gain money from wealthy men. In fact, she accepts to lose her virtue in order to have financial stability and manage her own business. Now, she is described as being strong and independent because she abandoned the prescribed life plan of a woman of her time; she breaks her societies' rules in order to gain her life and improve her financial status. In this regard Simone De Beauvoir claims:

Woman seeks emancipation through work: bound to her father's or husband's household, she is most often satisfied just to bring home some extra money; she works outside the family, but for it; and since the working woman does not have to support herself completely, she ends up accepting remuneration far inferior to that of which a man demands.<sup>16</sup>

This means women are emancipating from men's oppression through work. They are challenging women's gender role by their financial independence. Though Roxana is forced to be independent after a life of hardship with an irresponsible husband and apathetic relatives. However, her emancipation is not like other women of her society, she uses prostitution to gain money. She prefers being without virtue rather than being without money she says, "poverty is the strongest incentive; a temptation, against which no virtue is powerful enough to stand out" <sup>17</sup>. From this statement, one can notice that Roxana can do anything just to be rich. After the landlord's death, Roxana takes possession of his fortune and manages to increase it, she has no intention of allowing any man to control her finances. She spends the rest of her life attempting to protect herself against returning to her original precarious position. Roxana has no intention of going back to her poverty, though after hearing the news of the jeweler's death, she immediately thinks of being thrown back to poverty once again.

Roxana switches from a woman of pleasure to woman of business. She starts to save the money she earns from prostitution to turn it into investment, and her friend Sir Robert contributes to her success. She gives him the money and he transforms it into a business. This is to say that Roxana's wealth is not just through her efforts as a courtesan, but rather through the successful investment strategies that she made with the contribution of her friend Sir Robert.

To conclude, Daniel Defoe, through *The Fortunate Mistress*, offers a compelling exploration of the powerful influence that wealth and economic stability exert on individual lives and societal roles, particularly for women. Roxana's journey illustrates not only the possibilities of social mobility through financial independence but also the psychological burden that comes with it. Her relentless pursuit of wealth does not cease even after she achieves material success; instead, it becomes a means of securing her autonomy and protecting herself from the vulnerabilities she once experienced. Defoe thus portrays a world in which money is not merely a tool for comfort, but a shield against social and personal ruin. Through Roxana, he presents a woman who, shaped by the hardships of poverty and the limited roles available to her gender, transforms herself into a symbol of resilience and ambition. Yet, this transformation is not without cost her conscience, relationships, and sense of identity are all affected by her devotion to wealth. Ultimately, the novel underscores the idea that financial independence, while empowering, can also become a source of anxiety and moral conflict, especially for women navigating a patriarchal society. Defoe's narrative compels the reader to reflect on the price of survival

and the societal conditions that force women like Roxana to continually strive for economic security at the expense of personal peace.

## **2- Emma Bovary's Ways of Rebellion:**

When Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* was published in 1856, the French government banned it, and Flaubert was put on trial for the book's overt sexuality. Underneath the sexual justifications, the charges were most likely motivated by a depiction of a woman expressing her dissatisfaction with traditional female roles. His protagonist, Emma, exemplifies the realistic struggle women life in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>18</sup> the heroine Emma rebels against the traditional behavior of a woman through various manners.

- **Failure of Marriage:**

When Emma marries Charles, she envisions marriage as a source of lasting happiness. She believes that marrying a doctor will allow her to escape the modest life she has known and enter the bourgeois class. However, her understanding of womanhood is shaped by the societal norms and gender roles imposed on women, which compel them to conform to socially constructed expectations. In this sense, women are molded by the cultural and social environments in which they live. For Emma, marriage appears to be a means of salvation from an ordinary and unremarkable existence. Nevertheless, the reality of her life after marriage quickly proves to be a stark contrast to the idealized expectations she once held:

Before marriage she thought herself in love; but since the happiness that should have followed failed to come, she must, she thought, have been mistaken. And Emma tried to find out what one meant exactly in life by the words bliss, passion, ecstasy, that had appeared to her so beautiful in books.<sup>18</sup>

From the quotation above, one may understand that Emma dreams of a loving husband but almost ironically paired with Charles, a bored disinterest character, his routine and embraces destroyed all excitement for Emma. She becomes irritated with his coarse ways and his stupidity. Marriage became a prison for her, where monotony and boredom slowly consumed her, like a caged bird deprived of freedom. After a short period of conjugal life, Emma begins to regret. Her disappointment prompted her first words to be spoken: "O God, O God, why did I get married!"<sup>19</sup>

Simone De Beauvoir admits that she has negative emotions about marriage and, in the following passage she explains her perception of marriage:

The principle of marriage is obscene because it transforms an exchange that should be founded on a spontaneous impulse into rights and duties, it gives bodies an instrumental, thus degrading, side by side by dooming them to grasp themselves in their generality, the husband is frozen by the idea that accomplishing a duty, and the wife is ashamed to feel delivered to someone who exercises a right over her.<sup>20</sup>

Emma's marriage is the best example of the marriage described by Simone De Beauvoir. She rebels against the standards of her society. She was considered to be "the wife of Charles Bovary" and not a particular entity because men consider their wives as possessions. Beauvoir says: "Woman is her husband's prey, his property."<sup>21</sup>

In a patriarchal society, women must preserve the norms of society in general, as well, those of the family in particular. The act of Emma's betrayal to her marriage is an example of her rebellion against her expected role. She makes the decision to gain freedom by breaking social norms. It is a form of revenge and refusal of her new life. But, if the wife is consistently blamed, she was mostly the victim, because against her fickle husband, she could not do anything. For a woman without financial independence, divorce was synonymous with precariousness.

Adultery is indeed experienced by Emma as a revenge for the sufferings caused by marriage. She experienced a satisfaction of revenge. Had she not endured enough suffering?. The accumulated resentment against her husband, an obstacle to happiness, considered responsible for all the misery of daily life, nourishes adulterous love. Domestic mediocrity pushed her to luxurious fantasies. Opposed to marriage, to the space of the house, adultery is escape, openness, enlargement, access to the world forbidden from outside, and a transgression of limits imposed on women. Their releases, subject to strict regulations, are condemned as offenses as soon as they no longer respect the conditions set by the code that governs women's conduct.

The first affair of Emma is based on the lack of love when she met Leon, her first lover; she wasn't in love with her husband so she takes a lover to satisfy herself. Adultery is a way out of boredom described in the following passage: "she found in adultery all the platitudes of marriage"<sup>22</sup>. For Emma, adultery is a way out of boredom. She thinks that it will allow her to escape the platitudes of marriage. More specifically with regard to the adulterous love relationship, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Gérard Leleu writes that "all infidelity is based on dissatisfaction"<sup>23</sup>

When Emma met Rodholphe, she struck by the apparent nobility and charm of the young man. Rudolph is a Don Juan, he possesses the signs of belonging to a socially superior class. He owns farms, woods, he hunts on horseback, travels to Paris, owns horses he rides. With Emma he uses dress seductions with much lucidity. It thus brings together all the talents that can give Emma the illusion of finally living the dream of her adolescence love and passion, the lover of her romanesque readings has become reality: She was finally going to possess these joys of love, this fever of happiness of which she had despaired. She was finely happy she repeated; "I have a lover! A lover!"<sup>24</sup> at last she was to know those joys of love, she was entering upon a marvelous world, she didn't express any regret she was happy and that's all what matter to her, Without caring about the circumstances, she violates her society's norms regarding so-called proper female behavior because she is dissatisfied living as a middle-class, provincial, married woman and mother whose world is comprised solely by her home, husband, and child.

Emma wants to be able to do more with her life, but doing more implies that she will violate the traditional roles of wife and mother. One may conclude that Emma's unhappiness is not entirely her fault. Her society contributes to construct ideas and notions regarding her sense of self and others that ultimately obstruct her ability to function in life.

#### **b-Other Forms of Rebellion:**

Emma is a materialist, who wishes to be noble and loved by high society. She wants to get people's attention. It's a very human reason; we only want what we don't have. So it is possible that Emma, raised in the same aristocratic milieu and stripped of her bourgeois origin, either a transformed woman or perhaps her whims would be considered normal.

It has been said that Emma is materialistic, bourgeois, and superficial. In addition, she is so selfish and fixed on her idea of happiness that she breaks the lives of her whole family not only with her suicide, which condemn her daughter to live in poverty and with people who do not love her. Emma is also determined to impose her own scenario on life. She has a man's character. Her tyranny of taste and her taste for dominance, combined with her quick demonstration of passion, are qualities that mix the masculine and the feminine. She is not just a poor little girl who is tired of life; she takes her in her hands and demonstrates her bravery and determination.

Emma wanted her independence more than anything. Flaubert's female protagonist firstly wanted to have a noble position in the high society of that time and to a certain extent she tried to experiment in her own life everything in the books she used to read. She

rebels against the traditional behavior of a woman, for example through various masculine fashion. her display of male fashion, Despite having a feminine attitude, Flaubert describe Emma's clothing with strong masculine connotations, Emma's first description, "she had like tucked into the front of her bodice, a tortoiseshell lorgnon" the tortoiseshell eyeglass is suggestive of masculine fashion, she also changed her hair style described in the following passage: often she changed her coiffure: she did her hair a la chinoise, in loose curls she plaited her at the side and rolled in under, like a man.<sup>25</sup>

Arriving in Yountville, in a man's hat and riding costume for the ride with Rodholphe,, she also dressed like a man for the masked ball. This shows how apathetic is towards her role as a woman she wanted to be free like men. She was displaying masculine behavior that releases her from the restraints of a woman. Emma by doing those things, questions the gender that is attributed to her. Even if she was a victim of patriarchal society she was not passive, she seek to emancipate herself and to get out of the constraints imposed on her by adopting those behaviors. This was her way to express this freedom which men enjoy and which she envies a lot.

Emma's masculinity is not limited to her outfit but also in her behavior and attitude. For example she expropriates what at that time was a male prerogative, smoking in public "just to vex people" and also putting Rodholphe pipe into her mouth. She knows that smoking was certainly reserved for men but she did it as to say that she is also free to do and to act exactly like men. She also helped her husband to bleed Monsieur Boulanger's man, this passage shows that Emma did not accept to appear as a fragile woman and refuses the weakness of her feminine condition.<sup>26</sup>

In her relation with Leon she takes control of the relationship, refusing the traditional fragility and submission of women. With her lover, Leon, Emma experiences a reversal of sexual roles: Leon feminizes and ends up becoming «Emma's mistress» who, at the same time, acquires a sort of male ascendant over her lover.

Another aspect of femininity that Emma questions is maternity. According to social norms, women are supposed to marry and have children, but Emma rejects it. Women's socioeconomic status influences their behavior and perceptions of motherhood. They cannot wish to have a daughter whose existence, in their opinion, would be similar to their own. They believe that having a son will provide them with a better life than their current status as alienated and oppressed women. For the same reasons Emma wants a son this idea of having a male as a child was like revenge.

Emma's position as a woman, according to Simone De Beauvoir, is determined by her duties as a wife and mother. Emma rejects these obligations and seeks independence. She denies being a mother and expresses regret over marrying and having children with a man she does not love. In relation to motherhood, De Beauvoir asserts that: «Motherhood relegates women to a secondary existence.»<sup>27</sup>

Emma's lack of maternal aptitude is made evident by Berthe's existence; she did not want to give birth to a girl; she wanted a boy. Emma views motherhood simply as a way to try something new, she showed little interest in becoming a mother.

When Emma was pregnant, her unborn child held little interest in her. When her daughter was born, she completely ignored her. When she decided to flee with her lover Rodolphe, she expressed no remorse; she was not even thinking of her daughter. The only thing she thought about was her happiness away from her annoying husband.

Between the window and Emma's work table was little Berthe, tottering about in her knitted bootees, and trying to reach her mother and grab hold of the ends of her apron strings. Leave me alone, cried Emma, pushing her away. The child soon came back, even closer; and, leaning her arms on her mother's knees, gazed up at her with her big blue eyes, while a thread of clear saliva dribbled from her lip onto Emma's silk apron. Leave me alone!' she repeated very irritably. Her expression frightened the child, who began to cry. OH! For heaven's sake leave me alone! She exclaimed, shoving her away with her elbow. Berthe fell against the foot of the chest of drawers, cutting her cheek on the brass fitting; the cut began to bleed.<sup>28</sup>

This scene leaves no doubt about Emma's relationship to Berthe: she has no feelings of love, care, or responsibility toward her daughter. Emma is not monstrous – simply inexperienced at doing or feeling anything that does not benefit her directly. Emma's romanticized view of her life does not extend to her child, whom she treats as a burden that is inhibiting her opportunity for real love and true happiness. She comes to associate her child with the boredom of domesticity.

To conclude, Emma Bovary embodies a profound challenge to traditional cultural values and the rigid expectations imposed upon women within a patriarchal society. Refusing to conform to the roles of the obedient wife and devoted mother, she seeks to liberate herself from the oppressive social norms that confine her. Her rebellion is not

merely personal but symbolic of a broader resistance against the institutions that reduce women to passive figures within domestic life. Emma represents the modern perception of the dissatisfied, neglected housewife—one who, in her yearning for passion, individuality, and fulfillment, attempts to escape the monotony and constraints of a stifling and conformist society. Through her aspirations and eventual downfall, she exposes the emotional and psychological cost of a life lived in repression, making her a timeless figure of both defiance and tragic disillusionment.

**End notes:**

<sup>1</sup> De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009). 91.

<sup>2</sup>. ibed

<sup>3</sup> De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009).503.

<sup>4</sup> Defoe Daniel. 1724. *The Fortunate Mistress*.( UK,Oxford world's classics, 2008).7-8.

<sup>5</sup> ibid 10.

<sup>6</sup> ibid 7.

<sup>7</sup> ibid 183.

<sup>8</sup> ibid 149.

9. ibid 114.

10. ibid 21.

11.

12.

13.

<sup>14</sup>. ibid 67.

<sup>15</sup>. ibid 17.

<sup>16</sup>. De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009).166.

<sup>17</sup>Defoe Daniel. 1724. *The Fortunate Mistress*.( UK,Oxford world's classics, 2008).27.

<sup>18</sup> Flaubert Gustave.1857. *Madame Bovary*. (Paris, France: Folio Classique.2001). 42.

<sup>19</sup><https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/celebrate-banned-books-week-with-these-six-reads/>

<sup>20</sup>De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009).530.

<sup>21</sup> Ibed 206

<sup>22</sup> Ibed 641

<sup>23</sup> Flaubert Gustave.1857. *Madame Bovary*. (Paris, France: Folio Classique.2001).379.

<sup>24</sup> (Wattier and Picard 395).

<sup>25</sup> Flaubert Gustave.1857. *Madame Bovary*. (Paris, France: Folio Classique.2001).379.

<sup>26</sup> <https://edubirdie.com/examples/the-elements-of-feminism-in-madame-bovary/>

<sup>27</sup> De Beauvoir Simone.1949. *The Second Sex*. (London, England, Vintage Classics, 2009).530

<sup>28</sup> Flaubert Gustave.1857. *Madame Bovary*. (Paris, France: Folio Classique.2001).178

## **Conclusion:**

Throughout this dissertation entitled “Woman Between Oppression and Rebellion in Daniel Defoe’s *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724), and Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856),” we have endeavored to shed light on the social status of women, their roles within the private and public spheres, and the issues they face in relation to household responsibilities, marriage, and motherhood. Our research has focused on the ways in which women are subjected to various forms of oppression and how the female protagonists of both novels react and rebel against patriarchal dominance.

Relying on Simone de Beauvoir’s seminal feminist theory as developed in *The Second Sex*, we were able to deepen our understanding of the construction of gender roles and their impact on women’s identity and autonomy. This theoretical framework served as a lens through which we interpreted the struggles of Roxana and Emma Bovary, not only as literary characters but as representatives of a broader feminine experience shaped by social expectations and constraints.

The dissertation has been structured in two main chapters: the first addresses the manifestations of female oppression within patriarchal society, while the second examines the various forms of rebellion and resistance employed by women in their quest for freedom and equality. Through this analysis, we have aimed to reveal how both Defoe and Flaubert use their literary voices to expose the many obstacles encountered by women in male-dominated environments, and to explore the consequences—both liberating and tragic—of their resistance.

Our study ultimately concludes that, despite the efforts of the female protagonists to assert their independence and resist patriarchal constraints, women in both novels remain trapped in societal perceptions that depict them as the weaker and subordinate sex. Their acts of defiance, though significant, often lead to social alienation, personal tragedy, or moral condemnation. This suggests that in patriarchal structures, rebellion may expose the limits of women’s agency rather than guarantee their liberation.

In sum, both *Roxana* and *Madame Bovary* serve as powerful reflections of women’s enduring struggle for recognition and autonomy. The themes of oppression and rebellion remain central, highlighting literature’s crucial role in questioning gender roles and advocating for societal change.

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