

## THE BLUES THAT ROCKS MARRIAGE

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### Abstract

*In this paper, two marital relationships will be analyzed – the one between Mr. and Mrs. Bovary as presented in Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert and the other one between Mr. Karenin and Mrs. Karenin in Anna Karenin by Leo Tolstoy. The focus will be on female partners in these marriages and there will be an attempt to explain why these marriages did not work. Particular attention will be paid to the main female protagonists' behaviour as described by the authors within their historical context in order to hypothesize that the underlying cause of the marriage breakdown of both Emma Bovary and Anna Karenin could have been linked to medical reasons exacerbated by social constraints as well as expectations set by male-dominated societies. Although social and cultural factors should not be overlooked in the analysis of the reasons for the marital breakdown in both novels, it is hypothesized that the lack of understanding of Emma's and Anna's mental health problems by their husbands, relatives and few friends they had, and the lack of proper medical or social support consequently arising from that lack of understanding, contributed to their suicidal final ending.*

**Keywords:** Emma Bovary, Anna Karenin, mental health, marital breakdown, marriage blues

### 1. Introduction

Marriage is a union between two people and it has been traditionally regarded as a union based on love. The goals of this union are happiness and mutual fulfillment in sharing deep emotions of love, respect, understanding, compassion and joy. It is a legitimate union, a contract signed before a religious or civil authorities' representative, obliging both parties to be devoted to each other, to share the goals of marriage and thus ensure continuation of ethical values and social customs of a particular society. As Denis de Rougemont indicates in *Love in the Western World*, "the success of any given marriage depends upon an individual notion of the nature of happiness" (Rougemont, 1983, p. 280). There are, nevertheless, many

other different reasons why people enter into marriage: for example, for convenience; for prestige in social status; for financial gains; or for political reasons. There are also examples in history of a marriage of state where a marriage is concluded to gain peace or guarantee an alliance between two nations or countries. Such were the unions between Cleopatra and Mark Anthony, or Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon for instance.

## 2. Discussion

The aim of this paper is to discuss the possibility that psychological problems of two famous nineteenth century's fictional heroines could be contributing factors to their marital failures. Two marital relationships will be investigated – the one between Mr. and Mrs. Bovary as presented in *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert, written in 1856<sup>1</sup>, and the other one between Mr. Karenin and Mrs. Karenin<sup>2</sup> in *Anna Karenin*<sup>3</sup> by Leo Tolstoy, written between 1874-1876.<sup>4</sup> The focus will be on female partners in these marriages with a hypothesis that the underlying cause of the marriage breakdown was linked with some mental health problems that both Emma Bovary and Anna Karenin experienced, which remained unrecognized or misunderstood by their social environment and for which consequently no emotional support or medical assistance could have been provided.

Both *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenin* have been regarded by critics and readers as literary masterpieces. They appeared twenty years apart, *Madame Bovary* being the predecessor, having been published in 1856. The story was considered so scandalous and amoral that the author had to stand the trial, during which he apparently defended his authorship. On the other hand, views about *Anna Karenin*, from the first reviews of the novel to the most

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<sup>1</sup> All references to the text are based on the translation of this work published in 1995 Penguin Popular Classics edition; the translator's name has not been mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> The translator noted in Two Notes that Russians commonly use three names: the first, the patronymic and the family name. Consequently, as Karenina is not Anna's patronymic but her married family name, the translator adapted the female protagonist's name into Anna Karenin "since the feminine form (Karenina) is not usual in English". This version thus differs from those which keep the Russian original – Karenina.

<sup>3</sup> All references to the text are based on the revised translation by Rosemary Edmonds published in 1978 Penguin Classics edition.

<sup>4</sup> There have been a number of translations of this famous novel into English. Edmonds first translated the novel in 1954; however, as she explains in the Note on the 1978 Revisions, a number of "mistakes in copying, editing and type-setting went undetected by the author", so these mistakes went under revisions "edition after edition for ninety-two years, until a definitive text was established for the *Collected Works of L. N. Tolstoy* (ninety volumes) published in 1970. The critical analysis of all previous versions of *Anna Karenin* in preparation for this final edition was entrusted to V. A. Zhdanov and E. E. Zaïdenshnure of the L. N. Tolstoy State Museum in Moscow."

contemporary ones, have changed throughout years. Its dual plot was confusing for some critics and Anna's character was interpreted differently from what Tolstoy himself was aiming at, or what the majority of readers enjoyed (Knowles, 1978). Nevertheless, it has been highly acclaimed as one of the world's greatest novels and has been also adapted for the screen or theatre. Both works have a female protagonist as a central character; furthermore, they also vividly depict contemporary life, social customs, ethical values and moral hypocrisy in both France and Russia, as well as the inferior status of women in both the familial and public domains.

Both female protagonists are adulteresses, condemned by the society for their amoral behavior and for the neglect of their husbands and children. They are criticized for their selfishness and for being inconsiderate of the societal ethical values of the time. Their passion seems to be the main locomotor force in their extra-marital love affairs, whereas absence of such passion towards their husbands was detrimental for their marriages. Although most critics and readers share the opinion that both lovers in the affair should be blamed for their adulterous actions, it is the final condemnation which results in the suicidal death of the adulteress that implies whose fault has the bigger share (Browning, 1986).

The story of a married woman from the middle or upper class who engages in a passionate extra-marital love affair with an unmarried man of the same rank, eventually leading to the marriage breakdown and public humiliation of both married partners and the woman's lover, was so popular in the nineteenth century that it has been classified in literary criticism as a female adultery novel subgenre (Overton, 1999). One of the outstanding female socialites and authors in the first half of the nineteenth century, George Sand, questioned conventional ideas related to marriage and "several of her novels construct adultery as a response to problems of marriage" (Overton, 1999, p. 319). Although Emma Bovary as well as Anna Karenin are fictional characters, one cannot underestimate, however, the influence of the unconscious male author's viewpoint in creating such characters. As Turner puts it, "the rhetoric of moral condemnation is an inseparable part of Tolstoy's art" (Turner, 1995, p. 265). The core cultural values are expressed through norms and rules imposed by the communal beliefs, interest, tradition, or other important collective terms of reference. Mack-Canty suggests that culture is related to men (Mack-Canty, 2004). Therefore, as most of these female adultery novels were written by male writers, their attitudes, rules, and judgements apply as the core societal values. Overton puts it that in Balzac's novels *A Woman of Thirty* (1832-42) or *The Muse of the Department* (1843), for instance, husbands are portrayed as

modest, moral, and above all, tolerant of their wives' infidelities (Overton, 1999, p. 317). Female adultery is generally characterized as a flaw in the woman's character, whereas male adultery, if not accepted, is considered tolerable. For instance, Anna Karenin negotiates reconciliation between her brother Stiva and his wife Dolly. Stiva is remorseful for his "momentary infatuation" with the governess and asks his wife for forgiveness (Tolstoy, 1978 p. 23). Dolly, however, does not approve of his love affairs and calls him a "detestable, disgusting stranger" (Tolstoy, 1978, p. 24). Anna Karenin, "the wife of one of the most important personages in Petersburg and a *grand dame* of Petersburg society" (Tolstoy, 1978, p. 80) comes to console Dolly, offers her sister-to-sister talk and understanding, and reassures her that Stiva is humiliated not only because he hurt his wife's feelings and abused her trust, but that he also feels ashamed for what he did because of his children. Therefore, condemnation of a love affair of a married man is softened because of the man's feelings of guilt, remorse, his plea for forgiveness, and as such, his sin is not as deplorable as an adulteress's is. This is not a new notion, however. Moller refers to Capellanus that in the early twelfth century, men were considered boisterously bold for being adulterous, yet for the same thing women were condemned and their "good name was ruined by it" (Moller, 1960, p. 40).

The social expectations of married partners in the society adhering to the traditional, conservative patriarchal values can have an impact on the success of their marriage. As Kushner puts it, ideology played a role in characterization of female suicides in the nineteenth century popular fiction (Kushner, 1985). Based on these literary conventions referring to the adulteress as the 'fallen angel', a female character is judged by her close environment and by the society, as well as by herself, as someone who is unworthy. Beside these socially-dominant values influencing their relationship, spouses can also have deeper, inner individual psychological problems which can consequently affect their behaviour, communication or relationship in general. Both Flaubert and Tolstoy meticulously describe psychological conditions of their heroines and provide ample examples which suggest that both Emma and Anna could have suffered from personality disorders or psychological disturbances, which may be the underlying cause of their dysfunctional marital relationships. This hypothesis could not have been validated in the nineteenth century, as the so-called female hysteria accounted for most psychosomatic symptoms and almost any ailment could fit the diagnosis, in which light the illness itself was not taken seriously enough. Lawrence Rothfield suggests that Flaubert links hysteria as a symbol of the medical discourse with the

world of fiction he created (Rothfield, 1985, p. 59). Furthermore, “Emma’s life is shaped by medical discourse’s assumptions about hysteria, even though her death is caused by the discourse’s absence”, namely by the lack of medical support (Rothfield, 1985, p. 60). Medical dictionaries of the nineteenth century would describe hysteria as a medical condition affecting mostly females between twelve and thirty years of age and that a melancholic, angry or passionate person would be more prone to the hysterical attacks caused by severe disappointments, jealousy or unrequited love. Rothfield contends that this medical dictionary explanation “describes Emma Bovary’s condition quite accurately: her tendency to convulsive affections from an early age is shown by Flaubert in the flashbacks to her convent days, when ‘her nature, positive in the midst of its enthusiasms’, had led her to devotional excesses; every word used to describe the ‘hysterical character’ is also used at some point in the novel to refer to Emma” (Rothfield, 1985, p. 66). Rothfield further suggests that Flaubert projected some of his own experiences onto Emma’s character when he described some manifestations of his own epileptic episodes as Emma’s hallucinations (Rothfield, 1985, p. 75). This connection between the author and the character he created using the “symptomatic identification” is, according to Rothfield, that which “Flaubert had in mind when he remarked that ‘Madame Bovary c’est moi’” (Rothfield, 1985, p. 76).

Psychiatry and psychology as medical sciences gained their momentum towards the beginning of the twentieth century thanks to pioneering works of Pinel, Kraepelin, Freud, Jung, and many others who identified and explained psychological or physiological problems pertaining to deviations in human body functions and corresponding behavior (Burton, 2019). Behaviour of the female protagonists in both *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenin* shows signs bordering with symptoms of bipolar disorder, mood swings, post-natal depression and other psychological disorders or disturbances which affect their behaviour. In the nineteenth century these manifestations of mental health issues could be interpreted as flaws in the character or female hysteria. For instance, Rothfield quotes Baudelaire’s review of Flaubert’s work in which Baudelaire “argued that Flaubert was using hysteria not adultery” (Rothfield, 1985, p. 58).

Bipolar disorder is one of the mental health problems which manifests in depression, mood swings, non-bizarre delusions (including the erotomaniac, grandiose and jealous types), nightmares and fatalistic attitudes (Grohol, 2020). Most of these symptoms have been described as experienced by the female protagonists in both novels. Flaubert’s choice of

expressions describing Emma Bovary's time at the convent in her tender teenage years foreshadows her inclination to self-sacrifice and bodily harm:

She *loved the sick*<sup>5</sup> lamb, the Sacred Heart *pierced with sharp arrows*, and poor Jesus falling beneath His cross. *To mortify the flesh*, she tried to go a whole day *without food*; and she puzzled her head for some vow to accomplish. (Flaubert, 1995, p. 48)

Having been alienated from her immediate family, she stayed with nuns and succumbed to the escapism of romantic novels and their exaggerated passions.

They were all about love and lovers, damsels in distress swooning in lonely lodges, postillions slaughtered all along the road, horses ridden to death on every page, gloomy forests, troubles of the heart, vows, sobs, tears, kisses, rowing-boats in the moonlight, nightingales in the grove, gentlemen brave as lions and gentle as lambs, too virtuous to be true, invariably well-dressed, and weeping like fountains. (Flaubert, 1995, p. 50)

Emma gets married to Charles Bovary, a widower and a country doctor, whose actions are governed by laws of the society. Emma, on the other hand, lives a lonely life in the world she constructed based on the English and French romantic novels. In accordance with the customs of the time, her dowry is used by her husband to set his private business and consequently he has benefited from that marriage both financially and emotionally. His self-esteem is boosted. "Possessing such a wife, Charles came to have an increased respect for himself" (Flaubert, 1995, p.55). He takes it for granted that she will be happy with him only on the basis that he provides for her financially. His work takes him away from her most of the day so Emma feels bored and her communication with Charles become routine; they deal only with daily matters. "Charles' conversation was as flat as street pavement, (...) provoking no emotion, no laughter, no dreams" (Flaubert, 1995, p.54). The clash between the imaginary and unfulfilled desires and the commonplace reality occupied Emma's mind: "for her, life was cold as an attic facing north, and the silent spider boredom wove its web in all the shadowed corners of her heart" (Flaubert, 1995, p. 57). As Stallman notes, "all Emma's romantic moods of illusory happiness crumble in counter moods of despair" (Stallman, 1949, p. 197). She experiences depression in her early adulthood which is a warning sign of potential development of mental health disorders. (Bipolar Disorder in Children and Teens, 2020).

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<sup>5</sup> my emphasis

Landgraf asserts that “in love, we wish to express ourselves authentically and find ourselves acknowledged and appreciated for who we are” (Landgraf, 2004, p. 29). Emma feigns her feelings towards Charles because she feels unacknowledged and neglected from the beginning of their marriage; gradually, she becomes indifferent; and finally starts to hate him for not being a knight on a white horse. “She sought in Balzac and George Sand a vicarious gratification of her own desires” (Flaubert, 1995, p.71). She first feels the pain because she is afraid she will lead a boring life in a small town; then this fear aggravates into anxiety, leading to panic attacks and feelings of not having control over her life. She needs to compensate that feeling of not being loved as much as she is worth and seeks love from an outside source of emotions, internally blaming Charles for being beyond her intellectual or artistic capacities.

Had Charles so wished, had he guessed, had his eyes once read her thoughts, it would instantly have delivered her heart of a rich load, as a single touch will bring the ripe fruit falling from the tree. But as their outward familiarity grew, she began to be inwardly detached, to hold herself more aloof from him. (Flaubert, 1995, pp. 53-54)

Emma then starts experiencing mood swings. She becomes capricious and starts developing physical symptoms of anxiety – “she grew pale and had palpitations of the heart” (Flaubert, 1995, p. 80). Some days she is overly talkative, then she suddenly goes into the silence and apathy. Despite having some treatment, her condition does not improve and they move to Yonville. She is pregnant; however, having had no financial means on her own, Emma “forfeited the pleasure of those preparations that whet the appetite of mother-love; and this perhaps enfeebled her affection from the start” (Flaubert, 1995, p. 101). After the birth of her daughter, Emma exhibits symptoms of post-natal depression as she shows little interest in the infant, who is taken care of by a local wet nurse. She seems to be indifferent to or to lack maternal interest in her daughter Berthe which implies that Emma is a bad mother. The outward indifference to the child may have also resulted from her indifference towards Charles, the baby girl’s father (Overton, 1999, p. 320).

Her dreams of a courtly love could be interpreted nowadays as her having non-bizarre delusions. People who have this type of psychological disturbances usually do not appear out-of-the-ordinary and their social or daily functions may not be impaired. There are three main types of this disorder: an erotomanic type – delusions that another person, usually of higher status, is in love with them; a grandiose type – delusions of inflated worth, knowledge, or

special relationship to a deity; and a jealous type – delusions that the individual's sexual partner is unfaithful (Grohol, 2020). There is evidence throughout the text that Emma experiences such delusions. Firstly, she believes that Rodolphe is madly in love with her. She is also “intoxicated with love” (Flaubert, 1995, p. 177). However, similar to Charles, Rodolphe “certain of her love, [...] began to be careless; imperceptibly his manner changed” (Flaubert, 1995 p. 183). Emma refuses to see it at first, but then gradually her mood changes and she becomes more and more depressed. Eventually, when Rodolphe breaks up their relationship, she suffers from a severe depression which lasts for several months. “She lay with mouth hanging open, eyes closed, hands straight down at her sides, motionless, white as a waxen image” (Flaubert, 1995, p. 219). During the depression phase in the bipolar disorder, people may stay in bed all day; they often feel worthless and that their life is meaningless; they may think or speak of suicide (Grohol, 2020). Then, Emma starts having visions:

She let her head drop back on to the pillow, seeming to hear through space the harps of the seraphs playing, and to see, seated upon a throne of gold in an azure Heaven with His Saints around Him bearing branches of green palm, God the Father, resplendent in majesty, at whose command angels with wings of flame descended to Earth to carry her up in their arms. (Flaubert, 1995, p. 225)

During her physical recovery, she has delusions of grandeur, becomes very religious and “she wanted to become a saint” (Flaubert, 1995, p. 225). Her self-esteem gets inflated, and she increases her goal-directed activities: she starts knitting for the poor, welcomes the poor at home for dinner, and so on. In her strife for happiness, Emma believes she leads a morally virtuous life. She wants to achieve eudaimonia – a state of being similar to a deity or a saint, or at least to be protected or looked after by a saint. These are all characteristics of a bipolar disorder: in the manic phase, an individual is excessively emotional, excited, euphoric; the depressive phase is, however, characterized by apathy and underactivity, accompanied by feelings of sadness, guilt, and fear of the future (Glanze, 1990, p. 149).

In her second love affair with Leon, Emma exhibits other characteristics of uncontrolled temperamental behaviour, for instance sensation seeking: she becomes excessively involved in pleasurable activities that have a high potential for painful consequences. She goes on buying sprees, gets a Power of Attorney for her husband's financial affairs and signs a number of promissory notes with extended due dates, thus corrupting Charles' financial



stability which anyway has been on thin foundations. She becomes self-centred and pre-occupied with her lover.

According to Jung, it is the female anima, embedded in our unconscious “other” that exists in each male, and vice-versa, the male animus is the supplementation of the female in the sphere of the unconscious “other” (Stein, 2007, pp. 143-152). Emma is not insensitive; still, she is too self-centred. She displays some characteristics usually associated with animus, or male personality. For example, she takes initiative in her encounters with both Rodolphe and Leon; initially shows interest in her husband’s business affairs; and pressed by financial hardship, shows some bargaining skills. “She took to raising money on her old gloves and hats, and on the old junk in the house. She drove a hard bargain, the lust for profit running in her peasant blood” (Flaubert, 1995, p. 298). Charles, on the other hand, is sensitive, but unable to articulate his feelings; he is more feminine in that respect, passive, and needs guidance. He appears stoic in his attitude and free of passion. However, as Caston explains, “despite their adamant opposition to the passions, (...) the wise man’s life will not be empty of feeling” (Caston, 2006, p. 274). Nevertheless, he takes Emma’s love for granted. In his view, marriage is a union for life; therefore, he should not work on it. In his professional environment, Charles is defined by the author as a mediocre and inept medical professional. Although he ventures to treat a patient’s minor deformity caused by his lack of experience and inability to apply proper disinfection procedures, his experiment ends tragically with the amputation of the patient’s leg. Thus, due to professional negligence, he becomes partially responsible for the onset of gangrene in the patient’s limb.

Finally, Emma’s jealousy and obsession for confirmation of love from Leon prevail and her incapacity to control her urges goes into a full swing. She loses a sense of reality and falls into irreparable debt dependence from a local loan-shark and, from her viewpoint, her only exit from such circumstances is in suicide. She has previously contemplated suicide when Rodolphe left her; however, this did not eventuate. Kushner points out that in the nineteenth century, the suicide among females was associated with the individual emotional act, while the suicide among males was linked with the financial or social burdens (Kushner, 1985, p. 541). In this respect, Emma’s animus prevails and she shows characteristics of male gender as she feels the financial burden which she cannot repay. This pressure aggravates her already shattered sense of control over her life and she succumbs to the suicidal ending. According to the modern approach in suicide prevention, “feeling suicidal is not a character defect, and it does not mean that a person is crazy, or weak, or flawed. It only means that the person has

more pain than they feel capable of coping with” (HelpGuide - Suicide Prevention, 2020). Despite few people around her, Emma is a loner. She has no relatives, no friends and no acquaintances. She blames Charles for not being there for her, while at the same time she is blind for his affection towards her and their child. She is unable to acknowledge his love despite the efforts Charles put in their relationship. As Stallman’s analysis suggests, “her dream states are inevitably followed by fits of depression” (Stallman, 1949, p. 197). In conclusion, she is unaware what she takes in and that she does not give back anything in return.

Compared to Emma, Anna Karenin has had even more pronounced symptoms of mental health disturbances manifested by non-bizarre delusions of a jealous type. She becomes obsessed with Vronsky and constantly seeks ways to test his feelings and devotion to her, perhaps subconsciously aware that she has built an image to which he cannot respond in reality. As a result of such obsession, she also becomes extremely jealous and bitter. “Abandon me, abandon me!” she murmured between her sobs. “I’ll go away to-morrow. I will do no more. What am I? A wanton! A millstone round your neck. I won’t torment you any longer. I’ll set you free. You don’t love me; you love someone else!” (Tolstoy, 1978, p. 778). After Vronsky reassured her that he did love her and nobody else, her behaviour changes from “despairing jealousy” to “desperate, passionate tenderness” (Tolstoy, 1978, p. 778).

Anna often has grim fantasies, deceptions which are increasingly perilous, and she withdraws herself into a mean individual with destructive personality. As Browning suggests, “Anna imagines death to possess a morbidly titillating appeal” (Browning, 1986, p. 329). Concurrent to non-bizarre delusions, Anna has a premonition of fate. Anna meets Vronsky in unfortunate circumstances when a man threw himself under a running train.

Madame Karenin seated herself in the carriage and her brother noticed with surprise that her lips were trembling and that she had difficulty in keeping back her tears.

‘What is the matter, Anna?’ he asked, when they had driven a few hundred yards.

‘It is a bad omen,’ she said.’ (Tolstoy, 1978, p. 79)

In her delusional affect, Anna associates herself with Frou-Frou and when Vronsky killed the horse after the steeplechase accident, she feels as if Vronsky killed her love. Furthermore,

when she discusses her son Seriozha with Vronsky, she feels desperate and that her fate is sealed, that she would not be able to have the son in her care, which may not be only her fatalistic ideas but the grim reality of the time she lived in. “In pre-Revolution Russia only the innocent partner could apply for a divorce, which was difficult to obtain. The guilty party was not allowed to remarry and was deprived of the children” (Tolstoy, 1978, Translator’s note).

Later, she frequently suffers from nightmares, which can be seen from the following excerpt:

At dawn a horrible nightmare, which she had had several times even before her connection with Vronsky, repeated itself and woke her. A little old man with unkempt beard was leaning over a bar of iron, doing something and muttering meaningless words in French, and – this was what always made the nightmare so horrible – she felt that though this peasant seemed to be paying no attention to her he was doing something dreadful to her with the iron, doing something dreadful to her. She awoke in cold perspiration. (Tolstoy, 1978, p. 785)

Anna feels strongly for her son Seriozha. She wants him to be an ideal, strong, lovable man, husband and father in the future. Overton suggests that “Anna channels into her relationship with her son the need for loving that is not met by her marriage” (Overton, 1999, p. 320). Anna also idealizes Vronsky, compares him with herself and imagines that he is much finer than he really is. After the humiliation at the opera, Vronsky notices that Anna has changed and that her mood has become incomprehensible. In an instant she would change from someone being deeply in love to someone cool, irritable, impenetrable.

Anna shows her own lack of confidence and integrity. She wants a courtly love – to be part of the divine connection between two souls – and at the same time yearns for a carnal, passionate, sexual relationship, which makes her feel impure – less divine – less deserving the status of a lady in the “courtly” sense of an unreachable, only admired, lover. Anna is also narcissistic and afraid of old age leading to the loss of her physical appeal. “Her chief preoccupation was still herself – how far she was dear to Vronsky, how far she could compensate to him for all he had given up” (Tolstoy, 1978, p. 674).

She constantly wants affirmation of Vronsky’s love towards her. Although still a young woman, Anna may have experienced symptoms of perimenopause, when “lots of women are ready to release grudges, guilt and blame so they can free themselves of old hurts”

([www.womenshealthnetwork.com](http://www.womenshealthnetwork.com) ). Irritability and mood swings have deep physiological roots in hormonal imbalance. This condition may not be considered a psychological disorder per se; however, Anna's melancholic character, prone to self-deception and dual personality added to her problems. She continuously exaggerates the hopelessness of her situation. Not being prepared to accept her husband's offer for divorce, she cries: "Oh, why did I not die? It would have been better!" (Tolstoy, 1978, p. 461). Browning also notices that "after she gives birth to her daughter, she might have obtained a divorce from her husband, kept Seriozha with her, and married Vronsky; but Anna chooses not to permit her own happiness. Rather, she prefers her fantasy of desperation and misery, and thereby causes immense suffering for all who are near her" (Browning, 1986, p. 331). All of these behavioural expressions may be associated with borderline personality disorder. Eventually, as Paskow suggests, "Anna commits suicide to end a life made unbearable by her husband's punitive behaviour and by her tortured conscience" (Paskow, 2005, p. 323).

Some critics suggest that both Emma and Anna show disappointment when they give birth to a baby girl whose future might be unprivileged like their own so they envy "the greater freedom available to men" (Overton, 1999, p. 319). The birth of Anna's new child was life-threatening, so it could be from exhaustion, post-natal depression, or generally due to her psychological imbalance that Anna does not show the same amount of interest to her newborn daughter as when she gave birth to her first child – Seriozha. Anna's visit to her toddler daughter was "an uncommon event", she even did not know how many new teeth her girl had (Tolstoy, 1978, p. 650). When both Anna and Emma regard their baby-girl with detachment, it is highly likely that they do not have a motherly bond due to the "baby blues". As the term suggests, to "feel blue" means to feel depressed, in low spirits, as blue is the colour associated with low energy, or even death (the colour of the corpse). Anna is taking advantage of her illness, though. She is egocentric in her demands. Both her husband and her lover do love her, but she is not satisfied with it. Essentially, her lack of self-confidence blames them for being inadequate for her, while she feels inadequate for either of them. Another reason why Anna perhaps feels alienated from her baby girl could be that she is afraid that her beauty might be affected and that she may not be as attractive to Vronsky as she used to be. Taking the 19<sup>th</sup> century socio-cultural perspective into account, Overton suggests that Anna feels that she could not be happy with Vronsky because their child does not have equal rights, opportunities or privileges like Seriozha, her child with Karenin. Being a child of an adulteress, Anna's and Vronsky's child could not inherit Karenin's property

(Overton, 1999, p. 320). “All this suggests how deeply the novel is rooted in conservative, patriarchal ideology. Fundamentally, Anna’s children function as part of a case against female adultery” (Overton, 1999, p. 320).

Like Emma in *Madame Bovary*, Anna has almost no close friends, especially not female ones with whom she could share her feelings, fears, and to whom she could turn in distress. Her alienation from society which ostracizes her and labels her as amoral makes her suffering unbearable. Similar to Emma, Anna feels that there are “social codes that arrest a woman’s development, requiring her to be seductive yet chaste, and which doom her if she falters” (Cook, 1958, p. 125). On the other hand, Emma’s husband does not repudiate Emma as he is not aware of her affairs with other men, nor do her neighbours or townsfolk ostracize her when they do know of her affairs (Paskow, 2005, p. 323). Yet, that lack of interest by the people in her environment could be the locomotive force which built the frustration and feeling of alienation (Paskow, 2005, p. 325).

These two heroines compromised themselves as adulteresses and have been viewed as victims of patriarchal society in which an adulteress is punished through denial of access to her children, not being able to get a divorce, or having to be financially dependent on her husband. Had the authors decided differently, both Emma and Anna could have succumbed to the patriarchal conventions of marital convenience to keep appearances and remain silent, like Stiva Oblonsky’s wife Dolly, or Emma’s mother-in-law, Madame Bovary had done.

Although both Emma Bovary and Anna Karenin are fictional characters, it is also possible that both Flaubert and Tolstoy have been inspired by some real-life women. Tolstoy based the plot on a newspaper article about the woman who had committed suicide by throwing herself under the train. Paradoxically, the woman who did it was not an adulteress herself but she ended her life it when she discovered that her husband had been cheating on her. Given that Flaubert’s father was a prominent provincial doctor, Flaubert could have observed particular forms of behavior of his father’s female patients. Furthermore, Rothfield suggests that both Emma Bovary as well as Dr Larivière “may be seen as projections of Flaubert’s own personality” and that both Flaubert and Dr Larivière in particular “assume the status of deities” as they work on their patients/characters from above (Rothfield, 1985, p. 77).

### **3. Conclusion**

In conclusion, most studies of these two novels focus on social and cultural factors as the reasons for the failure of the two female protagonists’ marriages, which is undeniably justifiable. The fictional characters are the product of the author’s imagination and the author

decides who can and who cannot have a fulfilling and happy marital relationship and under what conditions. Nevertheless, it is also evident from all the arguments presented above that both Tolstoy and Flaubert described symptoms which may be associated with mental health problems experienced by the female protagonists. Neither of these fictional characters is presented as insane, but they exhibit behaviours which in certain circumstances can be classified as extensively irrational or destructive. This analysis is not intended to add to the stigma related to people with mental health issues and it is not meant to create more biases in this respect. It attempts to draw attention to the fact that the lack of understanding as well as the lack of proper medical or social support, evident in both novels, might have exacerbated the mental health condition in both Emma's and Anna's cases which led to suicide as the final attempt in escaping the suffering through self-sacrifice.

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