Death of Desire, Desire of Death:
An exploration of narcissism and death in
Madame Bovary and *The Awakening*

by

Linda Martin
B.A., University of Victoria, 1992

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of English

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

[redacted]

Dr. Toby A. Foshay, Supervisor (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. Judith L. Mitchell, Departmental Member (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. Mark Lapprand, Outside Member (Department of French)

[redacted]

Dr. Ingrid E. Holmberg, External Examiner (Department of Greek and Roman Studies)

University of Victoria

PG 2246
M 2/M 27

Supervisor: Dr. Toby A. Foshay

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the psychological nature of narcissism and death in the mimetic characterization of Emma Bovary in Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening.* It also questions the differences between the protagonists' motives for and mode of their suicides, since they result from almost parallel emotional experiences. Emma's violent arsenic ingestion suggests moral punishment rather than the more instinctive death of Edna's tranquil drowning.

Investigation includes gender dynamics operating between author and character, as well as both conscious and unconscious authorial intuition. Chapter One discusses the foundational psychoanalytical theory of narcissism and the death drive. In addition, it deals with psychological and social elements that affected mythological Narcissus as well as nineteenth-century individuals. Chapters Two and Three examine Emma and Edna's emotional lives and predisposition to suicide, focussing upon their emotional injuries, libidinal object-choices, and ego-ideals.

Findings conclude that the authors' creative processes appear to parallel the narcissism displayed by their characters, in that their fictional representations serve as attempts to exorcize their own forms of narcissism.

Examiners: [redacted]

Dr. Toby A. Foshay, Supervisor (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. Judith I. Mitchell, Departmental Member (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. Mark Lapprand, Outside Member (Department of French)

[redacted]

Dr. Ingrid E. Holmberg, External Examiner (Department of Greek and Roman Studies)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Toby A. Foshay for his supervision and assistance during the course of this work and the preparation of this thesis.

In his journey through the land of love Freud reaches Narcissus only after having traveled over the dissociated space of hysteria. The latter leads him to establish the "psychic space" that he will explode, first though Narcissus and finally through the death drive, into the impossible spaces of "lovehate," that is, infinite transference.

—Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*

CHAPTER ONE

I *MADAME BOVARY* and *THE AWAKENING*

Thirty years following Flaubert's publication of *Madame Bovary*, Kate Chopin published *The Awakening*. Often called an "American," or "Creole" *Bovary*,[1] Chopin's novel parallels many elements of Flaubert's novel in that its protagonist, Edna Pontellier, shares Emma Bovary's experiences of a nineteenth-century bourgeois, puritanical environment. In addition, both endure motherlessness and passionless marriages, and experience adulterous erotic awakenings. Both characters are also made to appear self-indulgent in their following desire along self-destructive courses ending in suicide. Yet beneath the veneer of hysteric, adulteress, dysfunctional mother, and heretic lie two psychologically realistic profiles of nineteenth-century human beings who suffer loneliness, low self-esteem, inner rage, and particularly an inability to love.

Besides changing the setting from Provincial France to the Creole culture of Louisiana, Chopin incorporates her own philosophy and psychology on the subject of women, desire, and suicide. Without judgment, she intended to "record in her own way and voice, the *terra incognita* of a woman's 'inward life' in all its 'vague, tangled, chaotic' tumult" (Showalter 177). Unlike Flaubert's passive portrayal of Emma, Chopin grants Edna her own agency to pursue her *jouissance,* take control of her life, and determine her own death. Further, whereas Flaubert

creates Emma's psychological profile from a male perspective, necessarily influenced by nineteenth-century patriarchal cultural conventions and gender biases, Chopin represents a woman in that milieu writing a woman's psychology.

Although the psychological structure of both *Madame Bovary* and *The Awakening* suggests a sound basis in psychoanalytical theory, both were written without privilege of scientific foundation. Freud was less than one year old in 1857 when Flaubert published this novel, and Freud's writings were unknown to Chopin at the time of her 1895 composition; psychoanalysis was not introduced to America until 1908.[2] Interestingly, Freud names Flaubert as one of his preferred authors, praising him for his "imaginative insight" (Jones 427). Moreover, he commends creative writers for possessing *a priori* knowledge of psychological concepts long before scientific discovery. He believed that "the creative writer cannot evade the psychiatrist nor the psychiatrist the creative writer, and the poetic treatment of a psychiatric theme can turn out to be correct without any sacrifice of its beauty."[3]

Emma's psychological profile developed over a five-year period involving what Flaubert termed "the sum total of my psychological knowledge."[4] Besides Flaubert's "imaginative insight," Laurence Rothfield claims Flaubert based his methodology upon medical and social discourse regarding hysteria (228). However, according to Benjamin Bart, Emma's profile also incorporated Flaubert's personal emotional and physical experiences (271) to which the

following chapters will refer.

Yet, despite the deliberate psychological structure of the novel, Flaubert had wished it masked, remarking: "The Reader will not notice, I hope, all the psychological work hidden under the form, but he will sense its effect."[5] In this respect, Bernard Paris points out that Flaubert achieved such subtlety, for though readers have acknowledged Emma as one of the greatest literary characters, only a small readership has observed and esteemed Flaubert's "psychological portraiture" of Emma. "Considering all the praise which the novel has received, it seems strange to say that Flaubert's achievement in *Madame Bovary* has not yet been fully appreciated" (Paris 199). Paris believes that a complete case study of Emma will help to illuminate the psychological dimension of the novel:

> In addition to being a part of the novel's total design, Emma is also a mimetic character with a motivational system of her own; and it is not until we have understood her as though she were a person that we shall be able to do justice to the subtlety of Flaubert's psychological intuitions and to the brilliance of his mimetic achievement. (199)

Accordingly, for the purpose of a psychological reading of *Madame Bovary*, the following chapters will consider Emma as a person rather than a fictional character. Likewise, since Edna Pontellier also stands as an autonomous, complex, mimetic character, the same approach will be taken.

Similarities between the two novels and protagonists suggest that the psychology of Chopin's "Creole Bovary" might, indeed, emanate from Flaubert's brilliant prototype, especially when its development took only seven months. Yet,

beyond emulation of Flaubert, Chopin's characterization suggests modification as well as defiance. As a female writer, Chopin incorporates her own psychological intuition as well as her own life experiences. Thus, Edna's personality differs from that of Emma despite similar diachronic experiences. However, both protagonists' psychological profiles articulate more than cases of hysteria, feminist issues, or moral degeneracy: they portray realistic elements of the timeless psychological disorder of narcissism that Freud and others explore and explicate years later. Not only do they mirror Freud's depiction of a narcissistic woman in his 1914 ground-breaking essay "On Narcissism," but they also reflect their respective authors' idiosyncrasies.

In this regard, Carl Jung refers to the unconscious influence of the creative writer's personality on the development of fictional characters.[6] In discussing personality "complexes," he argues that:

> Because complexes have a certain will power, a sort of ego, we find that in a schizophrenic condition they emancipate themselves from conscious control to such an extent that they become visible and audible. They appear as visions, they speak in voices which are like the voices of definite people. (80)

He further asserts that since the personal unconscious might contain any number of complexes or "fragmentary personalities," the writer has the potential to dramatize and personify his or her mental contents:

> When he creates a character on the stage, or in his poem or drama or novel, he thinks it is merely a product of his imagination; but that character in a certain secret way has

> made itself. Any novelist or writer will deny that these characters have a psychological meaning, but as a matter of fact you know as well as I do that they have one. Therefore, you can read a writer's mind when you study characters he creates. (81)

For Flaubert and Chopin, then, it seems their mimetic character creations are projections of themselves that, unconsciously at least, serve as attempts to exorcize their own difficulties. In Flaubert's case, he had suffered emotional losses and frustration and endured difficulties relating to his identification with and animosity towards the feminine. Chopin also suffered personal emotional loss, enduring frustration over social, sexual, and artistic limitations. Accordingly, both Emma and Edna can be understood as narcissistic characters through whom their authors work through their own narcissism to effect catharses.

II NARCISSISM AND THE DEATH DRIVE

From its inception, psychoanalytical theory of narcissism has been associated with anti-feminism. The first published study on narcissism claimed that the disorder showed more prevalence among women and was diagnosed only in "feminine minded" men.[7] Freud, too, continued with this prejudicial inclination in his 1914 paper "On Narcissism." His culturally inherited bias stands out in certain of his generalizations, such as his belief that primarily women, along with artists, perverts, and homosexuals suffered from excessive narcissism. Further, he states that unlike men, who were capable of true object-love, most women were capable only of narcissistic self-love. Yet apart from its sexist generalizations and prejudices, critics regard "On Narcissism" as ground-breaking in its invaluable foundational insights into the definition and theory of narcissism.

In particular, the paper explicates primary and secondary narcissism, the libido theory, normal and narcissistic object-choices, and introduces the ego-ideal. Freud defines narcissism as both clinical and normal: clinical narcissism as a condition in which a person treats himself as erotic object, as the libidinal cathexis of the self; and normal narcissism as self love, "the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation" (1914, 546). Paradoxically, he states that: "A strong egoism is a protection against falling ill, but in the last resort, we must begin to love in order not to fall ill, and we are bound to fall ill if, in consequence of frustration, we are unable to love" (1914, 553).

"On Narcissism" explains the differentiation between primary and secondary narcissism. Freud describes primary narcissism as a normal state inherent in all infants, a stage when the libido centers solely within the child, when the child feels unified with its mother, and is not yet able to differentiate itself from the world of objects. In normal development, the child will distinguish gradually between self and other, form interpersonal relationships, and transfer its infantile ego-libido to objects. In contrast, secondary narcissism, or infantile narcissism, Freud describes as an abnormal process of regression occurring because of emotional disappointment or unrequited love, when the subject's object-libidinal cathexis is withdrawn from the external world and subsequently reinvested in the ego. Further, regression to secondary narcissism has the potential to induce psychotic states such as depression, hypochondria, and other related illnesses.

As a substitute for primary narcissism, Freud proposes the existence of an ego-ideal that forms following effacement of infantile egocentricity resulting from increased parental and social admonitions, as well the child's own developing judgment. In addition to effecting repression of the Oedipus complex, the ego-ideal represents a standard by which one measures one's actual performance. In addition, it provides a "target" for the lost narcissistic libido, or self-love, enjoyed in childhood, when one's satisfaction is undifferentiated. Because this state of primal narcissism stands for the image of total pleasure and gratification, a person

will always pursue its recovery in the form of one's ego-ideal (1914, 558).

Freud expresses his findings on the dynamics of love and narcissism in terms of his libido theory, which he modelled in quantitative terms following contemporary scientific principles. He conceptualizes the libido as a fixed quantity of instinctual energy capable of flowing back and forth between the ego and objects and converting into either ego-libido or object-libido. Further, he suggests that an increased expenditure of object-libidinal energy would result in a decrease of ego-libidinal reserve, or cathexis. As an example, he uses the state of falling in love, explaining that, without reciprocity the subject will suffer painful ego-libidinal depletion and emotional impoverishment. Yet such emotional discomfort greatly contrasts with the feelings of self-contentment, self-sufficiency, and blissful state of mind that he ascribes to narcissistic women. Freud further claims that since libidinal energy in narcissistic subjects flows between the subject and a narcissistic object resembling the subject, the libidinal energy remains within the subject and accounts for the narcissistic subject's appearance of self-confidence and self-sufficiency. However, he warns that although some self-love is normal, whenever a subject withdraws his or her libido from object-cathexes into his or her own ego, an overaccumulation of ego-libido could create a "damming up" of ego-libidinal energy that would produce anxiety, tension, and subsequent illness (1914, 592).

Freud separates object-choices into two groups of typology. First, he

describes narcissistic object-choices that resemble:

> (a) what he himself is (i.e. himself),
> (b) what he himself was,
> (c) what he himself would like to be [the ego-ideal],
> (d) someone who was once part of himself.

(Ironically, Freud uses masculine pronouns though he infers feminine classification of the narcissistic subject.) Secondly, he defines true object attachment, or "anaclitic," object-choices that resemble:

> (a) the woman who feeds him, or
> (b) the man who protects him,
> and the succession of substitutes who take their place. (556)

The difference between narcissistic and anaclitic object choices, however, seems to lack distinction, since the latter reflects aspects of primary narcissism—anaclitic objects are based upon a child's first sexual objects and are associated with satisfaction of his or her narcissistic primary urges.

To illustrate narcissistic behaviour, Freud focuses upon women "with good looks" who develop self-contentment, comparing their charm with that of cats and large beasts of prey. He asserts that, "it is only themselves that such women love with an intensity comparable to that of the man's love for them" (1914, 554). While on the one hand, he praises this type of woman for her aesthetics and value to "the erotic life of mankind," on the other, he complains that her enigmatic nature and incapacity for true object-love draw upon emotional dissatisfaction and self-doubt in male suitors. He claims that the reason for their allure is that "another person's narcissism has a great attraction for those who have renounced

part of their own narcissism and are in search of object-love" (1914, 555). His observations and assertions not only identify narcissistic criteria such as vulnerability and fear of dependency in 'normal' male subjects, but also expose his own blind spot in recognizing his own narcissism, for he confesses that (along with other male subjects) he almost envies their "blissful state of mind" and "unassailable libidinal position" (1914, 555). Yet despite Freud's prejudiced interpretation of the dynamics of object-love, what he shows is that the narcissism of these women reflects the narcissism that the male subjects have braved to renounce. Thus, their narcissism represents a screen upon which men direct their ego-depleted desire. Due to an impoverishment of ego-libido, such male suitors are attracted to narcissistic women as erotic objects because of their assumed self-sufficiency, the potency that they lack. Indeed, it is "normal" object-love that Freud discovers masking narcissism. From Freud's point of view, men suffer ego depletion because of their unrequited love of narcissistic women. Accordingly, he suggests that both men and women adopt narcissistic compensation: men for their loss of ego-libido and women for "social restrictions that are imposed on them in their choice of object" (554).

Although Freud allows for such "social restrictions," he does not elaborate further upon social, political, or economic limitations, or even ego-depletion as causation of their narcissism. Instead, he primarily advocates physiological causation,[8] thereby revealing his own culturally biased blindness. Moreover, in

recommending childbirth as amelioration towards normal object-love, he perpetuates his cultural ideology that advocated restrictive, reproductive roles for women.

His investigation into the connection between narcissistic injuries and melancholia led him to hypothesize that the internalization of a destructive, lost love-object might cause both narcissism and depression. In "Mourning and Melancholia," he explains that melancholia derives partly from the pathological process of mourning that involves an ego-identification with the lost love-object. Such identification develops following the loss of a loved object, when the object-libido is withdrawn and subsequently not displaced upon another object. Because the subject associates the lost object with rejection, the person unconsciously hates the object. Further, since these unconscious feelings cannot be admitted, instead of being directed at the lost love-object, the subject misdirects them against his or her own ego, "abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering" (1914, 587-588). Paradoxically, the narcissist's self-love masks self-hatred, as does his or her grandiose behaviour conceal vulnerability, insecurity, and low self-esteem. Narcissism, then, represents a defence against inner weaknesses as well as the pain of rejection. Julia Kristeva identifies narcissism as "a defence against the emptiness of separation," and asserts that, "in being narcissistic, one has already throttled the suffering of emptiness" (Kristeva 42-43).

Although Freud touches very briefly upon the permanent effects of childhood emotional injury, which he terms a "narcissistic scar,"[9] contemporary theorists believe such trauma to be the major cause of narcissism. Childhood narcissistic injuries include parental rejection, maternal loss, disruption of mother/child bonding, and inconsistent parental emotional investment. Otto Kernberg and Heinz Kohut, the two leading authorities on narcissism, both underscore parental empathic failure as causation. In particular, Kernberg identifies parental figures that are chronically cold and covertly aggressive: "a parental figure, usually the mother or a mother surrogate, who functions well on the surface in a superficially well-organized home, but with a degree of callousness, indifference, and nonverbalized, spiteful aggression" (234-35).

Now recognized as a personality disorder, narcissism is defined by the American Psychiatric Association by the following five diagnostic criteria:

> (1) A grandiose sense of self-importance; (2) preoccupation with unrealistic fantasies; (3) exhibitionism; (4) cool indifference or feelings of rage, inferiority, shame, humiliation, or emptiness in response to criticism; (5) at least two of the following interpersonal disturbances: entitlement, exploitativeness, alternation between over idealization and devaluation, lack of empathy.[10]

This perspective has been criticized, however, particularly by Reuben Fine, for its lack of a continuum between normal and abnormal conditions. According to Fine, "All people are narcissistic; the difference is only one of degree" (qtd. in Berman 20-21).

Kernberg also considers narcissism as both normal and abnormal, assessing its severity by the intensity and time span of the emotional injury. To the above diagnostic criteria, he adds: intense ambitiousness for brilliance, wealth, power and beauty; over-dependency on external admiration and acclaim; chronic intense envy, hatred, and boredom (264). Moreover, he asserts that while normal narcissism reflects good mental health and an ability to formulate normal object-love, abnormal, or pathological narcissism inhibits normal love.

Kernberg defines normal narcissism as "the libidinal investment of the self." In addition, he interprets the "self" as an "intrapsychic structure" that integrates the ego—the real self; ideal-object; and ideal-self. He explains that because the psychic organization in normal narcissism involves ideal-object images containing good and bad object representations, and ideal self-images that integrate realistic, good and bad self-images, normal narcissism consolidates both "libidinally invested and aggressively invested components." Besides possessing a realistic self-concept, the subject can love normally, since, Kernberg states, the "integration of love and hatred is a prerequisite for the capacity for normal love" (316).

In contrast, Kernberg explains abnormal narcissism as involving a pathological condensation of certain elements of

> the real self (the "specialness" of the child reinforced by early experience); the ideal self (the fantasies and self-images of power, wealth, omniscience, and beauty which compensated the small child for the experience of severe oral frustration,

> rage and envy); and the ideal object (the fantasy of an ever-giving, ever-loving and accepting parent, in contrast to the child's experience in reality; a replacement of the devalued real parental object). (265)

The unrealistic manner of idealization in pathological fusion and its deficiency in consolidation of libidinally and aggressively invested components not only generates an unreal self-concept, but creates an inability to love normally. In addition, it guarantees inevitable disappointment in object choice, for in Heinz Kohut's words: "The mirror hungry narcissist is compelled to go on searching for idealized figures who can provide a basis for identification, only to fall into despair when his idols turn out to have feet of clay."[11] It seems that whenever reality disrupts the defensive fusion, the narcissist suffers accordingly. Indeed, psychotic breakdowns do occur, despite the usual stability of narcissistic personalities. Moreover, despite pathological fusion usually preventing intrusion of the superego, occasionally, feelings of self-hatred arising from a judgmental and retributive superego may drive a narcissist to suicide (Berman 27).

Freud explains suicide motivation as deriving from the phenomena of melancholia and sadism:

> The self tormenting in melancholia, which is without doubt enjoyable, signifies . . . a satisfaction of trends of sadism and hate which relate to an object, and which have been turned round upon the subject's own self . . . It is this sadism alone that solves the riddle of the tendency to suicide which makes melancholia so interesting—and so dangerous. (1917, 588)

Furthermore, he interprets suicide as a neurotic's murderous impulses felt against

others turned back upon him or herself and asserts that "the ego can kill itself only if, owing to the return of the object-cathexis, it can treat itself as object" (1917, 588).

Three years later, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he introduces his controversial theory of the death instinct.[12] In this essay, he defines this instinct as "the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life," and as "an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things." (1920, 612). To this end, he asserts that since "inanimate things existed before living things . . . the aim of all life is death" (613). Analogous to this inclination is the process of libidinal regression to earlier developmental stages for emotional gratification[13] following emotional frustration. This innate tendency, which he compares with the Nirvana principle, will ultimately keep drawing the person towards a state totally lacking tension and energy, namely death. Later, in *The Ego and the Id*, he deliberates on the dual instinct theory of Eros and death, questioning why the two normally fused instincts defuse and precipitate the capitulation of life to death. In answer, he suggests the defusion might also relate to the principle of libidinal regression. He ends his paper with the idea of "the id as under domination of the mute but powerful death instincts, which desire to be at peace and (prompted by the pleasure principle) to put Eros, the mischief-maker, to rest . . . " (1923, 658).

III NARCISSUS

In "Narcissism: The Myth, The Disorder, and the Great Refusal," G. F. Alford proposes that the Narcissus myth reveals important elements of both human nature and the basis of the disorder of narcissism. Regarding Narcissus in heroic terms, he argues that Narcissus's death represents a "protest against a world that seems to demand the fragmentation and suppression of self as the price of civilization" (Alford 20).

Alford primarily focuses upon Ovid's poem, which version introduces both Tiresias's prophesy that Narcissus will die young if he attains knowledge of himself, and the character of Echo, the beautiful water nymph who pursues Narcissus against his will. Additionally, Alford reviews three other versions of the myth: the first by the Greek author Conon, written contemporaneously with Ovid (36 BC-17 AD), records Narcissus's rejection of a young male suitor and his subsequent encouragement of the lover's suicide. As vengeance for his death, the Gods curse Narcissus that he will love only himself. In consequence, Narcissus does fall in love with himself, and feelings of undeserved guilt arising from his suitor's suicide contribute to Narcissus's self-destruction. The second narrative, written by Pausanius in the second century, deals with Narcissus's love for his deceased twin sister and his solace derived from recognition of her resemblance in his watery reflection. The third account by Pentadius claims that Narcissus's father was a river and that Narcissus gazed into the water searching for his

estranged father (Alford 20). It would seem that each of the four versions of the myth exhibit criteria for narcissism: pathological self-love, self-hatred, an inability to love normally, and ego-identification with a lost love-object.

Alford asserts that Narcissus's reflection indicates a fragmented personality, and interprets Tiresias's prophesy as a caution against the price of partial self-knowledge (24). It can also be explained as a prediction of the breakdown of Narcissus's defensive fusion. Such disorganization results partly from feelings of self-hatred arising from the reality of his judgmental and retributive superego, manifested as undeserved guilt relating to his suitor's suicide, and partly from his disillusionment with his idealized objects and his ideal-self.

According to Alford, unless the ego-ideal and superego, that is, parental and cultural values, are in accordance with each other, the ego will pursue reunification with the most primitive aspects of the ego-ideal (primitive narcissism), those aspects "whose image of pleasure is concrete, immediate, and physical." Accordingly, the individual will follow immature objectives rather than pursuing more mature concepts of morality and ethics (Alford 23). Because Narcissus possesses ethical and moral insight to judge and reject his cultural ideals, Alford suggests that he is unable to consolidate with either his primitive or mature ego-ideal. Thus, he represents a breakdown of narcissistic defensive fusion. In other words, without his emotional defence, Narcissus feels the despair and emptiness of his emotional trauma. Whereas narcissistic fusion represents life for Narcissus, defusion means death.

His death can also be explained in Freudian terms of "a neurotic's thoughts containing murderous impulses felt against others turned back on himself." Angry with his culture, his parents, and his sister for emotional abandonment, Narcissus withdraws his object-cathexis. In satisfaction of trends of sadism and hate felt towards these objects, he turns them upon himself. Thus, treating himself as object, he can kill himself. In this regard, Ovid's poem differs from other versions in that Narcissus weakens and dies naturally.

His suicide is not in vain, however. Rather, it symbolizes the protest of a sensitive human being against unfair, insensitive cultural ideals. Since Narcissus rejects his agonal culture, Herbert Marcuse considers him a hero, comparing him with Orpheus and Dionysus, other anti-heroes who represent the pleasure principle in their "Great refusal"[14] to accept "the identity of toil, productivity, repression and civilization" symbolized by the reality principle (Alford 31). Accordingly, Narcissus's suicide represents the epitome of such refusal. He is both victim and victor of the reality principle.

IV THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Narcissus's mythological and psychological dilemma is timeless and bears relevance to the context of both *Madame Bovary* and *The Awakening.* In many ways, French and Creole Victorian realms lacked empathy, often misunderstanding the vulnerability of human nature and fostering polarization of gender roles and subordination of women. Both Flaubert's account of Charles Bovary's "Spartan" upbringing and Chopin's description of Léonce Pontellier's family background are similar in that they involve devaluation of the feminine. Furthermore, both texts signify a patriarchal milieu of female subjugation which treats women little better than chattels, diminishing them to their reproductive functions. The conventional nineteenth-century perspective of women's nature also reflected male-centred misunderstanding. Unrealistic and unfair, society dichotomized its classification of women as either moral or corrupt; further, it evaluated women as either Madonna-like figures, loving and maternal, or as their heretic counterparts, irrational, sentimental, and emotionally or morally degenerate. This binary view permeates both *Madame Bovary* and *The Awakening.* In addition, the institution of marriage plays a significant role in each text. Since divorce was illegal in France during Emma's life, frequently adultery provided the only relief from restrictive marriages. This also privileged men, however, for while men practised adultery freely and legally, society criticized women harshly, subjecting them to the threat of possible punishment by imprison-

ment.[15] Thirty years later in Creole Louisiana, despite its availability, divorce proved difficult under Napoleonic law, and adulterous women were subject to economic hardship and ostracization. Moreover, nineteenth-century patriarchal sensibility excluded the possibility or existence of women's sexual desire. Baudelaire imparts this prejudice in his review of Flaubert's novel in which he qualifies his praise of Flaubert's accurate depiction of a feminine mind with his remarks that:

> [Flaubert] was unable to keep from infusing male blood into the veins of his creation, and Madame Bovary, in the most energetic and ambitious aspects of her character, and also in her strong predilection for reverie, remained a man.[16]

In this regard, neither Charles Bovary nor Léonce Pontellier comprehend their wives' sexuality, or the possibility of adulterous involvement. On both continents, then, culture maintained similar perspectives. Cultural ideals of purity, fidelity, and motherhood stood as paragons to which women should aspire and represented the social standards by which Emma Bovary and Edna Pontellier were judged.

Though representing the feminine side of Narcissus's cultural dilemma, both Emma and Edna are emblematic of his emotional entrapment that culminates in self-destruction. Yet the difference between Emma and Edna rests in the question of whether their deaths represent protest. Like Narcissus, Edna awakens to disillusionment with her culture, her idealized objects, and self. Accordingly she is unable to consolidate with her ideal-ego. In contrast, although Flaubert satirizes Emma's flawed culture, her suicide cannot be considered as a cultural protest.

Unlike Edna, Emma sustains her narcissistic idealization of object and self. Similarly, she does not reject her ego-ideal; rather, she dies for it, as a would-be romantic heroine.

Another dissimilarity between the two protagonists, however, lies in the mode of their deaths. While Chopin grants Edna agency to pursue her desires and effect her own death, Flaubert withholds Emma's autonomy in his portrayal of her stereotypical temptation, seductions of flesh, fall from innocence, and finally her questionable decision for her violent death. In view of the numerous drowning metaphors used throughout the text, Emma's painful and undignified poisoning suggests incongruity when compared to Edna's tranquil drowning, which is also foreshadowed throughout the novel. Rather, her arsenic ingestion points to the author's heavy-handedness and is suggestive of moralistic, sadistic punishment for her selfishness, adultery, and dishonesty. Flaubert's comments support this view: "I think I have written a book that is moral by its effect as a whole . . . I do not preach adultery or irreligion, since I show, as every good author should, the punishment incurred by immoral behaviour."[17] Moreover, other authorial motives such as Flaubert's own inner conflicts and increasing identification with his protagonist appear to have complicated her life and death.

The following chapters will explore these two diversified authorial designs, including the relationship between author and character. To this end, this thesis will refer to relevant biographical details of the historical authors, as it will explore

the protagonists' personal histories in its identification of the emotional injuries that provoke their narcissism. Further, it will employ the above foundational psychoanalytical theory in discussion of the protagonists' erotic lives that culminate in psychotic breakdowns, precipitating their desire for and mode of death.

CHAPTER TWO: EMMA BOVARY

I DESIRE

Desire is the bait, death is the hook.
—Joseph Campbell[1]

A psychological reading of *Madame Bovary* explicates Emma's wantonness, dysfunctional motherhood, and avarice as a narcissistic, insatiable desire for love. Similarly, her desire for romantic love, social advancement, luxuries, and wealth indicates an underlying libidinal frustration and a need for affection, fundamental to her ego survival. As Freud insisted, "A strong egoism is a protection against falling ill, but we must begin to love in order not to fall ill, and we are bound to fall ill if, in consequence of frustration, we are unable to love" (1914, 553).

Emma's complex personality, moral decline, and fatal destiny are engendered from Flaubert's calculated design. Part of her flawed nature derives from his unrealistic personal and cultural presumption of women's nature representing either Madonna figures or whores. Jean Pace asserts that all of Flaubert's art, as well as his personal life, reflects this bifurcation and paradoxically represents his "contempt for women in general coupled with a romantic idealization of one woman [Elisa Schlésinger]" (118). Although beginning as a virtuous woman, Emma ends, in Flaubert's words during the trial, as "*un caractère de femme*

naturellement corrompu."[2] Also fused into his design is the anti-feminist bias of nineteenth-century cultural discourse that misunderstood, subjugated, and morally imprisoned women. Such prejudices and bourgeois injustices are articulated in Emma's observation that:

> A man is free, at least—free to range the passions and the world, to surmount obstacles, to taste the rarest pleasures. Whereas a woman is continually thwarted. Inert, compliant, she has to struggle against her physical weakness and legal subjugation . . . there is always a desire that entices, always a convention that restrains. (105)

Yet despite Flaubert's apparent empathy, he plays a game of "cat and mouse" with Emma (Williams 81), sadistically blocking each chance of escape. For the most part, he portrays her as masochistic and passive, granting her assertiveness only in her immoral conduct, such as infidelity, or misappropriation of her husband's property. As if doomed from the start, Emma never finds emotional satisfaction.

Flaubert based Emma's psychology upon the contemporary and unfairly labelled "female" disorder of hysteria. Although Baudelaire claimed Flaubert was the first writer to venture into this inexplicable subject,[3] Laurence Rothfield asserts that Flaubert explored beyond the general dictionary definition into the field of medicine. Rothfield quotes an excerpt from the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales,* of which text Flaubert gives Charles Bovary possession:

> The circumstances that most predispose a patient to hysteria are . . . a nervous constitution, her female sex and her age, between twelve and twenty-five or thirty years of age. . . . A majority have from young age shown a disposition toward convulsive ailments, a melancholic, angry, passionate,

> impatient character. . . . Exciting causes, more specifically, are morally powerful ailments [including] unrequited love, . . . acute disturbances of the soul, . . . a violent fit of jealousy, . . . powerful grief, . . . acute disappointment . . . . The nervous constitution and the unhealthy condition that precede and facilitate the development of the attacks are caused by excessive masturbation. (228)

Not only does Rothfield believe that assumptions about hysteria circulating in nineteenth-century medical discourse mold Emma's life (221), but he points out that the above definition corresponds accurately with Emma's psychological state, and that Flaubert utilizes every word of this medical definition in her description at some point in the text (228). Notwithstanding Flaubert's diligent research, albeit based on distorted theory, Emma's psychology transcends that of a mere female hysteric.

Besides these stereotypical prescriptions, Flaubert's psychological realism of Emma's personality results from projection of himself as his female Other. Into Emma's personality he infused his personal experiences, libidinal idiosyncracies, weaknesses and undesirable feelings of helplessness that related to his own feelings of ennui, melancholia, emotional breakdowns, and the "hysterical malady" of epilepsy (Bart 271). Indeed, many factors appear to have contributed towards Flaubert's complexities and own narcissism.

According to Sartre, Flaubert's childhood lacked emotional gratification in that he was an "unloved or ill-loved infant" (Collas 41n). Further, it included parental inconsistencies: his relationship with his father had been strained, his

father remaining emotionally distant to him. In addition, despite his love and admiration for his father, Flaubert had felt ambivalence towards him. With his personal feelings of inadequacy haunting him and his constant rivalry of his older brother for his father's attention, he had often felt distant and alien towards his father. Consequently, his father's death left Flaubert devastated and without emotional resolution. In addition, his emotionally demanding mother had created other problems for Flaubert, especially his abnormal over dependency upon her.

Flaubert also possessed feminine characteristics and homosexual tendencies, and enjoyed domination by his men friends (Starkie 36). He once admitted: "Am I not a feminine nature, and Lesbos is my mother-country" (Starkie xiv). Though not directly blaming *his* mother for his feminine nature, he claimed that the weakening and feminization of men were caused by women involved in their lives (Bart 386). As a student, his effeminacy had caused him dissatisfaction: once he disclosed that "there are days when one longs to be a woman" (Barnes 157), while at other times he had often wished to castrate himself (Starkie xiv). His disposition also caused him difficulties in his realm of art, for his friends had criticized and taunted him for his over sentimentality in writing "the lavishly romantic *Temptation.*"[4] Likewise, his femininity proved problematic in his erotic relationships with women. Emile Zola claimed that women sensed Flaubert to be more like a woman than a man (Bart 226), and that because he was too feminine in his reactions, women failed to take him seriously as a man, regarding him more as

a friend than a lover (Bart 385).

Flaubert was unable to love normally; to him women represented only sex (Bart 87). The only woman with whom he claimed he was ever "wholly happy" had been his deceased sister, whose death had also left him devastated (Bart 8). According to Bart, Flaubert really desired a man (148), but searched for the mother-figure "that Madame Flaubert had never been or had been so fully that all the other women had to be what she was" (385). This premise shows in his long time and unrequited libidinal attachment to Elisa Schlésinger. Similarly, his relationship with Louise Colet, eleven years his senior, also reflects her maternal attraction. Yet, despite his attempt to formulate normal object love, their spasmodic six-year liaison proved unsuccessful. One of the causes of Flaubert's ultimate devaluation of Colet followed his perception of her "feet of clay" in her lacking the "masculine" intelligence that he had believed she possessed.[5]

Flaubert's excessive sexual life, ranging from depravity to asceticism, ultimately rendered his misfortune. From a heterosexual union he contracted syphilis, which event might account mostly for his contention and resentment of the feminine. The disease burdened him with endless pain and nervous tension that required equally unpleasant treatment (Bart 259). Moreover, libidinal disappointment and insecurity fostered his contempt of and cynicism towards women; his belief that women were dangerous and inapproachable inevitably led to their devaluation. As Bart maintains, Flaubert discovered "the key to Emma's

sad destiny" in the same ironic fatality as he loved Colet (244).

Many critics affirm that Emma represents Flaubert's alter-ego. In particular, Benjamin Bart writes that Emma's life "revolves around the life of Flaubert, flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood"; further, that his "greatest single source was himself and although he admitted it perhaps only three or four times in his life, he always knew that Emma Bovary was himself" (271). To this end, Flaubert's admission that "*Madame Bovary, c'est moi, d'après moi!*" interpreted by Steegmuller as "Madame Bovary is myself—drawn from life" (1980, 235), supports such identification. Similarly, Paris claims that Flaubert's inner conflicts mirror those of Emma's and manifest in his attitudes towards her: "Emma represents a side of himself which he despises, pities, and fears. He needs to expose her folly again and again in order to reinforce his own resignation" (204). Thus, Emma's construct can be understood as Flaubert's narcissistic attempt to work free of his undesirable characteristics. Further, his inner conflicts prevent Emma's gratification of her desires and explain his sadistic attitude towards her.

In addition to Flaubert's conscious psychological structure, but equally relevant to Emma's psychology, are the intuitions originating from his unconscious. Ion Collas stresses the significance of Flaubert's extensive utilization of the elements of money and food and of their psychological symbolization of love in the context of *Madame Bovary*. Although Flaubert's conscious insights into these connections are likely, Collas extends the

signification of such elements to include and reflect Emma's past emotional life. This psychological significance must stem from Flaubert's unconscious, since, Collas states, "their real meaning could not have been clearly understood by anyone before the turn of the century, when psychoanalysis started shedding light on the forgotten world of infancy preserved in the adult psyche" (129). Consequently, the combination of Flaubert's conscious and unconscious intuition results in the creation of a mimetic character of psychological complexity far exceeding his original intention, or possible interpretation.

Analysis of Emma's personality suggests that, like Flaubert, she suffers from the ageless human condition of narcissism. Indeed, her characteristics correspond with the criteria for narcissistic personality disorder, catalogued in the *DSM III.* Beneath Emma's façade of grandiosity, indifference, exhibitionism, lack of empathy, exploitativeness, and sense of entitlement lie feelings of inferiority, shame, humiliation, hatred, envy, and emptiness. While her narcissism shields her from past emotional trauma, it also prevents her from enjoying normal attachment love, even with her child. Her incapacity for normal object-love drives her to seek objects that reflect her own idealized image. In Kernberg's words, narcissists will "idealize objects from whom they expect narcissistic supplies and to deprecate, and treat with contempt, those from whom they expect nothing (often former idols)" (228). In Emma's case, ennui and apathy suppress her contempt.[6] Emma's method of devaluation involves internalizing her love objects: "she

smothers [love] by routine" (146) and "buries it in the depths of her heart" (251). Mitchell, discussing apathy, claims that "the logic of narcissism requires that in order for apathy to be effective, there should be a 'withdrawal of libido from the external world'" (116). Withdrawal of object-libido has occurred in Emma; however, the question arises as to the cause of her narcissism.

In answer, several theoretical causes are applicable, such as: childhood emotional trauma; parental rejection; inconsistencies in parental emotional investment; disruption of mother/child bonding; maternal loss; and loss of love-object. Yet a diachronic analysis of Emma's personality poses difficulty, inasmuch as Flaubert offers very little of her history directly in the text. Collas, however, argues that two time factors coexist in the novel: that Emma's present time reflects her past; and that to understand Emma's psychology, one must refer to her past (Collas 126). Clues to her personal history, he asserts, can be found in particular words and in elements such as food and money.

Flaubert's omission of critical details of Emma's first twelve years is puzzling, particularly when he provides numerous childhood details of Charles and enriches seemingly insignificant matters with minute details. Such absence suggests deliberate ambiguity. It is as though Emma has repressed her reminiscences that are too painful and uncomfortable to recall, and that whenever stimulated, their emotional energy converts into symptoms of hysteria. Following sensations and memories that reflect emotional emptiness, Emma does fall into

hysterical conditions. Emma's psychological defence against painful sensations manifests itself as symptoms of ennui, boredom, or in its correlative, fatigue. Collas states that "Pronounced symptoms of lassitude, exhaustion, and numbness often weigh Emma down. They reveal their meaning and their origin by making their appearance precisely at times when we would expect Emma to be angry, full of hate or at least spiteful" (91). Interestingly, Flaubert also found memory disturbing, it being the root of his "nervous malady" (Bart 93).

Besides using his personal characteristics in Emma's creation, it is conceivable that he also used emotional details of his own family dynamics for the structure of her family history. After all, if she is to repress memories, she must have a history to repress. Moreover, it is possible that Flaubert not only used his family prototypes on which to base the characters in the novel, but in creating the psychology of a woman—his Other—he reversed their gender. Specifically, Emma appears to signify Flaubert; Emma's mother represents Flaubert's father; and Emma's brother symbolizes his sister. Since we must identify Emma's original psychic wound through examination of her family dynamics, with the above hypothesis in mind, certain biographical data of the historical author prove useful in its reconstruction.

In particular, paralleling the deaths of Emma's mother and brother are the deaths of Flaubert's father and sister who died within months of each other prior to the novel's inception. As with Emma and her father, their deaths caused Flaubert

and his mother immense anguish. In addition, Flaubert's ambivalent feelings towards his father, along with his abnormal fear of separation from his mother equate with those of Emma. Furthermore, the eight year age difference between Emma and her brother corresponds to the age difference between Flaubert and his rival brother. Accordingly, the premise suggests first that Flaubert's emotional trauma molds Emma's emotional makeup; and secondly that his family dynamics shape a past for Emma that includes uneven parenting, a poor relationship with her mother, sibling rivalry, libidinal disappointment and trauma.

Emma's mother also constitutes a large part of the psychological puzzle, particularly since Emma is a victim of maternal loss, deprivation of maternal love, and disruption of mother-child bonding. It is likely, therefore, that a primary cause of Emma's emotional emptiness stems from this relationship. Yet details of this are again conspicuously absent. Emma does not, or cannot, share reminiscences of her mother, except in terms of her death. Such avoidance suggests her unconscious defence against any impending emergence into consciousness of unpleasant feelings of abandonment and rage.[7] An example of her avoidance occurs after the word "abandonment" has described her school oak wreaths. Immediately in response to the signified sensation, she speaks of her mother to Charles, but avoids further remembrance. Instead, she digresses, talking only about the cemetery, the flower bed from which she would cull flowers for the grave, and other matters that cause her boredom (27). To reiterate Collas's

assertion, her boredom starts at times when Emma feels angry. In this case, then, her anger seems to stem from her abandonment by her mother.

Emma's reaction to her mother's death also signifies emotional insincerity and disaffection. Yet, even before her mother's death, Emma appears emotionally numb and depressed (42). According to Freud, causes of melancholia usually extend beyond obvious object losses due to death. They often include circumstances of being slighted, neglected, or disappointed and can impart opposed feelings of love and hate into the relationship, or reinforce already existing ambivalence (1915, 586). Though she publicly mourns her mother's death, she privately exploits the event to establish and maintain an idealized image of herself as both a victim and as a romantically grieving daughter. Yet her grief is contrived. While her performance gains Emma attention from her father and sympathy and respect from the nuns, it also brings her covert delight as she revels in the speed with which she achieves the "ideal of ethereal languor, inaccessible to mediocre spirits" (45). In addition, her dislike for her mother shows in her description of her mother's memorial picture as fabricated from "the dead woman's hair" (45). Not only are her words impersonal, but they signify alienation, even callousness, indicative of inner rage.

Emma's abandonment, however, precedes her mother's death. Separation from her occurs at the time of her enrolment in the Rouen convent, at thirteen, the sensitive age of puberty and adolescence. Motherless, Emma is left to seek

surrogate care and maternal understanding from the asceticism of nuns who stress piety over sensuality. The text makes no indication of Emma's visiting home, nor of her family's visiting her; instead, she lives "uninterruptedly" at the convent (41). Furthermore, investigation of Emma's infantile care suggests equal neglect and rejection.

Discovery of her deprivation is achieved first by employing the "psychological law" that adult behaviour and experience essentially repeats childhood experiences (Collas 128); and second by identifying and interpreting the psychological symbols of food and money. To this end, if Emma's dysfunctional treatment of her own daughter is a repetition of her infantile experience, then the quality of maternal care and affection that she received would have been wretched. First of all, Emma does not value her female child; in fact, she faints at the news of its gender. Her devaluation of the female child suggests her family's past overvaluation of her brother. Next, by entrusting her daughter to Madame Rollet, the wet nurse, Emma exhibits a total absence of empathy for her daughter. Very noticeably, Madame Rollet lives in such appallingly unhealthy and filthy conditions that Emma has to clean off her feet on exiting the house (111). Yet, ironically, during her final emotional breakdown, Emma makes a futile emotional retreat to this "bad mother" and into her bed (361), rather than to Madame Homais, the ideal mother-figure. Accordingly, Madame Rollet appears to represent the type of mother Emma experienced.

Collas identifies Emma's infantile emotional frustration through examination of her adult nutritional habits. Referring to the Freudian theory of frustration precipitating infantile regression, he draws attention to Emma's nutritional habits. He points to Emma's instances of consuming nothing but milk, then tea, and to her decision to drink vinegar ostensibly for medicinal purposes, when instead, vinegar causes harmful appetite suppression. These facts, he asserts, suggest not only the wish to return to blissful infancy, but of frustration within that time (36). He explains that Emma's early infancy was frustrating and painful rather than joyful due to a deficiency of either nourishment or love, its counterpart. Accordingly, its reenactment does not rouse the desired relief from frustration so much as the original pain and suffering. He explains that:

> even Emma's drinking of milk, so evidently the sign of a search for bygone bliss, is linked with undernourishment and can be considered a symbolic representation of lovelessness not only in the present . . . but in the past as well. The image of drinking vinegar is both more direct and more dramatic. It stands unequivocally and glaringly for the deprivation felt in infancy. It is milk with a negative sign attached to it, it is non-milk, non-love. (44)

Further evidence of Madame Rouault's dysfunctional mothering skills is found in the signification of money. Collas associates the Emma-Lheureux relationship with that of a mother-child relationship—Lheureux representing an evil mother (117). By interpreting their relationship on this deeper level, he believes it represents a reenactment of Emma's infancy which provided her with poor nourishment and an environment of "emotionally destructive forces" (128).

Interpreting money as a signifier of love, Collas believes that Lheureux, in giving Emma luxuries and funds, symbolically nurses and feeds her.

> It is Lheureux the giver, not Lheureux the exploiter who is truly Emma's bad demon. As a shadow from the past, he incarnates the evil aspect of her infancy—that unhappy infancy we have so often seen reflected in manifestations of her adult life but never with such clarity and precision as in her steady progression toward disaster and death, effected under the influence of loans, Lheureux's poisoned gifts. (117)

In this context, Lheureux's sudden withdrawal of credit constitutes emotional abandonment and precipitates Emma's final breakdown. Such withdrawal would repeat previous sensations of emotional abandonment experienced as an infant and as an adolescent exiled from her home. From this analysis of the relationship, Emma clearly suffered poor maternal bonding, libidinal rejection, and emotional disappointment, resulting in anguish and resentment. To reiterate, Emma's repeated method of dealing with emotional disappointment is to internalize her love-objects, repress their memories, and sink into apathy.[8] At the convent, Emma substitutes her disappointing libidinal cathexes for idealized objects such as the Virgin (131) and others from the illusory world of art. Having already buried her mother's memory, her mother's actual death would seem as bathos to her original separation and rejection.

Following the death of Emma's mother and brother, Emma's object-libidinal cathexis ought to have been directed towards her father. Yet such displacement fails; Emma and Rouault, indeed, share little affection. Further, his

irascibility and tyranny induce Emma's masochistic response of victim, typically manifested in her piercing her finger with her sewing needle (18), or biting her lip in silence (19). Rouault's insensitivity also shows in his sarcasm that she is "too clever to have anything to do with farming" (28), which comment signifies her worthlessness not only on the farm, but also as a daughter. Moreover, his lack of empathy, indifference and rejection shows in his encouragement of her inappropriate and loveless marriage to Charles, as well in his penurious attitude and connivance in reducing her dowry and allowing only a small wedding.

Since the death of his wife and son, Emma's father has also withdrawn his libido from the object world, obtaining oral gratification through his over-indulgence in choice food, cider, and brandy. Yet, as if enjoying his melancholia, he eats all his meals alone, apart from Emma. As food becomes his expression of affection, it is noteworthy that Rouault sends his annual present of a turkey to Charles, rather than Emma.

Emma's narcissistic defence against her father's indifference involves deprecating and extinguishing his memory. Her emotional withdrawal from him occurs after his three-day visit to Tostes, following her disappointment over his self-centeredness and lack of interest in her unhappy dilemma. As she physically closes the door behind him, psychologically she severs the relationship. Indeed, her "surprise" feeling of "relief" (77) parallels her "surprise" feeling of relief experienced following her mother's death (46).

Yet a warm relationship between Emma and her father had once existed during her prepubescent past. In fact, her sole recollection of girlhood involves him and reflects felicitous moments. The memory follows her reading of his letter, to which she initially reacts by attempting to sustain her alienation, focussing upon his coarseness of spelling mistakes and use of ash to dry his ink. She imagines him as "the old man" standing at the fireplace (201), repeating her earlier lack of subjectivity that had described her mother as "the dead woman." Yet, despite her process of devaluation, his affectionate sentiment towards Berthe breaks through her emotional guard, evoking her affectionate childhood reminiscence of herself

> [sitting] there beside him, on the fireseat, burning the end of a stick in the flame of the cracking furze! She remembered summer evenings, full of sunshine. The foals would whinny when anyone came near, and gallop and gallop to their hearts' content. . . . How happy she had been in those days! (202)

Her association of this state of happiness with her state of innocence that had preceded her ensuing stages of "virgin," "wife," and "mistress" (202), suggests that her father's love for her ceased at this prepubescent time. Accordingly, the environmental "emotionally destructive forces" that Collas ascribes to Emma's psychological deterioration (128) seem to encompass such disruption of her father's empathy. In fact, she obliquely places culpability upon her father for her (and her brother's?) hardheartedness and absence of empathy for others in her discursion that:

> (In this [her harshness and lack of sympathy] she was like most sons and daughters of country folk: their souls always

keep some of the horniness of their fathers' hands.) (77)

By the time Emma arrives in Yonville, her cumulative emotional trauma and resultant ego-depletion fill the criteria for her narcissistic protection. In consequence, Emma has buried her past and suffers psychological orphanhood. Yet Leo Schneiderman categorizes her as a protagonist belonging to nineteenth-century "dependent youth." He defines this type of character as one whose patriarchal family connection had the power to defeat, protect, or manipulate its offspring. Further, he explains that if "a protagonist is destroyed by social forces or Oedipal rivals it is because a social norm has been violated, or fate has been tempted in some other way, and not because of incurable narcissistic wounds that result in impaired self-worth" (216). He also maintains that nineteenth-century protagonists contrast with those of the twentieth century who, from the start of their fictive lives, escape the control of their elders. This, he explains, follows the decline of the nuclear family and the loss of parental power that deprives children of "god-like fathers and mothers to be worshiped or blasphemed against" (217). Rather than to a preordination due to innate weakness, he attributes Emma's downfall and suicide to her craving for affluence and to a surplus of love that arises from pride. He overlooks the fact that pride results from emotional humiliation.[9] He claims her death results from her "unlawful self-assertion" and violation of social conventions such as her adulterous behaviour, harmful influence on Leon, and betrayal of Charles (216). This premise, indeed, seems to represent

Flaubert's conscious intention.

Flaubert's portrayal of Emma differs, however, from the nineteenth-century pattern. His ultimate complex psychology of Emma is realistic and more contemporary, and her downfall is effected by internal as well as external causation. Schneiderman overlooks certain factors such as Flaubert's unconscious symbolism that relates to infantile emotional deprivation, his strategy of Emma's repressed memories, and the many signs that do, in fact, indicate "incurable narcissistic wounds" that lead to "impaired self-worth." Emma's narcissistic defence of orphaning herself to prevent any psychological dependency, thus, aligns her with twentieth-century independent literary characters that Schneiderman defines as symbolic "motherless children, fatherless waifs, emotionally abandoned from infancy onward" (216). Emma is emotionally immature, having regressed to infantile narcissism in consequence of emotional frustration experienced throughout her life. The fact that Flaubert reveals the ages of most of the main characters while withholding Emma's is significant. She never matures and always demands the emotional interest withheld by her parents, whose only legacy is emotional distrust.

Accordingly, Emma's fear of further psychic trauma and distrust of others prevents her from forming true object attachments that demand emotional dependency. Kernberg states that although narcissistic personalities often appear dependent in their need for esteem and veneration from others, their severe

mistrust and condemnation of others prevent dependency (228). As he explains, dependency on others represents the narcissist's worst fear: it exposes the subject to the danger of further exploitation and pain (Kernberg 235). Ironically and paradoxically, Freud indicates that anaclitic attachment also constitutes a type of narcissism, in that "normal" subjects also experience vulnerability and fear. Yet, because of Emma's ego-depletion and low self-esteem, she demands object-choices sufficiently powerful to infuse strength into her ego. Not only must they supply her with adoration, but they must possess nobility and status to enable her realization of materialistic ambitions and escape from her bourgeois world. To this end, her narcissistic object-choices correlate closely with her ego-idealization.

Emma's idealized self-image transforms itself in accordance with her predestined and predisposed decline from innocence to corruption, occurring during her progressive psychological journey towards *jouissance* and self-destruction. Juliet F. Maccannell explains the relationship of *jouissance* to the superego:

> Freud . . . made an important move linking the contemporary superego . . . more closely to the id than the oedipal superego, in so far as it is involved with *jouissance* or the pleasure principle. This principle, allied to the death drive . . . rules the id; but the id now stands on equal footing with the superego in issuing commandments . . . Its imperative (Enjoy!) is strictly opposed to that of the superego of lack, which commands the sexes to desire, not to enjoy each other.

Because Emma's patriarchal superego is not integrated with her unrealistic ego-ideal, she regresses towards culturally immoral objectives, and her rebellious

superego aligns closer to her id, or the pleasure principle.

Emma's ego-ideal formulates while she attends the convent. In response to familial emotional wounds, she devalues her peasant background that includes a cousin's criminal involvement in assault and battery (22). Instead, an unreal ego-ideal develops out of a new set of values: convent asceticism, religious rhetoric, romantic discourse, and upper-class mores. In addition to this unreal self-image, Emma envisages an equally unreal godlike lover whose image develops from religious and romantic discourse. At the convent she would confuse sacred and profane forms of love, grouping together from religious texts signifiers such as, "'betrothed,' 'spouse,' 'heavenly lover,' [and] 'mystical marriage'" (42). In addition, influenced by romantic literature, she would dream of her lover as a "Gothic white-plumed knight . . . galloping out of the distance on a black horse" (43). Synthesizing these ideals, her fantasy involves

> . . . a phantom, embodying her most ardent memories, the most beautiful things she had read and her strongest desires. In the end he became so real and accessible that she tingled with excitement, unable though she was to picture him clearly, so hidden was he, godlike, under his manifold attributes. He dwelt in that enchanted realm where silken ladders swing from balconies moon-bright and flower-scented. (343)

Furthermore, Emma's experience at La Vaubyessard not only ignites her desire for an aristocratic lover and noble lifestyle, but also implants the upper-class acceptance of illicit love in her mind as she overhears gossip about the duc de Laverdière's affair with Marie-Antoinette (57) and witnesses other clandestine

relationships (61). The visit also transforms her concept of love, which begins to signify wealth as well as piety and romance. Accordingly, money becomes another idol and demigod to Emma.

Because of Emma's unreal standards of excellence, her search for her ideal-lover will necessarily effect libidinal disappointments. Schneiderman explains Kohut's "mirror hungry narcissist" as "one who is compelled to go on searching for idealized figures who can provide a basis for identification, only to fall into despair when his idols turn out to have feet of clay" (217).[10] Accordingly, analysis of Emma's object-choices shows that their fallibility plunges Emma into psychological collapse.

Dealing firstly with Charles, her first object choice, at the time of their introduction, Emma's ego-ideal aspires to the bifurcation of piousness and nobility. The text reflects such duality in its description of her first as a young, innocent woman dressed simply like a Madonna in a blue woolen dress (17) while she plays martyr to her father's tyranny and grieving daughter to her mother's death; and second, dressed in the richness of silk, emulating a countess (22). In addition, her ideal sexual-object also reflects this duality as she imagines Charles as her savior, a nobleman, god-man, or Gothic knight. However, since she desires rescue from her father's tyranny, her melancholia, dizzy spells, anxiety, boredom, and lovelessness, the reader questions her object-choice of Charles.

Although Charles is no "white-plumed knight," her father refers to him as

his "savior" (20). This allusion provides irony, since Charles's arrival at Les Bertaux takes place on the sixth of January, which date coincides with the religious Feast of the Epiphany, celebrating the manifestation of Jesus as Christ, as well as signifying the secular Festival of Fools. As an authority figure, Charles's appearance deceives Emma and Rouault. No doubt they would have assumed that he was an affluent, fully qualified physician rather than an impoverished *officier de santé*. Accordingly, marriage to Charles would assure Emma social position, wealth, and a possible outlet for satisfaction of any romantic notion of altruism assimilated from the nursing tradition of Ursuline nuns at her convent. He fulfills none of her expectations, however, especially that which promises her "betrothed" and "heavenly lover" would awaken her understanding of love. Instead of love, Charles awakens her hatred. As Charles's wife she is his dependent, and their union repeats her disappointment and failed relationship with her father. Furthermore, Charles's failure in meeting her ideals also rekindles her shame and humiliation caused by her father and family. Rather than her savior, Charles becomes her fool.

True to narcissistic behaviour, Emma possesses a conviction of entitlement, manifested in her attitude towards Charles. In particular, it surfaces in her interception of Charles's medical account-receivables, violation of his power of attorney, and exploitation of his real property. According to Collas, Emma's fiscal exploitation of Charles and irresponsible borrowing from Lheureux suggests the

behaviour of an unloved child, stealing from its parents.[11] Further, the fact that Emma borrows without any sincere intention or realistic ability to repay her indebtedness reflects her infantile personality in that infants, "capable of intake only," can only accept love and never return it (Collas 109).

Significantly, Emma's sexual object-choices reflect her childlike passivity; in fact, the male characters always instigate the relationships. (Indeed, by today's standards, Emma's seduction by both Rodolphe and Leon would constitute rape.) Moreover, she is actively chosen as a reflection of their own narcissistic needs. To this end, Emma fulfills Charles's social and erotic needs. Even before their meeting, he observes and assesses her father's prosperity, and despite Emma's projection of a virtuous image, Charles observes her in sensuous terms. Further, his fascination with both her aesthetics and enigmatic behaviour of aloofness and self-sufficiency—which signifies her narcissism—reveals attitudes similar to Freud's later comments on narcissistic women. His premise that "this type of woman" appeals to "those who have renounced part of their own narcissism and are in search of object-love" (1914, 555) certainly applies to Charles whose personal history suggests sufficient cause for his libidinal self-cathexis. In contrast to his first wife who, like his mother, excessively demanded his affection, however, the younger Emma represents the non-threatening aspect of his mother. Marriage to Emma, then, offers Charles not only her sensuality, refinement, and assumed wealth, but also an opportunity for a positive, anaclitic relationship. Yet,

though Charles seems to succeed in his ironically "anaclitic" object-choice, Emma fails.

Emma's disillusionment in Charles soon leads to his devaluation. Moreover, the greater her awareness of entrapment and dependency upon him, the more her hatred for him increases. Similarly, the "horrible possibilities" she images as revenge against Charles (129) signify her underlying violence. Such desire is "killed" by her indifference and habitual boredom that she punctuates with activities of overspending, acquisition of luxuries, and illicit love affairs. Though she does grant Charles another chance, significantly after sensing her father's written affection (201), her hatred subsides, only to be reignited following his botched surgery and subsequent loss of reputation.

Emma's emotional withdrawal from Charles precedes her second object-choice of Leon. Though her ego-ideal still represents standards of nobility, romance, and virtue, her exposure to La Vaubyessard has influenced and tainted her moral values. Stranded emotionally, culturally, and intellectually, she looks for companionship that will offer her rescue. To this end, Leon fulfills her desire in that she sees him as brilliant and godlike (120) as opposed to Charles, whom she now regards as dull and coarse. Emma believes that with his appreciation of literature, music, and art, Leon will, indeed, rescue her from Charles's banality.

As an object-cathexis, Leon also reflects Emma's self-image and ego-ideal. His idealism parallels hers in that he idealizes "noble characters [with] pure

affections . . . [as] refuge from life's disillusionments" (100). In addition, he experiences similar idiosyncrasies, such as melancholia and boredom (96), as well as an uncertain maternal relationship, since reference to his mother's dominance of him occurs more than once in the text (139, 341). Moreover, his response of boredom to Madame Homais's affectionate and ideal standards of motherhood (114) also suggests underlying anxiety. He also shares Emma's masochistic tendencies in response to feelings of helplessness, expressed in his pricking his fingers on cactus spikes (118). Furthermore, Emma's habit of blurring reality boundaries reflects those of Leon. Her imagining herself in illusory roles such as those of a sacred victim, a Madonna, or as the vicomte's mistress equates with his playacting roles derived from literature (99). Yet, although their relationship is not physically consummated, due to their fear of social admonition, Emma experiences Leon's retreat to Paris as emotional withdrawal, which brings about her "carnal desires, cravings for money, [and] fits of depression" (128). As her virtue fades and conscious ideas of promiscuity flourish, Emma becomes seasoned for Rodolphe, her third object-choice.

Emma bases her overvaluation of Rodolphe upon many criteria. More than her previous object-choices, he meets her standards of romance, nobility, and wealth that promise her escape and rescue. Besides being handsome, elegant, and passionate (219), he is a wealthy landowner with a private income. His full name of Boulanger de la Huchette would signify nobility to Emma; yet ironically, the

name literally translates as, "baker of the bread bin," and conforms to the food signification within the novel. Totally impressed, she calls him her "king" and "idol" (223); even his self-proclamation of *roué* fails to offend her, for it would, no doubt, remind her of socially acceptable illicit love witnessed among the nobility at La Vaubyessard.

Rodolphe consciously desires Emma for her beauty and sophistication, yet her appearance and demeanor mirror his own. Analogous to Emma, he controls his emotions with a narcissistic, "perfect calm that resigned anger employs as a shield" (368). Moreover, they share orphanhood, vulnerability, symptoms of melancholia, and boredom. In fact, her narcissism parallels his own, for he also shows an ineptitude for anaclitic love and a need for narcissistic objects to satisfy his desires. As Emma will fulfil his need to dominate, he will satisfy hers for domination in their sadomasochistic relationship, a characteristic of narcissistic love. In this regard, during their first meeting, he already plans his future devaluation and abandonment of her. Accordingly, as with her other lost love-objects, she will passively repress his memory, burying him in "the depths of her heart" (251).

Rodolphe's seduction succeeds through his manipulation and flattery. Not only does he awaken her sexually, but he helps redefine her ego-ideal. With methodically skillful rhetoric, he mocks the "old morons and bigoted old church mice" who discourage passion, asserting that morality is eternal rather than temporal. He scoffs at social conventions that reflect "the mediocrity of provincial

life, so fatal to all noble dreams" (163). Moreover, his sexual overtures merge sacred and profane ideals of love. In calling her "my angel" and a "Madonna on a pedestal" (188), he thereby alleviates her conscience while also bolstering her ego-ideal.

As Rodolphe's mistress, Emma can consolidate with her ego-ideal. Her perceived transition into noblewoman and *amoureuse* allows her to fantasize herself as a romantic heroine, belonging "to the lyrical legion of those adulterous women . . . those *amoureuses* whom she had so envied" (191). Finally, she achieves personal identity in the role of perfect lover (223), which image she sustains, even after Rodolphe's abandonment of her. In transferring her libidinal cathexis from Rodolphe to God, she becomes, instead, the sacred lover of God, "murmuring" the same impassioned words in prayer as she had to Rodolphe "in the ecstasies of adultery" (251). Her ideal of sainthood is tenuous, however, for in reality, her relationship with Rodolphe, which exposes her to illicit, carnal love, has caused her moral debasement. Furthermore, in her eagerness to replenish her depleted ego-libido, she falls easily from virtue to debauchery with Leon; oscillating from a sacred to profane role, she re-emerges as romantic *amoureuse*.

Emma's overvaluation of Leon, the second time, is based upon his evolution into an urbane young man of distinction, which state mirrors her own sophistication, experience of depravity, and acquired sensual appetites. Moreover, both she and Leon still share idiosyncrasies of melancholia and idealistic fantasies.

While to Leon Emma represents "the *amoureuse* of all novels, the heroine of all plays, the vague 'she' of all poetry" (313), to Emma, Leon represents "a phantom," or a "god-like" lover (343). Yet Emma's regression to the sadistic anal stage of primary narcissism provokes her sadistic response to Leon, which she first experiences during his seduction, when she is

> seized by a vague terror in the face of [his] timidity, a greater danger than Rodolphe's boldness when he had advanced with outstretched arms. Never had any man seemed to her so handsome" (280).

Rodolphe's lesson of sadism serves her well. This time, she dominates Leon, using him as the vehicle for her expression of repressed anger and hostility. As she perceives his "feet of clay," however, her devaluation of him ensues as she labels him "unheroic, weak, commonplace, spineless as a woman, and stingy and timorous to boot" (332).

Yet despite her hatred and devaluation of Leon, in order to protect her ego-ideal she sustains the affair vigorously as fantasy. Clinging to her adulterous pleasures "more desperately" (342), she continues writing love letters to Leon, "faithful to the idea that a woman must always write her lover" (343). Again in protection and reflection of her grandiose ego-ideal, she lives her fantasy, unrealistically overestimating him. In quenching her increasing desire for love, Emma disregards the reality of the moral codes of her patriarchal superego. Through unreal fantasies of grandeur, she satisfies immoral objectives of pleasure in her journey towards *jouissance* and self-ruination. Instead of noble woman

status, however, her overspending and adulterous passion leave her as a bourgeois, penniless, unfaithful wife, which in the context of nineteenth-century sensibility, would have amounted to little more than a common thief and a whore.

Because Emma's grandiose idealized-image of romantic *amoureuse* protects her from the shameful reality of her world of depravity, debt, and lovelessness, she clings to her ego-ideal, believing it to be more real than reality. According to Giles Mitchell, pathological narcissism is "characterized by intense, excessive, and sometimes fatal devotion to the ego-ideal." Unlike the function of the ego-ideal in normal people of providing self-esteem and a sense of well-being, Mitchell explains that in pathological narcissism, the ego-ideal is based upon unrealistic "aspirations and ideals" that develop into "destructive images of perfection and omnipotence." Moreover, he states that the narcissistic ego gradually weakens, "so that in extreme cases such as Emma's, one dies for one's ego-ideal rather than let it die" (Mitchell 107). To this end, Emma chooses death rather than relinquish her ego-ideal.

Reality breaks through Emma's narcissistic defence with her realization that her fiscal bankruptcy will terminate the lifestyle necessary for continuance of her grandiose ego-ideal. Without the resources of money and luxuries, further clandestine relationships will lose their former elevated status, and so will she. As Leon so deftly articulates, "a rich woman's virtue is protected by her banknotes" (274). Without the protection of money, her idealistic world dissipates, thus

exposing her to the reality of emotional emptiness. As the narrator emphasizes, "it was only her love that was making her suffer" (369). But because Emma's pathological attachment to her ego-ideal prevents her acceptance of shame and humiliation that arise from her failure in either monetary or emotional resources, she preserves her idealized identity by exercising her only alternative. In a weakened state, clinging to her grandiose ego-ideal of a romantic heroine, Emma finally desires a heroine's death.

II DEATH

Human kind cannot bear very much reality.
—T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton"

From the novel's inception, Flaubert's destiny for Emma involved suicide. Yet her impulsive decision to ingest poison as a means to kill herself poses a mystery, as does her graphically cruel death which seems to exceed any possible authorial intention of creating realism. Instead, Flaubert's scheme suggests perverse sadism and animosity felt against Emma. To this end, a psychological reading of the text, along with consideration of relevant biographical details, intimate that her mode of death stems from both Flaubert's unconscious and conscious intentions. Further, his methodology suggests a form of retribution directed towards despised and feared feminine elements of himself and his world that are projected onto Emma.

Emma's motivation for suicide had also proved problematic for Flaubert, for according to his *scénarios de ensemble*,[1] it varied during the novel's development. Initially, he intended its causation to be uncontrollable sexual desire that culminated in madness, placing little emphasis on financial insolvency. Doubting the seriousness of sexual disappointment, he finally gave equal, then more, emphasis to her financial dilemma (Williams 34). Accordingly, although love causes Emma's ultimate suffering, Flaubert,, through the narrator, intrusively indicates that money was "the cause of her horrible state" (369). Notwithstanding

that neither financial insolvency nor the breakup of an (albeit tenuous) love relationship normally warrant suicide, Emma's motivation for death appears feasible through an understanding of her complex psychology which reflects Flaubert's biography and psychology.

The previous section establishes Emma's narcissism that has developed in response to her childhood emotional trauma, maternal loss, and subsequent loss of libidinal objects. In addition, her character exemplifies a falsification of reality in its pathological fusion of her real self, ideal-self, and ideal-object. What finally breaks her narcissistic defence, however, is the reality of her financial insolvency that Flaubert so adamantly emphasizes. According to Collas, love and money are symbolically interchangeable to Emma. As one example, he points to her assessment of real estate profit representing "countless love meetings" (321). Further, he refers to her "carnal desires" and "cravings for money" that integrate into one sensation of suffering (128) (Collas 101). Because money symbolizes love to Emma, without love she believes life to be "inconceivable" (193). To this end, her having to face the reality of social ruin, indebtedness, and consequent cessation of romantic liaisons would deflate her idealized self-image. Moreover, her loss would arouse feelings of humiliation, shame, inferiority, hatred, envy, and in particular, emotional emptiness, all of which narcissistic defence typically masks.

Emma's despair is sensed as a repetition of past emotional traumas, and is

described in terms of a death wound:

> It was only her love that was making her suffer, and she felt her soul leave her at the [memory]—just as a wounded man, as he lies dying, feels his life flowing out with his blood through the [wound].[2] (369)

According to Collas, the above passage is the most psychologically significant in the whole novel, in that it reflects Emma's emotional past. Emphasizing the signifiers "love," "memory," and "wound," he asserts that they "stand in direct relation to each other." Further, he argues that her sensation of dying relates to the trauma of past emotional deprivation, which recognition now emerges as a memory and fully dominates her consciousness:

> The past has completely displaced the present. The actual suffering that once accompanied Emma's earliest life experience is being relived before our eyes. A total regression has occurred to the state of infantile helplessness in the face of abandonment and hunger.[3] (120)

Without her defence of narcissistic imperturbability, Emma hysterically unleashes her old feelings of oral rage against those throughout her life who have withdrawn emotional support. Her "memories and thoughts" involve: "her father, Lheureux's office, their room in Rouen, [and] another landscape" (369). Besides Rodolphe, then, she condemns her father, Lheureux, Leon, inferred in her reference to "their room in Rouen," and a nameless person, implied in her reference to "another landscape." This last allusion seems to correspond with the landscape in relation to which she has previously experienced uneasy sensations (42, 130). Hatred for

these men consumes her, and as Freud contends, hate leads to death and destruction (1923, 647).

The dynamics of Emma's suicide repeat her past behavioural tendencies in dealing with disappointment and rage. Throughout the novel she contends with frustrating and disappointing object-cathexes by introjecting them into her own ego, and subsequently by masochistically redirecting her anger towards herself. Both behaviours adapt to Freud's premise that suicide represents "murderous impulses" for others redirected against oneself following withdrawal of one's object-cathexis from the world of objects. Accordingly, Emma's masochistic resolution to kill herself responds to her feelings of hatred towards all who have hurt her in the past.

Emma's choice of arsenic as the means to end her life is initially puzzling, however, since a cursory reading of the novel supports an expectation that Emma would end her life by drowning. This anticipation evolves partly from the drowning leitmotiv employed so extensively throughout the text. In particular, Emma's decision to kill herself occurs at the riverside while she sensed "the earth beneath her feet was as yielding as water and the furrows . . . like immense dark, breaking waves" (369).

Indeed, throughout the novel, Emma's melancholia and emotional breakdowns reflect the shipwreck and drowning theme of the intertext, *Paul and Virginia.* Emma often identifies herself with its heroine, Virginia, and expresses

her emotional life in similar metaphors. For example, when pondering her future, she perceives that:

> Deep down, all the while, she was waiting for something to happen. Like a sailor in distress . . . seeking some white sail in the distant mists of the horizon. She had no idea by what wind it would reach her, toward what shore it would bear her, or what kind of craft it would be—tiny boat or towering vessel, laden with heartbreaks or filled to the gunwales with rapture. (72)

In addition, one should remember that Virginia drowns because of her modesty. Similarly, when Emma's obsession with carnal thoughts of Leon meets with a lack of spiritual guidance from the priest, she expresses her moral confusion as a metaphorical drowning:

> She sank heavily in her chair . . . [and imagined] the whitish light coming through the window panes was slowly fading and ebbing away . . . lost in shadows in an ocean of darkness. (135)

Even Rodolphe observes her as drowning, "gasping for love like a carp . . . gasping for water" (153). Furthermore, his seductive rhetoric used at the agricultural fair also mirrors Emma's shipwreck and rescue fantasy:

> Yes [happiness] comes along one day . . . All of a sudden, just when we've given up hope. Then new horizons open up before us: it's like a voice crying, 'Look! It's here!' We feel the need to pour out our hearts to a given person, to surrender, to sacrifice everything. (169)

As if to fortify Rodolphe's seduction and weaken Emma's hesitation, the same drowning theme is repeated in the isolated background discourse of the Yonville community of "Only one so blind, so sunk . . . so sunk in the prejudices of another

age . . ." (169).

Nautical metaphor also expresses Emma's libidinal interest in Rodolphe. When the relationship is positive, she senses it as buoyancy, feeling as though she were swimming under "limpid water" (187), and that "their love was at high tide" (218). In contrast, when the relationship deteriorates, she imagines shadows on the river bank that "seem[ed] to shudder, rear up and then curve downward like huge black waves threatening to engulf them" (198). Furthermore, the shipwreck allusion dominates her consciousness following Rodolphe's betrayal and during her attempted suicide. While standing at the window, she senses the floor "like a pitching ship," and feels that

> she was at the very edge, almost hanging out, a great emptiness all around her. The blue of the sky was flooding her; her head . . . filled with the rushing of the wind: all she had to do was to surrender, yield to the onrush. (241)

Unlike Virginia, however, she has surrendered her modesty to her sea captain;[4] yet her rescue fails, and like Virginia she drowns.

Emma's preoccupation with drowning compares with that of Flaubert who had experienced a suicidal urge ten years before his writing *Madame Bovary.* At this time, he would dwell upon a recurring image of a succession of suicide victims jumping into the "frigid wet tomb" of the Seine from a particular location on the Pont Neuf, which they had often passed en route to their love affairs. He would imagine their corpses "[roll] slowly with the current, their faces distorted, their legs and arms blue with cold . . . [as] each cake of ice would push them for-

ward in their long sleep, nudging them gently toward the sea" (Bart 74). According to Bart, Flaubert transferred his haunting image and suicidal impulse to his protagonist in *November*, whom he describes as a "thinly disguised Flaubert" (70).

Notwithstanding Emma decides to kill herself while at the riverbank on which she also had frequently travelled en route to her love affair with Rodolphe, she does not end her life in the water. Emma decides to swallow poison, despite her psychological sensations of submersion under "immense dark, breaking waves" and physiological symptoms of drowning, feeling that her "lungs would burst." Indeed, her motivation for arsenic ingestion seems contradictory to the numerous allusions to drowning presented throughout the text. Emma seems to follow the same destiny as other female protagonists in Flaubert's earlier writings.[5]

A close reading reveals, however, that Emma takes the poison in response to many subtle subliminal suggestions carefully infused in her mind. Often in the novel, the substances of sugar and acid are juxtaposed, sugar always placed first in their binary logical arrangement. Accordingly, the concept of the arsenic being bitter, or its substance being much different from sugar, would diminish in Emma's unconscious. Moreover, both arsenic and acid have been associated with her illicit sexuality. In particular, while preoccupied with the fear of Binet's knowledge of her Rodolphe affair, she overhears Binet ask Homais for "sugar-acid" (195). Likewise, when returning from a sexual liaison with Leon, she attends the Homais household for news of her father-in-law's death. At this time

she encounters the kitchen canning session, in which sugar and arsenic are again closely correlated, and witnesses Justin's chastisement for his prurient interest in a book regarding fornication (295). As a result, Emma's thought cluster that develops from this incident includes an association and confusion of sugar with acid or arsenic, punishment for carnal love, as well as the idea of death.

Furthermore, at this time, Emma learns not only of the location of the arsenic, but also the description of its container, which Homais expressly describes as "a blue glass bottle sealed with yellow wax with white powder in it" (293). Notably, the colours of blue and gold play an important role in Emma's signified world. As Eric Gans points out, the colour blue symbolizes Emma's "naive idealism," used throughout the text to illustrate her "illusions and romantic fulfilment" (67). For Emma, the colours of blue and gold or yellow continually signify her varying and progressive ideals of love throughout her moral decline. Some examples are: first, the sky blue borders of her prayer book (41), the gold candlesticks, and brass crucifixes worn by the nuns at the convent (42); second, her wedding cake, standing upon blue cardboard and spangled with gold paper stars (33); third, the blue waves and golden sunlight of the idyllic landscape she dreams she will share with Rodolphe (230). Ironically, though blue and gold symbolize love to Emma, the blue and gold arsenic bottle provides her with no love.

Far from consolation, the bottle containing arsenic dispenses an unexpectedly violent and agonizing death, the causticity of which she would have

had no conception. After all, the reading experience that Flaubert ascribes to Emma lacks realistic details of poisoning, since it is comprised of romantic novels rather than medical texts. Emma's expectation involves a passive death, implied in her thoughts while she awaits death: "Dying doesn't amount to much! . . . I'll fall asleep, and everything will be over" (372). While Emma's experience lacks knowledge of the arsenic's unpleasantness, however, her creator had full knowledge, for his research had crystallized each symptom and stage of such poisoning (Bart 308). To this end, the likelihood seems slight that a woman, such as Emma, would have chosen such an unpleasant death from arsenic had she known of its horror. Apart from Emma's agony, her undignified death hardly conforms to her romanticized heroine's death. Indeed, as if in cruel mockery, her grotesque appearance at her deathbed vividly contrasts with her vivacity previously reflected in the mirror when she had consolidated with her ego-ideal. No longer reflecting the romantic heroine and *amoureuse,* the mirror reveals her once "enormous, dark, deep eyes" as watery and lifeless. Her mouth that once boasted, "I have a lover! I have a lover!" she sees silenced, with its swollen tongue protruding repulsively (383). Her final appearance compares more with that of the diseased beggar than with her idealized self-image of either fictional or religious archetype.

In spite of the expectation of Emma's drowning, then, her decision to take the poison is justified when considering Flaubert's well-crafted characterization of his protagonist's romantic idealism and vulnerability. He understands intuitively

that her intense devotion to her ego-ideal would prevent its relinquishment, while her vulnerability would have caused her to follow his carefully infused subliminal suggestions that are introduced through clusters of ideas and sensations. Thus, he creates a plausibility that Emma, in her hysterical confusion, would integrate the various sensations that she has felt in response to her recollection of the blue and yellow bottle containing white powder. First she would imagine idealized love; second sweetness rather than bitterness; third, carnal love and its punishment; and fourth, death. To this end, she would punish herself for her transgressions by eating the poison, rather than by drowning.

Yet her mode of death also involves Flaubert's unconscious psychological intuition. Indeed, the process of her eating arsenic correlates with infantile emotional deprivation and its subsequent need for fulfilment. Already noted are Collas's arguments that money and food are psychologically interchangeable symbols for love in Emma's life.[6] In addition, Flaubert would not have consciously known about their deeper significance in relation to forgotten infantile experience that is preserved in the adult unconscious (129). Yet, although psychoanalysis had not established this phenomenon in Flaubert's lifetime, his intuition proves psychologically accurate. According to Collas, Emma's eating of poison represents the "recapitulation of all her previous experiences, it is her entire life seen in a flash" (Collas 51). Reduced to an infantile emotional level and repeating the trauma of her past emotional needs, Emma again seeks poisonous nourishment.

Furthermore, her eating the poisonous substance reflects the bizarre psychological disorder of pica, which medical research also links with poisoning. Defined as the desire to consume peculiar and often dangerous inedible substances other than food, pica is often practiced by children who suffer from infantile oral frustration, abandonment, lack of parental love, and maternal death or separation.[7] Interestingly, Flaubert in his youth also exhibited signs of pica when he would eat the verdigris scrapings from copper coins that he knew to be poisonous (Steegmuller 1939, 17). Ion Collas connects Flaubert's past emotional frustration with Emma's poisoning, strongly believing "that the extensive use of food as a love symbol in *Madame Bovary* and especially the assimilation of poison to food in the suicide scene reflect Flaubert's own childhood experience" (Collas 48n).

Freud defines poison as "nourishment that makes one ill," while Shirley Panken connects poison to oral frustration, asserting that such infantile frustration can make the mother appear as "the donor of bad or poisonous milk."[8] Collas further explains that the infant internalizes such conflict in order to protect the needed, though frustrating, mother from the infant's aggression. Hence, the image of the infant's frustrating mother is incorporated or introjected into the infant's psyche and is experienced as part of his or her own self. Collas maintains that Emma's "swallowing Homais' arsenic symbolizes the internalization of a conflict with the mother . . . her introjected poisonous mother" (Collas 121n). (This conjecture also reflects Freud's notion that a destructive, lost love-object causes

narcissistic injury.) Accordingly, if Emma's poisoning repeats her experience of infantile maternal strife and symbolic poisonous milk, then, as Collas theorizes, the idea of her poisoning derives from Flaubert's unconscious intuition, which reflects his oral rage.

Two historical events prove relevant to the hypothesis of Flaubert's oral rage. The first involves Flaubert's initial glimpse of his beloved and unattainable Elisa Schlésinger. When he was fifteen years old and she twenty-six, he witnessed her "open her dress and give her white breast to her baby" (Steegmuller 1939, 23). The second incident also pertains to the maternal breast. Though unspecified in the final text of *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert notes in his second *scénario* that Emma's mother's death ensues from breast cancer (Steegmuller 1939, 355). These incidents, especially the inaccessibility of Elisa's "maternal" affection, and the conceit of the diseased aspect of Emma's mother's breast, tend to suggest Flaubert's libidinal frustration and oral rage.

As for his conscious motivation for choosing arsenic, however, Flaubert would have known its etymology is "male."[9] In this regard, Emma's ingestion of poison symbolizes male retribution for her "immoral" transgressions against the patriarchy, its cultural ideals for women, and religious and social law. Yet, though Flaubert might have intended Emma's punishment to derive from arsenic/the masculine, ironically, her ingestion of poison suggests a repetition of poisonous milk/maternal strife. In any event, her treatment reflects moral example and, in

Flaubert's words, "the punishment incurred by immoral behaviour."[10] Flaubert's moralistic intention seems expressed through Homais, who wanted his sons to witness Emma's suffering so as "to inure them to life's great moments, to provide them with a lesson, an example, a momentous spectacle that they would remember later" (381). No doubt, Emma's example was a demonstration of male-perceived woman's errant willfulness and evil influence, and of how incessant desire for the forbidden leads to poisonous destruction. Flaubert shows that like Eve, Emma is lured by desire and destroyed by the bait.

Eric Gans believes Flaubert seems to have experienced "sadistic relish" at the idea of Emma's death when, at one point, he had callously expressed his hope that "within a month *la Bovary* will have arsenic in her belly" (xi).[11] Yet his actual writing of her death scene precipitated parallel symptoms of her poisoning in his feelings of nausea, actual vomiting, and a distinct ink taste in his mouth. Bart explains this phenomenon as resulting from an error in Flaubert's research, when he had recorded symptoms of poisoning due to mercury instead of those of arsenic. For a perfectionist seeking accuracy, Flaubert's "Freudian" error is significant, since he was concurrently taking mercury for his treatment of syphilis. In addition, two years previously, he had suffered a severe attack of mercury poisoning, during which, his tongue had swollen so greatly that he was unable to withdraw it into his mouth (Bart 249)—a symptom he prescribed for Emma. Hence, his plan for Emma's destruction seems linked, at least unconsciously, to

himself. Rather than questioning the phenomenon by re-checking his sources, Flaubert justified it as his possible psychological connection with Emma (Bart 307), which further substantiates the hypothesis that Emma symbolized Flaubert.

As a projection of Flaubert, Emma is created as a narcissistic character who fulfills Flaubert's own narcissistic needs. As the object and victim of his narcissism, she mirrors his own folly. When he perceives her danger and corruption and "feet of clay," she is devalued and destroyed. To this end, his sadistic punishment not only punishes Emma, but paradoxically suggests his self-hatred and masochistic self-flagellation for his weaknesses. Just as Emma is sadistically abused by her father, Rodolphe, and Lheureux, and Emma abuses those weaker than herself, such as her child, Charles, and Leon, so does Flaubert create a life of frustration and pain for Emma. Flaubert's punishment for her represents his attempt to work through his inadequacies, pain, and narcissism by exposing her foolish conduct, then debasing and "killing" her off.

With perverse sadistic precision, then, Flaubert executes Emma's extinction, a relentless torture that inflicts both physical and psychological suffering. In the first place, his physical transformation of her beauty into grotesqueness not only punishes her vanity, but symbolizes and exposes her concealed moral corruption. Flaubert's deep-seated cynicism and moralistic attitude are evident in his adolescent remarks: "I dissect ceaselessly; I enjoy this especially when I come upon an element of corruption in something I generally

considered pure and when I discover gangrene in 'nice' places, I raise my head and laugh."[12] Similarly, his attitude shows in later comments that: "beneath beautiful appearances I search out ugly depths."[13] Such philosophy, indeed, seems to influence his depiction of Emma's physical deterioration.

Secondly, he allows her no mental peace, even following her last rites. As her creator and source of her idiosyncrasies, he understands her vulnerability; he knows that in repentance, she would again strive for her alternate ideal image of *amoureuse*—this time that of devout-lover. Accordingly, during the ceremonial unction, he portrays her religious fervour in profane terms:

> pressing her lips to the body of the God-Man, she imprinted on it, with every ounce of her failing strength, the most passionate love-kiss she had ever given. (382)

But this ideal religious state is short-lived, seized from Emma with the arrival of the blind beggar whose presence ruins any possibility of re-fusion with her ego-ideal. Symbolizing reality and her retributive patriarchal superego, the beggar sings his raucous ditty, reminding her of her transgressions, thus shattering her narcissistic fusion. Instead of dying in peace, Emma dies in hysteria.

Yet, despite the torture inflicted upon Emma while she lived and died, her harassment continues after her death. Again underscoring her corruption, the narrative recounts the startling image of black liquid pouring from her mouth onto her white gown (390). The black substance not only conforms with the symptoms of mercury poisoning, but also correlates with Flaubert's permanently blackened

saliva, the result of his mercury treatment for syphilis (Barnes 29). In addition, it symbolizes his self-hatred and vengeance against the feminine for his weaknesses in being lured and destroyed by carnal desire. Further indignities seem to follow with Homais's mutilation of her scalp, occurring when he clips a lock of her hair, and again with her pallbearers' insensitive handling of her coffin. To this end, Flaubert's "overkill" of Emma seems to point overwhelmingly to some form of resentment.

Just as Emma's motive for suicide derives from her hatred of the world that is redirected towards herself, so does it suggest a reflection of Flaubert's hatred of his world that is redirected towards his despised self. Like Emma, he has sustained narcissistic wounds by way of inconsistent parenting, loss of a parent and beloved sibling, libidinal frustration, unrequited love, and cultural intolerance of the feminine. Intuitively predating Freud's psychological premise of suicidal causation, Flaubert had aptly observed that:

> *On voudrait crever puisqu'on ne peut faire crever les autres, et tout suicide est peut-être un assassat rentré,*
> [One would desire to die since one cannot kill others; and all that suicide is, perhaps, is suppressed murder].[13]

Accordingly, in "killing" Emma, Flaubert attempts to exorcize his demons; through his art, he strives to slay the enemy of his internalized frustrations, projected in the form of Emma. Almost in assuagement, he records Emma's death as an impersonal annihilation: "she had ceased to exist" (384), "*Elle n'existait plus*" (333).

CHAPTER THREE: EDNA PONTELLIER

I DESIRE

> Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
> Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,
> Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
> Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child leaving his bed
> wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
> .....
> *O madly the sea pushes upon the land,*
> *with love, with love . . .*
>
> —Walt Whitman, "Out of the Cradle
> Endlessly Rocking" (1-4, 77-78)[1]

Analogous to the adverse critical response to Emma Bovary, most nineteenth-century reviewers of *The Awakening* labeled Edna Pontellier's behaviour as "shocking," "immoral," "sickening," "selfish," and "poisonous." Yet a psychological reading of Chopin's novel indicates that Edna's maternal dysfunction, marital recalcitrance, and adultery are, as in Emma's case, symptoms of a narcissistic disorder. Like Emma, Edna craves love, fundamental to her ego survival.

Through Edna, Chopin explicates the misunderstood territory of a woman's psychology, interpreted from both her own unconscious and conscious psychological intuition. Unlike Flaubert's retributive portrayal of Emma's moral corruption, written from a patriarchal perspective, however, Chopin interprets Edna's conduct without prejudice. A modern reading of the novel shows that from

a woman's point of view, Chopin renders Edna's dilemma as an instinctual journey towards *jouissance* and selfhood, rather than one of promiscuity and selfishness. Her narrative espouses women's social and financial emancipation, as well as personal freedom to explore artistic and sexual desire. With feminist perspicacity, she uncovers the emotional frustration and social boundaries of the patriarchal superego that frequently affected and inhibited nineteenth-century women. Chopin brings Emma Bovary, her social restrictions, and universal narcissistic dilemma to the new world of America, and through her creation of Edna Pontellier, she responds to Flaubert's prototype. As Per Seyersted articulates, "*The Awakening* [represents] a woman's reply to a man's *Madame Bovary*" (Seyersted 1969, 139).

Chopin's response to Flaubert's *Bovary* conveys literary influences of Guy de Maupassant and Walt Whitman. Besides sharing Maupassant's fascination with suicide and death, she had also admired his literary realism.[2] At the same time, she revered Whitman for his erotic sensibilities and noncondemnatory attitude. Symbolically, she opens her novel with a scene of two caged birds that stand in relation to each other: the first is a parrot, strongly emblematic of Flaubert,[3] and the second is a mockingbird, not only indigenous to America, but also aligned with the poetics of Whitman. The bird signification suggests displacement of Flaubert's philosophical landscape with that of Whitman. Moreover, Chopin's "American" or "Creole Bovary" strongly evokes

Whitmanesque philosophy prescribed in the preface to *Leaves of Grass*.[4] In it, Whitman advocates that an American writer should incorporate literary models from other continents into his or her own craft, "incarnating" American geography and social fabric. Chopin also follows his doctrine of ultimate causation rather than divine retribution.[5] Instead of employing a patriarchal, clinical observation of women's inevitable corruption, such as Flaubert, Chopin utilizes a philosophy of free will in granting Edna personal agency in her pursuit of her own destiny.

Although numerous textual similarities align Edna Pontellier's character with that of Emma Bovary, Chopin takes Flaubert's complex template further, infusing into it both conscious and unconscious details of her own life and empiricism. Emily Toth claims that *The Awakening* "records Chopin's own dilemmas and her own choices" (1990, 333), while Seyersted believes that "on the unconscious level, Chopin identified herself deeply with Edna's struggle and with her torment" (Seyersted 1969, 173). Accordingly, Edna's character can be understood as Chopin's narcissistic attempt to work free of her inner conflicts, frustrations, and grief.

At the time of writing *The Awakening,* Chopin had experienced the death of many closely loved family members, whose death she continually mourned. As a young child, she had lost her father and subsequently her brothers, great-grandparents, and grandparents. Moreover, four years prior to commencement of the novel, she had suffered first the death of her husband, then the death of her

mother with whom she had been "unusually intimate" (Fox-Genovese 288). According to Leila, her daughter, each of these events had left Chopin with a permanent sadness.[6] Chopin's diary entries support this claim with their frequent references to her intermittent periods of depression beginning, however, long before the death of her husband and mother.

Although public opinion considered her marriage to be happy, privately it might have lacked such harmony. Before her marriage, her "Impressions" diary discloses an absence of excitement about her forthcoming marriage to Oscar Chopin, or any notation of her wedding until two weeks preceding the event. In that entry, Kate states pragmatically and unemotionally that she was marrying "the right man" (Seyersted 1979, 67). In addition, her honeymoon diary reveals continual expressions of boredom and ennui, and expresses feelings of love for Oscar only once. It is also questionable whether Oscar shared, or encouraged, her intellectual thirst after their marriage. Daniel Ranken claims that the character of Wallace Offdean in "A No-Account Creole, " is a true portrait of Oscar in 1870. This story, her first fictional work, was written after his death and depicts Offdean abandoning his intellectual intentions after marriage in favour of a business career (Ranken 95). A similar philosophical reversal occurs in *The Awakening* when Léonce disappoints Edna after their marriage with his lack of "sympathies and taste" that she believed they had shared (37). Although the community viewed Oscar as a loving husband, whether or not he supported Kate intellectually, or

whether she felt the same disillusionment in her husband is unknown; her writing career did not begin until after his death, however, flourishing with the encouragement of her close friend and obstetrician, Dr. Kolbenberger. Yet Rankin (a Roman Catholic Priest), still claims that the Chopin marriage resembled that of the Ratignolle's. Toth's research suggests otherwise inasmuch as rumor held that Kate's affair with Albert Sampite commenced before Oscar's death.[7] In addition, documents prove that Chopin had ordered her husband's coffin one week before his premature death from yellow fever.[8] To this end, such complexities of the Chopin marriage suggests a contradiction to public opinion. Instead, the marriage shows a closer resemblance to that of the Pontelliers with its contrasting private life and public façade.

Chopin presents the institution of marriage as a substantive adversary to Edna, against which she exposes Edna's frustrations and social limitations. From a woman's point of view, she illuminates the private world of a wife, trapped in an oppressive marriage which public opinion deems exemplary. When her community acclaims Léonce as "the best husband in the world," Edna is forced to admit "that she knew of none better" (26). Concerned with *les convenances*, Léonce promotes his public façade with conspicuous magnanimity towards his wife, whereas privately he is mean-spirited, rude, nasty, and tyrannical. Chopin, then, explicitly exposes a causation of Edna's breakdown in terms of her marital frustrations, to which she awakens, later . Later Edna labels marriage as one of

"the most lamentable spectacles on earth" (86).

Edna's awakening occurs after the first altercation with Léonce. While she acknowledges that their marital disputes are frequent, she senses this one as being different. Normally, her response to his behaviour is impassive and involves internalization of her anger; this time, however, she loses her emotional restraint. Her change of attitude results from her immersion in the Grande Isle environment, where she has experienced the warmth of mother-child relationships. In addition she has received unaccustomed empathic support from friendships with Adèle and Robert that vividly contrasts and exposes the reality of Léonce's callousness.

Her enlightenment occurs after her move outside to the porch, as she listens to the sea and assumes an infantile rocking motion. The description of Edna's surroundings, observed from her regressive position, evokes a particular allusion to Whitman's poetics, especially that of "Out of the Cradle Gently Rocking":

> It was then past midnight. The cottages were all dark. A single faint light gleamed out from the hallway of the house. There was no sound abroad except the hooting of an old owl in the top of the water oak and the everlasting voice of the sea, that was not uplifted at that soft hour. It broke like a mournful lullaby upon the night. (24)

The essence of this passage bears a similarity to the epigraph of this chapter in its allusion to birth. Not only does it infer the birth of Edna's awareness of her marital dilemma and "indescribable oppression," but it also evokes a re-experience of the separation of birth. As Whitman's poem inspires the speaker's memory of childhood, so does Edna's observation arouse sensations of her infantile past. Yet

it suggests unhappiness, for while rocking and cradling herself in her own arms, she interprets the sea as a mournful lullaby. Her awareness of "vague anguish" signifies her feeling the reality of emptiness that provokes her emotional breakdown and disruption of her narcissistic defence.

Many critics agree upon Edna's narcissism; yet, because the theoretical psychology of narcissism would have been unknown to Chopin, the degree of Edna's narcissism seems influenced by Chopin's creative and personal intuitive response to Flaubert's already created prototype. Notwithstanding that Edna's behaviour lacks Emma's extremes, Edna's personality does indicate one fundamental criterion for clinical narcissism, which is an incapacity for anaclitic love. In this regard, indifference displaces Edna's love for her family, husband, and children.

The degree of Edna's narcissism can be assessed according to Kernberg's "intrapsychic structure" (13). To this end, like Emma, neither Edna's ideal object-images, nor her ideal self-images are realistic, although by today's standards, her ideal self-images would be. A survey of Edna's history reveals that her ideal object-images do not contain both good and bad elements. In the first place, Edna's mother died when Edna was young; thus, her mother's personality would have been unknown to her and difficult to assess. In all probability Edna would have considered her mother as a martyr, or victim, since she had been "coerced . . . into her grave" prematurely by her father (92). Accordingly, Edna idealizes her

mother, who is, no doubt, the subject of Edna's image of the "faultless Madonna" and "fair lady of our dreams" (26). Secondly, her father would appear as a villain who had robbed Edna of her mother. Indeed, her father's callous attitude towards her mother seem implicated in Edna's comments praising Adèle, the consummate "mother-woman": "If her husband did not adore her, he was a brute, deserving a death by slow torture" (26). Moreover, her father's aggressiveness, emotional distance, and chilling Presbyterianism would also have contributed to Edna's negative perspective of him.

Edna's ideal self-images also fail to integrate realistic good and bad self representations. In the first place, her ego-ideal has indicated duality since childhood.[9] Likewise, as an adult, at the start of the novel, her private ego-ideal patterned a role of intellectual, artist, and liberated woman, while at the same time, publicly complying with the Creole ideal of a self-effacing "mother-woman." The formulation of Edna's private self-image had developed at school, and had been based upon her emulation of one of her "self-sufficient" friends who had excelled in literature and philosophy. In view of the virtual impossibility for a nineteenth-century woman to follow such a course, however, Edna had resorted to the only alternative, which had driven her further into her narcissism. Because the role of wife and "mother-woman" would demand total dependency upon one's husband, Edna would, thus, suffer one of the most frightening conditions for narcissists. Moreover, formulation of a positive self-image would be difficult, since her

idealization of her mother generates unrealistic and impossible standards for herself. Léonce's constant criticism of her mothering skills, housekeeping, wifely duties, and artistic ability would produce the same result, since it would lead to her ego-depletion and low self-esteem. Accordingly, since neither her ideal-object images, nor her ideal self-image are realistic, Edna's narcissism is far from healthy. Moreover, since her ideal object-images each lack consolidation of love and hate, Edna is unable to formulate normal object love.

Like Emma Bovary, Edna's personality exhibits many paradoxical criteria of narcissism. Her personality traits include assertiveness, self-sufficiency, indifference, and anger (the latter especially following emotional frustration or criticism), while demonstrating an incapacity for normal object love. She also experiences feelings of envy, particularly of other women in Robert Lebrun's life, including his mother. Moreover, throughout the text she suffers feelings of inferiority, shame, humiliation, emptiness, boredom, and ennui. In addition, Edna's imaginary "great passion" with the tragedian also corresponds with the symptom of preoccupation with unreal fantasies. Paradoxically, however, her superficial self-love masks self-hatred, as does her relatively grandiose behaviour conceal vulnerability, insecurity, and low self-esteem. As a defence against such inner conflicts, Edna's narcissism controls her suffering.

As Kernberg assesses the severity of narcissism by the intensity and duration of the narcissistic injury, evaluation of Edna's narcissism involves

identification and assessment of her psychic wound which is buried in her diachronic history. Again like Flaubert, Chopin offers few overt facts in this regard; yet many details emerge from her poetic and subversive narrative form. To this end, a detailed reading of the text reveals a history of emotional trauma, parental empathic failure, disruption of mother/child bonding, maternal loss, and the introjection of a lost love-object, all of which contribute to the etiology of narcissism.

Similar to Emma, Edna's history reveals the childhood trauma of maternal loss, which must be considered as a prime factor in her disorder.[10] The absence of Edna's conscious thoughts or dialogue concerning her mother not only creates a mystery, but suggests that because the subject is painful, it is repressed. Besides, Edna acknowledges the "inutility of remembering" (74). Though the cause of her mother's death remains unspecified, culpability falls obliquely upon her father, with the veiled accusation that his aggression and dominance had induced her premature death. Again unspecified, the time of her mother's death likely occurred near the time Edna recalls as:

> a summer day in Kentucky . . . a meadow that seemed as big as the ocean to *the* very little girl walking through the grass which was higher than *her* waist. She threw out her arms as if swimming when she walked, beating the tall grass as one strikes out in the water. . . . (34 italics added)

Her experience is significant, inasmuch as it denotes a point of demarcation in her life. In particular, her reference to herself in the third person suggests a

psychological dissociation from herself as she was then. Adèle's empathy encourages Edna's continuation of the reminiscence, however, which she then relates in the first person, thereby reconnecting herself with the child at that time:

> I could see only the stretch of green before me, and I felt as if I must walk on forever, without coming to the end of it. I don't remember whether I was frightened or pleased . . . Likely or not it was Sunday . . . and I was running away from prayers, from the Presbyterian service, read in a spirit of gloom by my father that chills me yet to think of. (35)

This reflection evokes emotional confusion and suggests the possibility of having experienced either fear or pleasure. Her fear would have arisen from her father's religious austerity and violent nature, whereas her emotional contentment would probably have stemmed from a kinder source, possibly her mother, who would have given her courage to endure his intimidation.

In order to evaluate the quality of mothering Edna received, her behavioural character traits must be examined. In the first place, because human behaviour usually repeats previous experiential patterns, Edna's conduct suggests that her mother was more loving than that of Emma Bovary. Although indifferent to her children, Edna's attitude towards them does not display the violence and cruelty that Emma inflicts upon her daughter. Sullivan and Smith assert that Edna repeats with her children the pattern of her own mothering (75). Rather than reflecting early emotional deprivation, however, Edna's detachment from her children appears to mask a fear of maternal inadequacy and consequent abandonment.

Further discovery of Edna's early childhood unfolds from examination of the novel's symbolism of food and money. Analogous to *Madame Bovary, The Awakening* employs similar signification. In this regard, Ion K. Collas's theory of food and money symbolizing love and providing clues to childhood emotions again proves useful. Accordingly, Edna's early childhood does not appear to reflect the emotional frustration suffered by Emma. Indeed, her response to food and money differs from that of Emma. Whereas Emma practices anorexic behaviour, drinks vinegar and eats poisonous foods following emotional regression, Edna relishes her food, frequently using the word "delicious" to describe pleasurable objects and situations. In particular, "delicious" describes the sea that she associates with the Kentucky meadow and maternal bonding. Food is also an important part of her life, especially that which pertains to her erotic sensibility. Moreover, Edna's growing habit of drinking milk (126) corresponds with the behaviour that Collas associates with an unconscious wish to return to blissful infancy following emotional frustration. Again referring to Collas's theory, the fact that Edna enjoys her milk at this time, signifies a positive experience of past maternal love. Equally important in this equation is Edna's attitude towards money, luxuries, and social position. Whereas Emma extorts Charles's money and property, and strives for social advancement, Edna rejects Léonce's wealth and social position. For example, when leaving her marital home, she takes only her belongings, planning to support herself with her revenues from

her art and funds from her mother's legacy. In addition, rather than perceiving her social decline negatively, she acknowledges her "spiritual" ascent positively (115). According to Collas's hypothesis, then, Edna's disregard for money and her enjoyment of food suggest she lacked the oral frustration experienced by Emma Bovary. Whether Chopin consciously employed these elements in response to Flaubert's psychological technique, or whether she unconsciously used them to signify quantitative love is unknown. Chopin's biographical experience indicates a loving infantile relationship with her mother in contrast to Flaubert's, which involved conflict and oral frustration. Accordingly, positive mothering, rather than negative, seems to have influenced Edna's psychology.

Although Edna's reaction to her mother's death is absent from the text, it would have been severe, as would her subsequent custodial experiences. Following such a loss, psychologists advocate a safe, supportive, and loving environment, essential for a child's expression of grief and rehabilitation; however, such a haven does not follow for Edna. Kernberg points to chronically cold and covertly aggressive parents as an additional cause of narcissism. In particular, he refers to "a parental figure, usually the mother, or a mother surrogate, who functions well on the surface in a superficially well-organized home, but with a degree of callousness, indifference, and nonverbalized spiteful aggression" (234-35). Remarkably, this profile corresponds with that of Edna's family. After Edna's mother's death, Edna's parenting consists of her frightening, emotionally

dishonest, inconsistent, and distant father along with her ascetic, unempathic, and bitter sister standing as surrogate mother. The narrative defines Margaret as having "all the Presbyterianism undiluted" (86), and as unloving, "matronly and dignified, probably from having assumed matronly and housewifely responsibilities too early in life" (35). Her bitterness corresponds with an attitude common to maternally orphaned daughters cast into their unwanted role. In addition, she expresses her passion as Presbyterian zeal, some of which impels her "violent opposition" to Edna's marriage into Roman Catholicism. Accordingly, such emotional impoverishment and family dysfunction shapes Edna's personality, as it does that of the youngest sister, Janet, who is described as a vixen, spiteful and quarrelsome through "habit" (35). Moreover, both custodians would have failed in providing the nurturing needed for the children to work through their loss.[11]

Again paralleling Emma's emotional background, Edna's relationship with her father fails after her mother's death. As a surviving parent Edna's father should have replaced her mother as love-object, but Edna recalls never having received any love from him, her childhood memories of him recalling trepidation.[12] Consequently, rather than affection for him, she feels indifference. A hypocrite, he had practiced gambling during the week and austere religious atonement for his weekday sins on Sunday. In addition, his gambling had ultimately lost him "the prettiest bit of farming land" in Kentucky (86). Moreover,

without doubt, her father, who had been a colonel in the confederate army, had used the same military discipline in his family management. In fact, Edna's motive for her marriage to Léonce was that of provocation and rebellion against her father's "violent" opposition (37).

The colonel is also vain, sartorial, superficial, egotistical, and dominating, which traits he exhibits during his visit to New Orleans. He enjoys sitting for his portrait, socializing among Edna's friends, spending time at the race track, and consuming alcohol steadily throughout the day. In addition, his attitude towards his grandchildren also shows indifference, especially in his "expressive action of the foot" (88), which again suggests his past treatment of his family. Yet, significantly, Edna overlooks his flaws. Having devalued Léonce, she embraces her father, as if counteracting Léonce's criticism with her father's (albeit superficial) attention. In this mind-set, she notices a part of her father's personality previously unknown to her. Rather than as a strict Presbyterian, she experiences him as a gregarious, attentive social companion. Moreover, his attention and perceived closeness transform her depression into elation. Likewise, his attention increases her self-confidence, enough to stand with him against Léonce's argument during a dinner party (90).

Yet her overvaluation of her father lasts only until the re-emergence of his violent nature, surfacing in response to her disobedience and refusal to attend her sister's wedding. His advice to Léonce exemplifies his tyranny: "Authority,

coercion are what is needed . . . [the] only way to manage a wife" (91). Ironically, the argument echoes their family's previous conflict over Edna's marriage. Thus, it would prompt a resurgence of that unpleasantness for Edna, as well as counteract his recent affection. Such emotional betrayal would constitute emotional abandonment to Edna. Accordingly, as a narcissistic defence against such abandonment, her devaluation of him involves underscoring his previously overlooked idiosyncrasies and ridiculing "his padded shoulders, his Bible reading, his 'toddies' and ponderous oaths" (91). Edna repeats her previous libidinal pattern of turning from her father to others for emotional fulfillment. By withdrawing her libido from her father, she displaces it upon Léonce, thus, repeating her libidinal pattern at the time of her marriage. Temporarily, she again feels "melting and affectionate" towards Léonce (92), reclaiming her ego-ideal of Creole wife, caring for his clothing and welfare. This attempt to fill her emotional void also suggests the manner in which she, as a child after her mother's death, would have transferred her libidinal interest, that is, unsuccessfully to her father and other object-cathexes.

The effects of Edna's motherlessness, then, significantly contribute to the etiology of her personality. Her need for mothering surfaces amid the maternal milieu on Grande Isle. In particular, it shows in her manipulation of Adèle to accompany her to the beach, without the children. Again, her need for maternal attention emerges following Robert's departure for Mexico, when she spends time

with his mother, for besides seeking news of Robert, she finds solace in Lebrun's company. Likewise, during a later visit to her, Edna's anticipation of maternal comfort shows in her rocking gently in the chair while she awaits for Madame Lebrun (79). In addition, she thrives upon the maternal attention provided by her mother-in-law during Edna's visit to her home. Yet, although the care generates Edna's enjoyment of her own children in that she plays games and drinks milk with them, her relationship with them is more infantile than maternal and indicative of her libidinal regression towards oral satisfaction.

Adèle's maternal companionship particularly serves as a catalyst in Edna's initial awakening to her sensuality. Her compassion and physical affection effects Edna's same unburdened state of mind that she remembers feeling as a child. It also evokes the same courage she had felt impelling her to "walk on forever, without coming to the end of [the expanse of grass]" (35). Edna's courage enables her to review her past emotional life and, later, pursue sensual and creative emancipation. In fact, their "subtle bond"—which the narrator concedes emanates from "sympathy" or what "we might as well call love"—plays an important part in Edna's transformation (32). Their relationship attempts both resolution and recreation of the mother-daughter bond, which, according to Helen Deutsch, often occurs in adult female relationships. Deutsch also asserts that such relationships sometimes express a woman's psychological participation in the Oedipal relational triangle. Further, some women need a best friend with whom to share all

confidences about their heterosexual relationships (Chodorow 200). Emma, on the other hand, even at school, has no women friends with whom she might share confidences about her relationships. Rather, her friendships are with men, perhaps reflecting Flaubert's own preference for men friends, and his lack of a father-son relationship. In the simulated mother-daughter bond in *The Awakening*, however, Edna shares details of her past erotic relationships, as well as her affection for Robert. Yet Edna will ultimately turn away from Adèle to her counterpart, Mademoiselle Reisz,[13] as her infatuation for Robert evolves into forbidden desire, and her passion leads her into the illicit relationship with Alcée Arobin.

Edna's attraction to Adèle's maternal warmth and sensuality is expressed in descriptive terms suggestive of her lost mother. The narrator claims that Adèle could only be described in the "old" words "that have served so often to picture the bygone heroine of romance and the fair lady of our dreams" (26). As a motherless daughter for more than twenty years, Edna would find difficulty in recreating her image; instead, she appears to search unconsciously for her in Adèle. The scene in which Edna attempts to sketch Adèle proves particularly significant in this regard. With Adèle sitting in the same rocking chair in which Edna had heard the sea as a lullaby, Edna perceives her as "some sensuous Madonna" and as a "tempting subject" (30). Though Edna possesses artistic competency sufficient to render a recognizable likeness of Adèle, her sketch bears little resemblance. The discrepancy implies that her unconscious attempt to re-create her mother's own

image has interfered with her observation of Adèle. Her failure causes frustration and anger, which Edna expresses childishly in her response of effacement and destruction of the sketch (30).

Edna's re-exposure to a maternal relationship causes her ambivalent feelings, however. While on the one hand the concept of reuniting with the state of original maternal bonding would promise relief, on the other it would arouse apprehension. Nancy Chodorow writes:

> The internalized experience of self in the original mother-relation remains *seductive and frightening.* Unity was bliss, yet meant the loss of self and absolute dependence. (194 italics added)

In fact, Edna experiences Adèle as seductive, both physically and psychologically. Although Edna regards her as a "tempting" subject and erotically observes the formation of her arms, neck, throat, lips and hands (27), her attraction represents an infant's love for its mother, its primary love-object. Therefore, Edna would also experience the relationship as frightening, inasmuch as it elicits not only dependency, but also the pain of separation.

Edna also perceives the ocean as "seductive and frightening." Standing as a central symbol in the text, the sea signifies a maternal presence, which arouses Edna's feelings of motherlessness and yearning. First of all, sounding as a mournful lullaby, the sea initiates her awakening to her emotional void. Later, in Adèle's presence, Edna's observation of the sea triggers her childhood reminiscence of a sea of long grass in Kentucky. As Adèle's empathy influences

Edna's subliminal association of the gulf with her Kentucky farm, so must Adèle's maternal presence unconsciously remind Edna of her mother. Moreover, Edna also associates the sea with maternal care in that she senses it as "delicious" (34) and as a lullaby. The fact that she senses its touch as "sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace" (32)[14] is also significant, since she had earlier observed Adèle embracing her child "with her own fond encircling arms" (31). At the same time, however, despite its "loving but imperative entreaty," the sea appears as a frightening entity as "never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in the abysses of solitude, to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation" (32). To this end, such meditation would bring her closer to the remembrance of her mother, yet also to her emptiness. The sea signifies both mourning and seduction in its pull towards emotional capitulation and despair.

Extending the sea metaphor, Chopin uses the symbolism of "melting" to describe Edna's psychological process of dealing with emotional disappointment and pain resulting from lost object-cathexes. For example, the cavalry officer, the engaged young man, the tragedian, and her mother have all melted into oblivion and dream. An instance of such a dream Edna describes as, "delicious, grotesque, impossible . . . [out of which one awakens] to feel again the realities pressing into her soul" (50). To Edna, then, the process of dissolving her disappointing object-cathexes into the unreality of dreams promises relief.

A mood of surrealism and ideas of "melting" preoccupy Edna on the night in which she swims alone for the first time. At this time, her ambition "to swim far out, where no woman had swum before" parallels that of her childhood when she wanted to "walk on forever, without coming to the end of [the meadow]" (35). Having derived courage from her infatuation with both Adèle and Robert, it would seem that Edna's ambition and confidence are associated with love. Yet both attributes fail following her perception of the gulf's vastness "melting" into the moonlit sky. Her failure results from her unconscious network of associations that link the sea with her mother, and the process of "melting" with loss. Thus, her ensuing "quick vision of death" (47) suggests not only the fear of physical drowning, but also psychological despair associated with her motherlessness.

In the same way, Robert's unrequited love creates sensations of dissolving in her mind. She feels as if his existence "would melt into the mist of the forgotten, reviving again with an intensity which filled her with an incomprehensible longing" (74). A few moments after this impression, Edna observes Adèle in similar terms, noticing the "melting curves of her white throat (75). It seems, then, that Edna's yearning for Robert substitutes for the same unaccountable yearning she feels for her other lost love-objects—in particular her mother—who have dissolved into her unconscious. Fox-Genovese concurs with this assumption, stating that "Chopin clearly indicates that the love for Robert derives in a large part from the repressed longing for the mother" (285). To this

end, Edna acknowledges that her disappointment over Robert's absence parallels "the symptoms of infatuation she had felt as a child, as a girl in her earliest teens and later as a young woman (64). Robert, then, is a sublimation in her unconscious of all of her lost love-objects. Furthermore, her object-libido appears both displaceable and insatiable.

Yet, apart from motherlessness, Edna seems to suffer from an unresolved Oedipal complex. Her emotional development seems to have frozen at the time of her childhood trauma relating to her mother's death, which appears to have occurred during her Oedipal phase. Despite her unspecified age at her mother's death, her infatuation with the "sad-eyed" cavalry officer suggests her age to have been about six or seven, or even younger, equating with Chopin's age of five when her father died. This estimation differs from Larzer Ziff's claim that she was ten years old (20), for Edna places the cavalry officer in her life at about the time she had wandered through the meadow. During this event, she describes herself "as a child" (64), and as "the very little girl" (34), the word "very" seeming to signify an age younger than ten. In this Oedipal phase then, as compensation for her father's emotional inaccessibility, she displaces her affection upon the cavalry officer who had also "melted imperceptibly from her existence" (36). Moreover, throughout her life, she repeats this Oedipal fixative pattern.

Oedipal displacement seems to recur with her preteen infatuation of the young man engaged to Margaret's friend. To the emotionally starved adolescent,

the engaged couple would represent, and reproduce, an Oedipal triangular relationship. The young man, again older than Edna, would represent the loving father while Edna would exemplify the daughter competing with the mother, represented by the fiancé. Similarly, however, the infatuation ends as painful disappointment, her "bitter affliction" (36) repeating previous feelings of abandonment. Yet, as with her previous losses, familial sympathy for Edna's distress seems doubtful. The fact that religion took "a firm hold" (35) on her after this emotional incident suggests her family's austere intervention or, even admonition. In any event, following her disappointment, she withdraws her object-libido from the outside world, and dissolves the young man into her realm of dream.

Edna makes her next object-choice as a narcissistic, "self-sufficient" young woman. Her infatuation with the contemporary stage actor develops as his picture gradually evokes memories and sensations of each of her other object-cathexes who have substituted for her Oedipal void. Yet the tragedian signifies a narcissistic object-choice, chosen after her own self-image, and as a substitute for her private ego-ideal. He corresponds with Edna's self-image in that his involvement in tragic drama parallels her own tragic life. The infatuation itself represents tragedy, the impossibility of which took on "lofty tones of a great passion" (36). Further, it correlates with her secret self-image of intellectual and literary scholar, fulfillment of which, given her family circumstances, poses

impracticality and impossibility.

Besides affording Edna an outlet for her object-libido, her fantasy infatuation assured her an emotional safeguard against further abandonment and libidinal disappointment. Moreover, it provided psychological escape and protection from her ascetic family's criticism, ridicule, or punishment in response to her sexuality. To Edna, sensuality signifies transgression and puritanical repression. Accordingly, subversively and rebelliously she concealed her fictive love, privately "kiss[ing] the cold glass [of his picture] passionately" (36), and publicly feigning emotional impartiality. Yet her fictive passion ended with her conscious decision to enter the world of reality and devote herself to the role of wife and mother. In marrying Léonce Pontellier, Edna suppressed her private ego-ideal and assumed the ego-ideal of a nineteenth-century Creole wife who, notwithstanding a superficial degree of freedom, remained a prisoner to patriarchal limitations. Unlike Emma's passive object-choices, however, Edna's involve self-determination.

Edna's prime reason for marrying Léonce had involved rebellion and escape from her oppressive, patriarchal family. As the perceived antithesis of her father, Léonce promised escape, economic stability, a less austere religion, and the same "sympathies of thought and taste." Though Léonce does not practice the colonel's religious faith, violence, gambling habits, and poor fiscal judgment, ironically, he is equally as egotistical. In her overvaluation of him, she also failed

to anticipate that he would, in fact, become as controlling of his wife, dysfunctional as a father, and exploitative of patriarchal privilege as her father. In addition, the fact that Léonce is twelve years older than Edna suggests her unconscious Oedipal displacement. Yet Edna's marriage materialized into something other than she had expected. Her description of it occurring as "purely an accident, in this respect resembling many other marriages which masquerade as the decrees of Fate" (36), not only signifies that their marriage occurred unexpectedly and without apparent design, but also that it was an accidental choice, or mishap.

Reciprocal affection does not exist in the Pontellier marriage. Whereas Léonce purports to have fallen in love with Edna, she never proclaimed love for him. Her reluctance to seek normal attachment love resulted from her fear of rejection and disappointment, and is indicated in her acknowledged "unaccountable satisfaction that no trace of passion or excessive and fictitious warmth colored her affection, thereby threatening its dissolution" (37). Nevertheless, though the marriage offered no passion, Edna expected some "sympathy of thought and taste" (37); instead, as in "A No-Account Creole," her disillusionment followed. Whatever understanding Léonce had advanced before marriage, his expectations of Edna afterwards exclude anything of an intellectual or artistic nature. His demands reflect gender polarization and confirm Edna's conformity to the role of "mother-woman" and to that of a socially supportive

wife. He avoids domesticity, spending his days in the business world and most evenings at his men's club. Furthermore, he expects her "tacit submissiveness" in order to prevent his "courteous" behaviour transforming into rudeness (76). Despite appearances, then, the Pontellier marriage is anything but ideal, and far from the "acme of bliss" that Edna imagined possible with the tragedian.

Although Léonce's reasons for his object-choice are not divulged, they also indicate one of narcissism. The fact that her characteristics of self-sufficiency and emotional indifference had attracted him suggests that her traits had paralleled his, reflecting Freud's hypothesis that narcissists attract other narcissists in their search for object-love. While no discussion refers directly to Léonce's family history, his childhood shows inconsistent parenting, in that it lacked paternal involvement while including maternal overindulgence. In any event, Léonce's adult attitude rejects his mother's values and relationship to the natural world, while capitulating to patriarchal demands and standards.

Notwithstanding Léonce's appearance of being a reasonable husband in that he tolerates Edna's flights of emotional discord and follows the advice of Dr. Mandelet, the reader must not overlook his dual nature of public charm and private tyranny. His concern for Edna relates to her physical welfare rather than to her emotional well being. At the beach, he regards her as if she were a "valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage" (21). Ironically, her damage is psychological rather than physical and caused largely by his behaviour.

An example of his damaging attitude shows in his retaliation to her resisting conjugal duties:

> It seems to me the utmost folly for a woman at the head of a household, and the mother of children, to spend in an atelier days which would be better employed contriving for the comfort of her family. . . . There's Madame Ratignolle . . . because she keeps up her music, she doesn't let everything else go to chaos. And she's more of a musician than you are a painter. (77)

His admonishment abrogates not only her strived-for ego-ideal of "devoted wife" and responsible "mother-woman," but also that of her private ego-ideal in that he quashes any ambition she may have of becoming an artist and "going where no woman had gone before."

Another example of his indifference and callousness that contributes to Edna's frustration and helplessness appears in the scene which initiates her awakening. Returning from his men's club, Léonce is described as in "excellent humor . . . high spirits, and very talkative" as he awakens her with his infuriating racket, stacking metal objects from his pockets "indiscriminately" onto the bureau (23). Determined that she should wake and give him her attention, he proceeds to disturb their sleeping children, claiming that one is ill. Since the child is not ill, however, Léonce is either mistaken or intoxicated. Either way he is dysfunctional as a parent, insensitive as a husband, or both. Without any apparent concern for the child, he relaxes, smoking a cigar while Edna, frustrated, "'springs" from her bed in response to his demand, and is forced to endure his continuous criticism of

"her inattention [and] her habitual neglect of the children" (24). While she remains fully awake and distraught, he finishes his cigar, retires, and falls asleep effortlessly. Léonce's continual psychological harassment repeats the colonel's domination and ego bruising of Edna. In consequence, and as a narcissistic defence, Edna has developed an emotional numbness, ameliorated by the affectionate mood of Grande Isle. Thus, again repeating her childhood libidinal pattern of transference from her father to the cavalry officer, she emotionally retreats from Léonce to Robert.

Noticeably, Chopin employs the same paradigm for Edna's adult object-choices as Flaubert does for Emma: Robert equates with Leon and Alcée with Rodolphe. Toth also points out that the names of Alcée and Robert represent elements of the first name of Chopin's lover, Albert Sampite (1990, 170).

Robert also represents a narcissistic object choice in that he symbolizes a reflection of Edna. Yet, besides a physical resemblance, they share the "sympathy of thought and taste" lacking between her and Léonce. To begin with, Robert's interest in literature and romantic mythology equates with that of Edna's. In addition, not unlike the tragedian, Robert shows an aptitude for acting: Robert plays roué to the women on Grande Isle, as Edna plays at her role of "mother-woman." But what is more important is the fact that neither can formulate normal object-love. Analogous to Edna, Robert has endured childhood parental loss and lovelessness. Having lost his father as a young child, he also has experienced

subsequent unempathic care. Since his mother "worships . . . and lives only for Victor," her second son (68), he, too, is motherless. His unconscious search for a mother-substitute shows in his devoting each summer to the company of "mother-women," rather than to that of men. Ironically, instead of discovering such a person in Edna, however, Robert finds a sympathetic, though narcissistic, object-cathexis.

The relationship between Robert and Edna develops as a result of Adèle's maternal stimulus. Chodorow explains Michael Balint's theory that

> the return to the experience of primary love—the possibility of regressing to the infantile state of a sense of oneness, no reality testing, and a tranquil sense of well-being in which all needs are satisfied—is a main goal of adult sexual relationships. (194)

Accordingly, Adèle's maternal presence, which recreates the state of primary love, provides the sense of security in which their infatuation develops.

As an object-choice, Robert symbolizes each of her past love-objects, including her mother, whose recollection has proven inaccessible and dangerous to her psychological health. Fox-Genovese also argues that "Chopin clearly indicates that the love for Robert derives in a large part from the repressed longing for the mother" (285). In fact, her grief over his absence leads to her realization that her obsession compares with past "symptoms of infatuation . . . she had felt incipiently as a child, as a girl in her earliest teens, and later as a young woman" (64). Inasmuch as at least one of these losses incurred "a bitter affliction," Edna would

know that this relationship also has the potential for emotional "instability." Nevertheless, instead of retreating emotionally, she risks emotional involvement and its possible tribulation in facing whatever her "impassioned, newly awakened being demanded" (65).

Without resorting to nineteenth-century medical discourse on the dynamics of female hysteria, Chopin's portrayal of Edna's behaviour is milder and far less clinical than Flaubert's account of Emma, perhaps reflecting Chopin's dislike of melodramatic accounts of hysteria.[15] The very worst of Edna's nervous behaviour involves her tearing her handkerchief, flinging her ring from her finger, smashing a vase, which she later claims as accidental (72), and a wine glass which actually does break accidentally (111). Emma, on the other hand, displays more uncontrollable behaviour; for example, her hysteria, following Rodolphe's abandonment, drives her into a comatose state, lasting for days. Yet Edna's outbursts also occur as frustration that follows her longing for unattainable love, which paradigm corresponds with Michèle Montrelay's modern definition of hysteria as "the passion of the female division between *jouissance* and *dèsir*" (Strong 16).

In spite of Edna's evolving sexuality, however, her relationship with Robert would never yield *jouissance,* nor would Robert aid her escape from Léonce, other than through flights of her imagination. Beneath Robert's flirtatious exterior, Creole ideology remains firmly entrenched in his mind, since adultery

was seldom an issue and trust between Creole men always implicit. Moreover, unlike Robert's repressed sexual desire, Edna's has evolved and been liberated since their initial childlike infatuation. Her desire for adulterous relationships not only contradicts the nineteenth-century misnomer of women's limited sexuality, but isolates her from social convention. Edna's sexuality and creativity take on a life of their own as her displaceable desire for love becomes physical.

The discordance between Edna's transformed ego-ideal of liberated woman and that of her cultural and puritanical upbringing drives her towards immature and irresponsible behaviour. In this state, she pursues more primitive aspects of her ego-ideal that offer pleasure, as her developing creativity and sexuality of her newly formed ideal of artist and (adulterous) lover demand unrealistic emancipation.[16] Accordingly, her patriarchal superego is repressed as her search for *jouissance* becomes self-destructive.

At the time of Edna's involvement with Alcée, Edna's transformed ego-ideal far exceeds the boundaries of a Creole "mother-woman." Moreover, Edna is aware that liberation from marital commitment and social convention would brand her as "a devilishly wicked specimen of the sex" (103). Accordingly, Edna's object-choice of Alcée mirrors her transformation: his attraction is based upon sexual passion which parallels his of her, satisfying their mutual narcissistic needs. Yet because Alcée represents reality and sexual availability, he contrasts Robert who symbolizes unreality and inaccessibility. While Robert, a gentleman, acts the

role of roué, Alcée, the roué, pays the role of gentleman. Alcée also fulfills Edna's Oedipal need and displacement in that he is older and associated with horses. Their initial meeting occurs at the race track during the period when Edna's father indulges her with affection. Further, their subsequent encounter also takes place at the track, where she realizes that "The race horse was a friend and intimate associate of her childhood" (94). Psychologically, then, horses signify love to Edna, since she associates them with her libidinal-objects from childhood

Notwithstanding such connection, her relationship with Arobin offers only sexual love and still precludes *jouissance.* Although initially she feels no shame or remorse for her adulterous relationship, she does feel guilt, which response signifies accordance with her ego-ideal, but conflicts with her super-ego. Edna's psychological retreat from patriarchal authority to her newly defined, "rebellious" superego which will tolerate culturally forbidden independence and sexuality is symbolized by her move to the Pigeon House. Yet her flight is doomed, since her puritanical past remains firmly entrenched in her unconscious. Moreover, both Robert and Arobin represent the embodiment of a double standard in a culture from which she will never be free.

Though not excessive in modern terms, Edna's ego-ideal is based upon unrealistic aspirations and ideals for her era. Accordingly, when her judgmental and retributive superego intrudes, breaking her narcissistic shield, Edna faces such reality. Awakening to her disillusionment, she relinquishes her ego-ideal, under-

standing that her ideals of ambition and pleasure have, indeed, drawn her towards social, psychological, and physical death.

II DEATH

Whereto answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before daybreak,
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,
And again death, death, death, death,
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's heart,
But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly all over,
Death, death, death, death, death.

—Walt Whitman, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (165-173)

Although suicide ends the lives of both protagonists of the novels, Edna's death lacks the violence, melodrama, and retribution dispensed to Emma. In contrast to Flaubert, Chopin allows Edna to "work out her own damnation"[1] and swim passively, yet fearlessly, to her unexploited death. As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese writes, Edna "returns to the maternal womb for repose and nurture she cannot find in the human world" (272). Entering the sea that had initiated her awakening to the reality of her lovelessness and sexual desire, she capitulates to her unconscious maternal presence, its "deliciousness," "seductive spell," and "mournful lullaby" that all along seems to have been singing Whitman's "low and delicious word death."

After her courageous rebellion against convention, however, Edna's decision to end her life initially surprises the reader. After all, affirmation of her independence includes separating from her husband and his affluent lifestyle, initiation of her painting career, and her overt involvement in an adulterous relationship. Indeed, her emancipation is articulated in her resolve "never to take

another step backward" (76), "never again to belong to another other than herself" (100), and to "give [herself] where [she chooses]" (129). Yet However, Edna's desire for freedom is fraught with psychological encumbrances; her independence is superficial, as is her newly formed "rebellious" superego, both of which, paradoxically, depend upon her narcissistic defensive fusion.

Her doomed and impractical flight from convention corresponds with her narcissistic journey into herself, where all perception of reality dissipates. In this state, Edna "abandon[s] herself to Fate, and await[s] its consequences with indifference (125). Reality, in the form of her patriarchal superego, invades her consciousness, however, the night preceding her death. Disrupting her narcissistic defence, it exposes her emptiness and leaves her with continuous despondency (136). Robert's rejection certainly constitutes a major factor in her breakdown, in that it repeats all other emotional "afflictions" caused by her other lost object-cathexes. Yet her confrontation with reality precedes Robert's retreat, in its sobering reminder of children.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese claims that children are "the inescapable link that binds Edna to the norms and institutions of her society" (284). After witnessing Adèle's childbirth, Edna is subjected to Adèle's ambiguous imperative: "Think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the Children! Remember them" (132).[2] Apart from its implication that procreation necessitates pain, it also serves as a twofold warning. First, it would caution Edna about the inevitability of a tainted

reputation, resulting from her adulterous indulgences, that would affect her children. Second, it would alert her to the possibility of future—or present—pregnancy. Despite unreliable methods of contraception and the dangerous and illegal practice of abortion, Emma seems to have abandoned the reality of possible pregnancy, initially in her relationship with Alcée, and later with Robert. This contingency seems to occur to her earlier when, in the presence of Robert, she begins to feel "vague dread" at the announcement of Adèle's imminent labour. Irrespective of Adèle's concerns, or Dr. Mandelet's warning that "Nature takes no account of moral consequences" (132), she still plans a sexual union with Robert, which suggests her lack of self-preservation. Moreover, Mandelet's observation of her seeming "to be in trouble" (133) hints of possible physical, as well as obvious psychological, crisis, inasmuch as his expression evokes a popular euphemism for contemporarily shameful out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Chopin at least alludes to the reality of the possibility of pregnancy, whereas Flaubert, despite his psychological realism, seems to have overlooked physiological reality. Remarkably, Emma indulges in more than five years of extra-marital sexual activity without fear of pregnancy, which perhaps reflects a man's lesser concern with unwanted pregnancy.

The reality of the complexities relating to children renders Edna a "death wound" (133), for apart from arousing Edna's moral obligation to her children, the advice from Adèle and Mandelet elucidates her biological entrapment and social

limitations which prevent her quest for independence. Edna's hopelessness derives from restrictions that faced nineteenth-century women who sought independence. Toth (1975) discusses the dilemma of such women in nineteenth-century fiction, stressing the infeasibility of enjoyment of love in conjunction with emancipation. She sets out the three available choices for women in this era. First, women could pursue love via traditional, but confining marriage. Second, they could seek independence, a state which would inevitably demand celibacy. Third, they could engage in an often "uneasy" marital compromise. In the first instance, Toth writes that if a woman pursued love through traditional marriage, she would lose independence and her freedom to make further choices, because "Romance, marriage and motherhood confine her to her sphere" (1975, 647). Adèle exemplifies this position; this option is impossible for Edna, however. On the one hand, her narcissism precludes normal attachment love and, thus, permanence; on the other, Edna has experienced the restrictions of "mother-woman" which include an absence of independent space for artistic endeavour. Her unsuitability for this option is expressed when her marriage is described as being "not a condition of life which fitted her, and she could see in it but an appalling and hopeless ennui" (76).

Second, Toth describes the plight of women who chose independence. Although adopting a different lifestyle, such women were still judged by cultural and socially accepted standards of womanhood, such as "appearance, chastity,

wifely and maternal qualities." Moreover, such choice would often exclude love, especially sexual love, because of possible risk of pregnancy and social taboos (1975, 647). Mademoiselle Reisz lives such an alternative; yet her lifestyle is equally inappropriate for Edna. Because Edna's patriarchal superego is firmly implanted in her unconscious, she would, therefore, fall vulnerable to social criticism. Chopin understood her culture's unfair misunderstanding of women artists and its unreasonable limitations placed on them (Taylor 151). These attitudes are reflected in Arobin's description of Reisz, for without having met her, he refers to her as "partially demented . . . disagreeable and unpleasant" (104). Furthermore, her celibacy contrasts with Edna's newly awakened, and not easily renounceable, sensuality. Indeed, she admits that, "Today it is Arobin. Tomorrow it will be somebody else " (136). Moreover, future pregnancy under these circumstances, would cause Edna economic and social disaster. Even Adèle would shun her, since her criticism of Edna's transgressions has already started. According to Helen Taylor, Creole husbands "relied on admonition and discipline of other women in policing each other on behalf of patriarchal tyranny" (199). Accordingly, Edna's ostracization would amount to further rejection, narcissistic wounding, and despondency.

Toth's third alternative identifies a compromise marriage for women seeking equality and fewer traditional restrictions involving men who were inevitably "dull, maimed, or both" (1975, 648). Yet Edna's circumstances also

preclude this option. Since the Napoleonic code of law granted few divorces and regularly awarded husbands custody of their children, Edna's legal options are limited. Even assuming that divorce was possible, a future relationship with Robert is unfeasible, since Edna knows his sensibilities are firmly embedded in Creole tradition. Moreover, return to her marriage would also pose difficulty besides providing no compromise or equality. Léonce, though prosaic, is not maimed, or in anyway impaired. On the contrary, Edna acknowledges his manipulative nature and power in the community (114). Just as Dr. Mandelet's tale depicts the errant wife returning to her husband, and as surely as Edna replaces her wedding ring onto her finger after casting it away, the reality of Edna's situation suggests that she will never escape Léonce. Furthermore, his inevitable knowledge of her affair with Arobin would not generate his respect, future trust, or latitude in her pursuit of art. Instead, return to the marriage would ensure psychological suffocation by Léonce and her sons. As Toth concludes, "Tragedy awaits the woman who will accept none of these fates" (1975, 647). Indeed, Edna typifies such a woman.

Still, one would expect Edna's already demonstrated courage to continue in her pursuit of liberation and her ego-ideal. But, as Mademoiselle Reisz warns Edna, "The bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings" (103). In spite of her ambition, then, Edna lacks the depth of emotional strength necessary to surmount the realities of her cultural

obstacles.

Besides social restrictions, Edna's failure is psychologically based and results from her narcissism and her depression. Sullivan and Smith note that "at least nine times in the novel, Edna's mental state is described as depressed, oppressed, or despondent" (69). Indeed, throughout the narrative, Edna experiences bouts of ennui, acute longing for an unnameable presence, along with feelings of boredom, hopelessness, and emptiness, all of which are correlatives of depression (Fine 349). Whenever these depressive feelings break though Edna's resolve, the reality of her loneliness short-circuits her progress. For example, during the last dinner at the Pontellier residence, while exalting in her future success and liberation,

> she felt the old ennui overtaking her; the hopelessness which so often assailed . . . a chill breath that seemed to issue from some vast cavern, wherein discords wailed . . . the acute longing which always summoned into her spiritual vision the presence of the beloved one, overpowering her at once with a sense of the unattainable. (109-10)

In short, her longing for the unnameable "beloved one" paralyzes her progress. Freud's hypothesis of abnormal mourning causing psychotic depression applies to Edna's situation, since her mother, the principal cause of her narcissistic injury, has become one of her internalized lost love-objects. Instead of directing her unconscious animosity for perceived abandonment towards her mother, or her other lost object-cathexes, she redirects it against herself. To this end, throughout the novel, Edna seldom expresses her anger; rather, she internalizes it. As

Robert's rejection reopens Edna's narcissistic wounds, the accumulation of her anger felt towards others for past abandonment ultimately takes the form of "sado-masochistic" self-destruction.

Several critics maintain that Edna's suicide results from psychological regression which, according to Freud, follows emotional frustration or trauma. Indeed, though Edna pursues ideals of independence and creativity, her emotional behaviour becomes progressively infantile. The trend follows the traumatic altercation with Léonce which had initiated her awakening.

Cynthia Griffin Wolff asserts that Edna's libidinal energies are orally fixated, and that her primitive, basic needs of "sleep and eat, sleep and eat" dominate her behaviour. She refers to Edna's predominant preference for the adjective "delicious," which, she believes, indicates an "insistent preoccupation with nourishment" (462). Similarly, Edna's experience on the *Chênière Caminada* signifies regression. After fleeing from a feeling of faintness and oppression experienced at the church service, she rests in the bed of Madame Antoine. No doubt, this feeling arises from subliminal association with cultural, marital, and paternal subjugation. Like a child, or a baby, she

> looked at her round arms as she held them straight up and rubbed them one after the other, observing closely, as if it were something she saw for the first time, the fine, firm quality and texture of her flesh. She clasped her hands easily above her head and it was thus she fell asleep. (55-56)

Wolff interprets the above passage as representing "a being discovering the limits

Chopin's psychological profile of Edna's surrender to the loving entreaty of the maternal sea, indeed, correlates with Freud's concept of "oceanic feeling," as does the final scene depict an inverted birth. Disrobing, and entering the sea ankles first, Edna swims through the symbolic, amniotic sea, back towards her mother's womb, which Chopin signifies with her painterly and impressionistic sensual image of the"musky odor of pinks" (137).

Although Edna's death is unexpected, contemporary readers can appreciate it as a natural outcome of her psychological breakdown. Moreover, her drowning seems appropriate, considering her relationship with the sea. Elaine Showalter adds further credibility to Edna's decision of drowning:

> Drowning itself brings to mind metaphorical analogies between femininity and liquidity. As the female body is prone to wetness, blood, milk, tears and amniotic fluid, so in drowning the woman is immersed in the feminine organic element. (186)

In addition, a close reading of the text indicates that her drowning has been presentient throughout, and that her connection with the sea and her interpretation of its voice have mirrored her regressive, depressive, suicidal thoughts. In its Whitmanesque "musical shuttle," the sea weaves a pattern of death in Edna's psychological decline. Along with Mademoiselle Reisz's music, its waves had aroused Edna's passions of "solitude," " hope," "longing," and "despair" (45). While hearing the ocean as a "mournful lullaby" (24), she had also sensed it as "delicious," and as "a loving, but imperative entreaty" (31). Furthermore, she has

felt the sea as

> seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in abysses of solitude to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation.[3] (32)

Drawn back to the Whitmanesque sea, Edna hears the above hypnotic and melodic refrain again before her death. Her experience contrasts that of Emma, inasmuch as Emma hears a refrain that condemns her, whereas Edna hears one of comfort and peace.

Edna's unconscious network of associations linking the sea with music and death also influences her visual scenario in the fantasy aroused by Adèle's musical piece that Edna had privately entitled "Solitude." Each time Adèle had played this piece, Edna had imaged the same scene:

> the figure of a man, standing beside a desolate rock on the seashore. He was naked. His attitude was one of hopeless resignation as he looked toward a distant bird winging its flight away from him" (44).

The image correlates with one from Maupassant's story, also titled "Solitude," in which a man mourns his isolation and contemplates suicide.[4] The reason for Edna's despondent interpretation of this particular musical piece appears to be her association of Adèle's maternal presence with her own maternal ineptitude and motherlessness. Furthermore this scenario, already woven into her unconscious network of associations, resurfaces before her suicide. Paralleling the male figure's "hopeless resignation" she also stands naked before the water, watching a bird in flight. Symbolic of her ego-ideal, however, it falls to its death.

In her despondency, Edna demonstrates none of the emotional turmoil suffered the previous night, nor, as the narrator points out, does she think of its issues. During her trauma, she had contemplated and solved her dilemma of eluding children, "antagonists who had overcome her, who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days" (136). No doubt, she had confronted the situation of facing her sons with her recent adulterous and rebellious conduct that would both hurt them and ostracize her from their (especially future) patriarchal world of understanding. Her solution had rested in the essence and meaning of her discussion with Adèle during the previous summer, in which she had declared:

> I would give up the unessential; I would give up my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself. (67)

Significantly, her recollection of her declaration repeats only that

> she would give up the unessential, but she would never sacrifice herself for her children." (136)

Despite acknowledging full awareness of its meaning and implication, she omits the phrase, "I would give my life," her omission suggesting an unconscious avoidance of her intention to end her life. Accordingly, her association of ideas draws her back to Grande Isle and the sea where evasion of her "soul's slavery" will occur. Likewise, Harold Bloom asserts "the soul's slavery in Whitman is to be eluded only though a dangerous liaison with night, death, the mother, and the sea" (1987, 5).

The dynamics of Edna's death suggest her suicide is initially an unconscious act, resulting from impulse. Still despondent from the night before, she is "unthinking" as she walks "mechanically" to the beach and, having experienced hunger, she has already ordered her evening meal. Moreover, contrary to forensic identification of suicidal drowning, she does not enter the water fully clothed, or with her pockets laden with stones.[5] According to habit, she changes into her swim suit; yet her decision to disrobe is also based on whim. The idea of her suicide, then, although unconsciously affirmed, is not scheduled; rather it just overtakes her. Chopin's philosophy of suicide supports Edna's impulse: "The desire [for self-destruction] seems to come in waves, without warning, and soon passes away."[6] While Chopin's comments hint of personal experience which were monitored by self-control, Edna's impulse lacks such restraint.

Edna encounters death as passive and pleasant, welcoming her nakedness, "like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known" (136). Moreover, despite the cold temperature of the water, she enjoys its sensation, experiencing it exactly as she had the previous summer under Adèle's maternal influence: "The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace" (32, 134). Recognition of her desire for death does not surface until the instant that she remembers the terror felt the first time she had swum out alone, which had seized her at the fear of being unable to regain the

shore when she had

> turned and looked toward the shore, toward the people she had left there . . . the stretch of water behind her assumed the aspect of a barrier which her *unaided* strength would never be able to overcome. (47 italics added)

The shore, then, stands as a metaphor for Edna's family and cultural ideology. Likewise, the water represents her liberation from such frustrations, which would be hopeless without "unaided" emotional strength. This time, as if avoiding the possibility of the panic that had previously caused her return to shore, however, she does not look back and deliberately swims farther away. In her escape from life, she psychologically regresses into her past, beyond the time of the meadow, swimming into the gulf as if repeating her childhood experience of having to

> walk on forever, without coming to the end of it . . . running away . . . a little unthinking child . . . just following a misleading impulse without question" (35)

Her final impulse anticipates Freud's theory of regression, the pleasure principle, and the death instinct underlying the id's wish to put Eros to rest. Ironically, Edna had claimed that her sole purpose for returning to Grande Isle was to rest (135).

Freud's explication of suicide representing sado-masochistic impulses occurring after a neurotic has withdrawn his/her object cathexis again applies to Edna's situation. She has, indeed, withdrawn her object-cathexis from the outside world, an example of which process occurs in response to Léonce's provocation:

> Edna looked straight before her with a self-absorbed expression upon her face. She felt no interest in anything

> about her. The street, the children, the fruit vender, the flowers growing there under her eyes, were all part and parcel of an alien world which had suddenly become antagonistic. (73)

Accordingly, angry with the world, Edna considers her adversaries before she dies. She thinks of her sons whom, the night before, she had also called "antagonists," for they, too, belong to the resolute, unforgiving, patriarchal world. Her thoughts link her children to Léonce, in that they had each stifled her with their wanting "to possess her, body and soul." Mademoiselle Reisz also enters Edna's thoughts that anticipate Reisz's negative criticism of her failure: "How Mademoiselle Reisz would have laughed, perhaps sneered, if she knew!" Edna's next sentence, "Goodby—because I love you," relates to Robert's last words in his farewell note and reflect Edna's bitterness about his weakness and misunderstanding of her. Noticeably, each of her reflections are negative and suggest that her last moments of consciousness involve aggressive thoughts against each of these once revered objects. Having withdrawn her object-cathexis, Edna treats herself as object and redirects her anger at herself.

Accordingly, Edna's psychological state engenders her damnation. The causal framework of her "death wound" and suicidal impulse is threefold: first, it is motivated by the intrusion of her retributive, patriarchal superego, experienced in the form of insidious guilt in her responsibility towards her children; second, by her disillusionment and disappointment in her ideal-objects and ideal-ego; and third, and most importantly, by her feelings of emptiness, depression and

hopelessness for her future.[7] The "death wound" of Emma, on the other hand, is caused by the reality of her social restrictions and entrapment caused by her fiscal insolvency. Though she does feel disillusionment and disappointment in her ideal-objects, unlike Edna, she still embraces her unrealistic ego-ideal, and her final decision is based upon shame, rather than guilt. Emma could never feel Edna's responsibilities imposed by her culture, since her sensibilities are written from the perspective of the patriarch. Still, common to both, is an insidious feeling of despondency and lovelessness connected to their motherlessness.

Yet, because Edna possesses ethical and moral insight to judge and reject her cultural ideology in its prejudices and preclusion of "the eternal rights of women" (85), her suicide may be considered as heroic and symbolic of other mythological heroes, such as Narcissus and others who, according to Rothstein, refused to accept "the identity of toil, productivity, repression and civilization" (Alford 23).

Unfortunately, readers of *The Awakening* for many years failed to recognize such heroism or mythological qualities in Edna. Instead, as Showalter indicates, most considered Edna's drowning as retribution for her immorality, since drowning represented the traditional fictional punishment for nineteenth-century immoral women (186). Contemporary readers, however, recognize Chopin's exposé of the force and effect of culture and tradition upon such women. Further although Edna's passive death fails to represent the level of protest that she had

demonstrated during her life, it does indeed represent Chopin's protest against culturally perpetuated prejudices and attitudes that Flaubert also had wielded against Emma Bovary.

CONCLUSION

Why try to catch an always fleeing image,
What you seek is nowhere,
And if you turn away, you will take with you
The boy you love. The vision is only a shadow,
Only reflection, lacking any substance.
It comes with you, it stays with you, it goes
Away with you, if you can go away.
—Ovid, *Metamorphosis* "Echo and Narcissus" (3.431-437)

The preceding pages endeavour to explore the nature of death and desire in Emma Bovary and Edna Pontellier. In so doing, apart from determining that both characters suffer from narcissism and are, thus, unable to formulate normal attachment love, the findings establish a significant relationship between character and author. It seems that the dynamics of the authors' creative processes parallel the narcissism that their characters display. Further, the fictional representations serve as attempts to exorcize the creators' own forms of narcissism.

Discussing *Madame Bovary* first, although Emma commences as a stereotypical "naturally corrupt" woman, incorporating the fears, misunderstandings, and prejudices of Flaubert and of his culture, she gradually evolves into Flaubert's alter ego. While formulating the psychology of his female Other, Flaubert displaces all his weaknesses onto Emma. His debilities included feelings of helplessness deriving from his effeminacy, his over sentimentality faulted in his earlier writing, and his debauchery that led to his contracting

syphilis. In addition he projected his idiosyncrasies pertaining to his hysterical reactions to his epilepsy, together with his ennui, boredom, melancholia, emotional breakdowns, fiscal irresponsibility, and problematic object-choices. As many critics agree, Flaubert identified in many ways with his heroine. Thus, as a projection of Flaubert, Emma represents the despised part of himself, his moral deterioration, and both physical and emotional weaknesses. Flaubert's identification with Emma shows particularly in his admissions that "*Madame Bovary, c'est moi, d'après moi!*" and in his assumption and acceptance that his parallel symptoms of Emma's poisoning signified their psychological unity.

Just as the etiology of Emma's narcissism involves inconsistent parenting, parental rejection, infantile emotional frustration, and possible internalization of deceased lost love-objects, so do similar components pervade Flaubert's personal history sufficient to cause his psychic wounding. Besides living in a social framework that rejected the feminine (not unlike the ideology suffered and protested by Narcissus), Flaubert also endured inconsistent parenting. While he experienced over protection from his emotionally demanding mother, he also suffered rejection by his emotionally distant father. Moreover, before commencement of the novel, he had suffered the death of his father and of his beloved sister.

Furthermore, Emma's implied past emotional life suggests a reflection of Flaubert's infantile emotional frustration, verified by Sartre's biography which

claims Flaubert was "unloved or ill-loved" (Collas 41n). Ion Collas's conjecture of Emma's infantile experience is based upon her adult behaviour, and employs the following psychological principles: first, the adult psyche unconsciously retains the forgotten realm of infancy; second, adult behaviour repeats childhood experience; and third, food and money are psychologically interchangeable symbols for love. Accordingly, he concludes that Emma's infancy was frustrating and painful due to a deficiency of either love or nourishment (129). Conceivably, then, as Collas purports, Emma's complex psychology stems from Flaubert's unconscious which retains details of his own emotionally frustrating infancy (Collas 48n).

Flaubert's portrayal of Emma manifests as one of pathological narcissism, which condition Giles Mitchell characterizes as exhibiting "intense excessive and sometimes fatal devotion to the ego-ideal" (107). As Flaubert's alter ego, Emma also signifies his devalued ego-ideal that reflects his personal weaknesses. Although Emma dies for her ego-ideal, Flaubert relinquishes his through Emma's symbolic sacrifice. In this regard, J.F. Masterson supports the premise that the process of artistic expression can relieve artists and writers with "a severely impaired sense of self to overcome low self-esteem, depression, and a feeling of abandonment."[1]

Yet despite Flaubert's apparent conscious identification with Emma, his treatment of her remains nothing short of sadistic; his web of obstructions prevent

each possibility of her escape, and her prescribed violent and undignified suicide exceeds any justification. In explanation, his sadism seems to relate to the feminine aspects of his world; his attitude towards Emma represents vengeance for his despised weaknesses which he believed were caused by women. Further, because of his identification with Emma, his attitude symbolizes masochistic self-flagellation. As Freud theorized the masochistic self tormenting in depression signifies fulfillment of sadistic and hateful tendencies relating to others that are turned upon the subject. Therefore, instead of directing his sadism felt for others against himself by committing the suicide that he had so often contemplated, he created a life and death of sadomasochistic torment for his alterego.[2]

Notwithstanding the extensive drowning motif woven throughout the text, Flaubert chose arsenic as Emma's mode of suicide. To this end, her poisoning follows his fictional pattern of reserving poison for his female protagonists, while transferring his personal obsession of drowning to his male heroes.[3] Since the etymology of arsenic signifies "male," such poisoning seems to symbolize a form of male retribution punishing Emma for her immoral transgressions against patriarchal boundaries.

Regardless of Flaubert's seemingly gender-based and incongruous decision of arsenic as Emma's mode of death, however, his resolution does, in fact, exhibit psychological authenticity. Collas believes that in view of Emma's frustrating infancy, deficient in either love or nourishment, her greedily eating the poison

reflects and repeats a pernicious form of her infantile love and nurturing (51), as well as replicating Flaubert's own oral frustration and childhood experience (Collas 48n). In this regard, Masterson recognizes that the creative process entails the "recovery of the injurious past, with its long-repressed feelings of loss, [which] therefore may lead to a partial restoration of the fragmented self" (Schneiderman 228).

Flaubert's creation of Emma, then, involves a narcissistic act, inasmuch as it reflects Flaubert's own despised self-image and failed ego-ideal. As a personification of his feelings of helplessness, abandonment, and self hatred she fulfills his narcissistic needs to devalue and destroy her. Thus, through artistic process, Flaubert attempts to exorcize his despised feminine nature and effect a catharsis to his own narcissism. Although Masterson acknowledges that to a certain extent, artistic expression may produce cathartic effects, he cautions that it does not necessarily result in changes in personality structure. In "killing" Emma, Flaubert succeeded in suppressing serious thoughts of his own suicide for about fourteen years. Yet his adversarial feminine Other seems always to taunt him through his continued effeminacy and his permanently blackened saliva, a side effect of his mercury treatments for syphilis. Hence it is doubtful whether he actually succeeded in eliminating the "woman" within his psyche.

In contrast to the gender dynamics operating between Flaubert and Emma, however, the relationship between Chopin and Edna takes on a different impetus.

First, Chopin is a woman writing a woman's psychology. In creating Edna, Chopin responds to Flaubert's psychological portrayal of a woman's quest for emotional fulfillment. Yet, instead of writing from a judgmental and retributive point of view, Chopin writes without moral prejudice, illuminating the causation of Edna's "corruption." Rather than as a "naturally corrupt woman" (Lowe 17), Edna is presented as a naturally sensual woman who awakens to her desires and to her culture's rigid Victorian constraints. She is a sensitive woman trapped in a world of insensitive cultural ideals.

Second, although grafted onto Flaubert's complex psychological prototype, Edna's character also reflects aspects of Chopin. Yet Edna personifies Chopin's positive ego-ideal and courageous alter ego rather than any despised part of herself. To this end, Edna's life imitates many of Chopin's life experiences, such as her cultural limitations, marital constraint, extramarital love interests, responsibilities towards children, and the succession of lost love-objects that complicated her life. In this regard, Chopin's emotional losses of her father and older brothers at critical times in her life seem to pattern Edna's unresolved Oedipal complex. Moreover, symptoms of her motherlessness seem to pervade Edna's character, as do her bouts of ennui, depression, and boredom.

Edna's narcissism is also analogous to Emma's personality. Although her symptoms are not as acute, she, nevertheless, exhibits feelings of fragmentation, unreality, and emptiness, as well as an incapacity for normal attachment love.

Psychological determinants in the etiology of Edna's narcissism include emotional deficiency resulting from paternal indifference and maternal death. Yet, while Emma's adult behaviour reflects infantile oral frustration and lovelessness, Edna's does not. In view of Collas's assertion that adult attitudes towards food and money represent psychological clues to childhood experience, Edna's attitude regarding these elements suggests that she would have enjoyed a loving relationship with her mother. This assumption, in turn, points to Chopin's own positive infantile experience that must unconsciously influence Edna's personality and adult behaviour. In contrast, Flaubert's negative experiences, no doubt, unconsciously at least, influenced his creation of Emma. With this hypothesis in mind, it is interesting to question whether the degree of Edna's narcissism actually reflects that of Chopin, as Emma's might measure that of Flaubert. Indeed, Cyrille Arnavon associates Edna's psychology with that of Chopin in his claim that Edna's regressive fixation mirrors that of her author (187).

As Chopin's alter ego, Edna also represents a narcissistic character that substitutes for her ego-ideal. As such, she satisfies Chopin's narcissistic needs that involve artistic liberty to expose and protest cultural restrictions of women's political and sexual rights. To this end, Chopin grants Edna agency to explore her creative and sexual desires in spite of her oppressive marriage and cultural milieu. Notwithstanding Léonce's obstruction she pursues her art, whereas Chopin does not commence her writing career until after her husband's death. Similarly, Edna

overtly engages in adulterous relationships with Alcée Arobin and Robert Lebrun, while further demonstrating courage by her endeavouring to live independently from her husband. In contrast, Chopin's affair with Albert Sampite and others remained covert even after her widowhood. As Edna symbolizes Chopin's ego-ideal, her wish "to swim out where no woman had swum before" seems to encapsulate Chopin's desire as a writer and woman. Moreover, Edna's morbid form of working through her repressed grief might also mirror Chopin's unconscious attempt to exorcize her own emptiness caused by her lost libidinal-cathexes—in particular her father, mother and husband. In this regard any one of these deaths might have resulted in Chopin's pathological introjection of lost love-objects into her own ego. Accordingly, through artistic process, Chopin also attempts to strengthen her own ego and effect a catharsis to her own narcissism.

Unlike Emma, Edna does relinquish her ego-ideal. Whereas Emma commits suicide believing she is a heroine, Edna does so without any such pretensions. Edna's decision to surrender arises from the reality of sociological factors that breaks down her narcissistic defensive fusion, intensifying her feelings of depression, emotional disappointment, emptiness, and motherlessness. Moreover, Edna's death lacks the sadistic violence of that of her counterpart as she swims passively through the symbolic maternal sea towards perfect peace. Her mode of death appears credible and appropriate, considering her maternal loss and attraction to the sea, which Arnavon believes

> from her early childhood has been represented by the blue fields of Kentucky (significant because there do not seem to be any large expanses of water where Edna grew up) [and] corresponds to a longing (often the result of a trauma) to return to the mother's womb. (187)

In view of Chopin's own traumatic bereavements and of Arnavon's identification of Chopin's regressive fixation, even Edna's suicide might symbolize a yearning that Chopin had perhaps experienced. Chopin does indicate personal comprehension and intuition of suicide in her comments that "the desire seems to come in waves, without warning, and soon passes away" (Toth 1984, 120).

Yet, notwithstanding Edna's death represents self-determination, Edna's passivity and abdication of courage reduces the impact of her previous rebelliousness. Rather than her suicide representing her protest, however, it serves as Chopin's personal rebellion, indictment, and protest of her cultural ideals. Moreover, besides representing an emotional scapegoat for Chopin, Edna's sacrifice symbolizes Chopin's vengeance against her world and is intuitive of Freud's theory of suicide. Instead of redirecting her animosity felt towards her world against herself, Chopin allowed Edna's alter ego to capitulate to the desire for death. At the same time, she exercises courage as a woman and artist to survive and write Edna's story, for out of Edna's death, the novel is born. Ironically, however, Chopin's life imitates her art as her rebellion and creative vision also prove fatal. Chopin's critics and readership considered Edna's suicide moral and appropriate for an immoral and irresponsible woman. Furthermore,

many associated Edna's behaviour with that of her creator, dealing Chopin the same social isolation and narcissistic wounding that Edna would have received had she survived. Consequently, *The Awakening* summoned disgrace instead of victory. On the other hand, while Flaubert also received adverse moralistic criticism for creating Emma Bovary and an albeit mild judicial admonishment for offending "public and religious morality" (Gans 52), he received little reproach for his cruel depiction of Emma's death. Ironically, the notoriety of *Madame Bovary* ultimately contributed to the novel's popularity and success.

Accordingly, irrespective of geographical setting, gender bias prevails. In France, Flaubert created his "morally corrupt" woman, "killed" her with a sadistic and graphic death, then walked away as a successful author, while in America, Chopin created her naturally sensuous woman, depicted her death with dignity and without graphic exploitation, yet was denied literary success. As a woman in nineteenth-century culture, Chopin represented the dreaded feminine aspect of human nature; as a scapegoat, she endured devaluation and sacrifice by her culture.

Analogous to her protagonist, Kate Chopin finally capitulated to cultural condemnation of her liberated vision. Deeply wounded and heart broken over adverse criticism of *The Awakening* Chopin sank into despair, which Per Seyersted believes originated in her realization that "she could never write as she wanted to . . . truth as she saw it and people would not see" (1987, 73). Literary and social

isolation, thus, accounted for her severe depression, apathy, and boredom, which condition Chopin herself noted as "a severe spell of illness" and a "rather monotonous existence."[4] Greenson defines boredom as apathy and as "a mood of unpleasant indifference, of passive waiting, and a sense of loneliness . . . (298). Perhaps this disappointment was her "death wound," and that she withdrew her libido from the outside world, regressing further into herself until she found the peace brought about by her death instinct. Five years after publication of *The Awakening,* at fifty-four, she died of a brain hemorrhage.

Chopin's destiny seems to repeat that of Edna and the mythological Narcissus who refused to comply with the demands of their culture, resistance of which ultimately cost them their lives. Flaubert, on the other hand, chose otherwise. In denying the feminine aspects of his world and of his own nature in his dealing with Emma, he upheld the pattern of "creating culture at the price of perpetual pain . . . progress through repression—the identity of toil, productivity, and civilization, the sacrifice of happiness for mastery of nature" (Alford 31). Yet Flaubert spent the rest of his life enduring what he called "an incurable malady [with its] invincible melancholy" (Bart 640). In addition he suffered feelings of abandonment, emptiness, psychic bruising, and "mortal wounding" (Bart 655) before his death, which was also caused by a ventricular brain hemorrhage.[5]

Death, then, seems to threaten the timeless condition of pathological narcissism and self-love, as death also stands central in the Narcissus myth.

Ovid's poem articulates the symptoms of what Freud describes as libidinal withdrawal, "damming up" of object-libido, and pathological self-love:

> The Truth at last. He is myself! I feel it,
> I know my image now. I burn with love
> Of my own self; I start the fire I suffer.
> What shall I do? I start the fire I suffer.
> What shall I do? Shall I give or take the asking?
> What shall I ask for? What I want is with me,
> My riches make me poor . . .
> . . . His weary head
> Sank to the greensward, and death closed the eyes
> That once had marveled at their own beauty. (3.463-467, 499-451)

To this end, both literature and psychology attempt interpretation and illumination of narcissism, the etiology of which seems encapsulated in Freud's assertion that:

> We must begin to love in order not to fall ill and we
> are bound to fall ill, if in consequence of frustration,
> we are unable to love.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

[1] Cyrille Arnavon called *The Awakening* an "American *Madame Bovary*" (Arnavon 181); Willa Cather called it "a Creole Bovary" (Toth 1990, 352).

[2] A. A. Brill founded the New York Psychoanalysis Society in 1908 (Roscher 296 n45).

[3] Sigmund Freud, (1907) "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva,*" S.E. 9:43-44 (qtd. in Berman 45).

[4] Gustave Flaubert, letter "to Louise Colet," 3-4 July, 1852, (Starkie 308).

[5] Ibid, 2 Jan. 1854, (Steegmuller 1980, 207).

[6] Carl Jung, *Analytic Psychology, its Theory and* Practice (New York: Pantheon, 1968).

[7] Havistock Ellis, "Auto Eroticism: A Psychological Study," *St. Louis Alienist and Neurologist*, 19 (1895). Ellis identified a "narcissus tendency" for erotic emotions to be consumed and often lost in self-admiration (qtd. in Berman 2).

[8] Freud proposed that the inception of puberty, with its accompanying maturation of previously latent female sexual organs, might initiate a state of intensified narcissism, detrimental to the development of "true" object-choice and sexual overvaluation (1914, 554).

[9] Freud asserted that "Loss of love and failure leave behind them a permanent injury to self-regard in the form of a narcissistic scar, which . . . contributes more than anything to the 'sense of inferiority' which is so common in neurotics (1920, 603).

[10] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental*

Disorders, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1980) (qtd in Berman 21).

[11] H. Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self.* (New York: International University Press, 1977) (cited in Schneiderman 217).

[12] Most psychoanalysts have rejected Freud's concept of the death instinct because of its puzzling nature. Péraldi states their rejection is based on an incorrect translation from German to English. He points out the difference between *Trieb* and *Instinkt*, *Trieb* meaning drive, not instinct. As such, its basis is psychological rather than biological (Péraldi 34).

[13] Freudian psychosexual states of development consist of: (1) Oral stage; (2) Anal; (3) Phallic; (4) Latency in which the sex drive disappears—6 years to puberty. The infantile stage of sexuality ends with repression of the Oedipus complex, Freud 1989.

[14] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros & Civilization,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 146-147 (cited in Alford 31).

[15] Though seldom carried out, prison sentences of between three and twenty-four months existed as penalty for adulterous women (Lloyd 39).

[16] Charles Baudelaire, "*Madame Bovary,*" 1857 (quoted in Steegmuller 1980, 234).

[17] Gustave Flaubert, letter "to Edmund Pagnerre," 31 Dec. 1856 (Steegmuller 1980, 222).

CHAPTER TWO: Emma Bovary, Part I— Desire

[1] Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 140. Campbell writes: "Eve sees the tempter in the form of a child offering the apple and she is moved by desire. Adam sees the serpent legs of the ambiguous tempter and he is touched with fear. . . Desire and fear: these are the two motions by which all life in the world is governed. Desire is the bait, death is the hook."

[2] *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris, Club de L'Honnête Homme, 1971-6, vol 13, 548 (qtd. in Lowe 17).

[3] Francis Steegmuller refers to Baudelaire's review "*Madame Bovary*" which applauded Freud for being the first to use "that psychological mystery" of hysteria as the "base and bedrock of a literary work" (1980, 234).

[4] Eric Gans believes that "There is more than a grain of truth in the often repeated ideal that writing *Madame Bovary* was a disciplinary action, the result of a 'punishment' inflicted on Flaubert by his friends after their condemnation of the lavishly romantic *Temptation*" (29).

[5] Flaubert had been distressed and horrified when Colet, by his side in bed, had proclaimed that she would "not exchange her present happiness for all the fame of Corneille." He claimed that, "Perfect as her flesh had been, the imperfection of her spirit had betrayed itself (Steegmuller 1939, 83).

[6] Ion Collas indicates that "The etymology of ennui (from "in odio" in hate), as well as the expression "to kill time" that exists in many languages, are other indications that the connection between boredom and aggression was intuited long before psychologists explained it in terms of the cleavage between the conscious and unconscious mind" (90).

[7] Emma's reaction her mother's death and avoidance of her mother's memory evoke those of Virginia Woolf's character, Clarissa Dalloway. Shirley Panken explains this phenomenon as reflecting Woolf's personal attitude towards her mother's death. "The predominance of hostile emotions towards her mother anesthetized Woolf's response to the death, representing her defence against the threatened eruption into consciousness of inassimilable feelings of abandonment and rage." Shirley Panken, *Virginia Woolf and the "Lust of Creation"* (New York: Albany State U.P., 1987), 137.

[8] Ralph R. Greenson explains apathy as "a defense against painful perceptions and serves the purpose of overwhelming feelings of annihilation." Further, he also connects boredom with apathy (299, 300).

[9] Th. Reik defines pride as "a certain psychic attitude referring to the valuation of one's personality. It . . . originates as a reaction . . . to an injury of the originally naive self-love of the ego . . . The free and independent attitude of the child toward the world proves that it is not proud until it has experienced . . . disappointments or injuries . . . [Pride] serves the purpose of defense against future damage." Th. Reik, *Masochism in Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1941), 233-234 (qtd. in Collas 75n).

[10] H. Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1977).

[11] Ion Collas concludes "that thefts in Madame Bovary, whether real or masquerading as loans, reflect emotional deprivation is supported by observations recorded by psychologists who have ascertained that children often steal from their parents when they feel unloved or ill-loved" (111).

Emma Bovary, Part II—Death

[1] Flaubert prepared ten plot *scénarios* before the actual composition of *Madame Bovary* (Williams 25).

[2] Collas's translation of "*souvenir*" and "*plaie*" as "memory" and "wound" rather than "thought" and "gaping hole" seems more accurate and appropriate in this context.

[3] Emma's decision to kill herself while in a state of infantile libidinal regression coincides with Freud's death instinct theory that libidinal regression might motivate defusion of the two normally fused instincts of life and death (1923, 658).

[4] Emma refers to Rodolphe as a sea captain when she informs Leon about her past lover (318).

[5] Eric Gans asserts that suicide often ends the lives of Flaubert's female characters: in "Two Coffins for an Outlaw" the mother kills herself; in "*Les Baladins*" the heroine is dealt a death similar to Emma's; again in "*Passion et Vertu*" the heroine ingests arsenic. In addition, Gans argues that Flaubert utilized his art to vent his frustrations in the form of "revengeful scenes of wish fulfillment and pathetic dramatization of the hero victim's fate" (29).

[6] Ion Collas points out that psychoanalysts symbolically associate money with milk, and in particular, mothers' milk. Moreover, Collas indicates that "the tendency of money to become sometimes symbolically linked to the remote experience of sucking has been known for sometime" (112).

[7] Raymond Sobel and James A. Margolis, "Repetitive Poisoning in Children: A Psychological Study," *Pediatrics,* XXXV (1965): 641-651 (qtd. in Collas 45n).

[8] S. Freud, (1933) *New Introductory Lectures,* SE, XXII, 122; Shirley Panken, *The*

Joy of Suffering (New York: Jason Aronson, 1973), 214 (both quoted in Collas 45n).

[9] The etymology of arsenic indicates a derivative of Greek *arsenikon:* yellow orpiment (which concurs with Emma's signification of the colour of gold and yellow); in addition, it is also identified with *arsenikos:* male.

[10] Gustave Flaubert, letter "to Edmund Pagnerre," 31 Dec. 1856 (Flaubert 1980, 222).

[11] Gustave Flaubert, letter "to Louis Bouilhet," Sept. 1855 (Gans xi).

[12] Gustave Flaubert, letter "to Ernest Chevalier," Dec. 1838, *Correspondance,* 1:19 (Kaplan 201).

[13] Gustave Flaubert, letter "to Louise Colet," 5 Sept. 1856, *Correspondance,* 2:365 (Kaplan 201).

[14] Gustave Flaubert, letter "to Louise Colet," 20 June 1853, *Correspondance,* 3:241-242 (Collas 123).

CHAPTER THREE: Edna Pontellier, Part I—Desire

[1] Walt Whitman, *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,* from the "Sea Drift" sections of *Leaves of Grass,* Lines 1-4 and 77-78. Whitman's poem concerns a crisis in his life in which he remembers (and now fully understands) his childhood experience of the annunciation of his role as artist. In *The Awakening,* Chopin ironically describes Edna's awakening as a divine annunciation. "This may seem like a ponderous weight of wisdom to descend upon the soul of a young woman of twenty-eight—perhaps more wisdom than the Holy Ghost is usually pleased to vouchsafe to any woman" (32).

[2] In her 1899 essay entitled "Confidences," Chopin acknowledges her astonishment felt for Maupassant's work: "Here was life, not fiction . . . Here was a man who had escaped from tradition and authority, who had entered into himself and looked out upon life through his own being and with his own eyes" (Toth 1990, 205).

[3] Following her translation of Flaubert's "*Un Coeur Simple,*" the story of a woman who had loved her parrot above all else in her life, Chopin wrote and published her story entitled "The White Eagle," reminiscent of Flaubert's story (Toth 1990, 377).

[4] Sue V. Moore reported that Chopin always kept a copy of *Leaves of Grass* on her desk, and that Whitman was one of Chopin's favourite writers in English. "Mrs Kate Chopin," *St. Louis Life* X (1894):11-12 (Seyersted 1979, 115). Per Seyersted also suggests that in view of Whitman's influence, *The Awakening* might as well have been called "Kate Chopin's *Leaves of Grass*" (Seyersted 1969, 162).

[5] In his Preface to *Leaves of Grass,* Whitman advocated excluding God "from a system of philosophy as contending against some being or influence " in favour of an outcome of ultimate causation, arising from "its long antecedent result, and that from its

antecedent, and so backward without the farthest mentionable spot" (Whitman 720).

[6] In a letter to Professor L.R. Whipple, 12 Nov. 1907, Chopin's daughter, Leila Chopin Hattersley, contradicts her mother's appearance of having a joyous nature, indicating that she bore a continual "stamp of sadness" as a result of the tragedy of family deaths occurring early in her life. Leila further states: "She was undemonstrative both in grief and happiness" (Rankin 35).

[7] According to Emily Toth, at least one of Albert Sampite's descendants claimed that Sampite and Chopin were lovers before her husband's death, which fact would, Toth believes, "explain Kate's restlessness, her escape trip to St. Louise alone and Oscar's stay at Hot Springs alone." In any event, Toth's source commented advised that "everyone agrees that after Oscar's death, the affair blossomed" (Toth 1990, 168).

[8] "The Practical Side of Oscar Chopin's death," *Kate Chopin Newsletter,* 1 (1975-1976): 29.

[9] Edna had been aware of her dual nature since a child, when "she had apprehended instinctively the dual life, that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions" (76).

[10] During the time of writing *The Awakening*, Chopin was involved in mourning and working through her own mother's death.

[11] Psychologists stress that without emotional support, children often suppress or deny their feelings for years, concealing them beneath "layers of stoicism and false maturity." Suppressed grief will often erupt through subsequent emotional losses (Edelman 3). Edna's overreaction to her rejection by the engaged young man provides a good example of this phenomenon in that she experienced this relatively trivial event as "a bitter

affliction" (36).

[12] The model for Edna's father seems to have been Oscar Chopin's father, Jean Baptiste Chopin, who is described as having been cruel and abusive to his wife (Toth 1990, 122).

[13] In a psychoanalytical tripartite scheme, Edna would represent the ego, Adèle the superego, and Mademoiselle Reisz the id, representative of Edna's creative and sexual drives.

[14] In a letter to Ruth McEnery Stuart, 3rd Feb. 1897, Chopin uses the words "song," "melting," and "enfolds" to evoke the memory of a beloved: "The voice of the woman lingered in my ears like a melting song, and her presence, like the warm red glow of the sun still enfolds me" (Seyersted 1979, 128).

[15] Chopin disliked melodramatic accounts of hysteria. She writes in her diary: "I cannot yet discover any serious significance in the present craze for the hysterical morbid and false pictures of life which certain English women have brought into vogue." "Impressions," 12th May 1894 (Seyersted 1979, 91).

[16] In Chopin's mind, sexuality and creativity seem synonymous. In an 1868 diary entry, she appears to link art with nature (sexuality) when quoting Melanchton: "The enemy of art is the enemy of nature; Art is nothing but the highest sagacity and exertions of Human Nature" (Seyersted 1979, 65). Moreover, Mademoiselle Reisz's advice to Edna about the necessary strength to become an artist, also alludes to Edna's sexuality.

Edna Pontellier, Part II—Death

[1] Nancy Walker maintains that Chopin intended that both Edna's suicide and awakening were "necessary and inevitable." She refers to Chopin's only public response to the negative criticism of *The Awakening* in which Chopin mockingly discusses Edna's behaviour: "I never dreamed of Mrs. Pontellier making such a mess of things and working out her own damnation . . . But when I found out what she was up to, the play was half over and it was too late" (Walker 14).

[2] Chopin had also experienced an occasion in which she had to "think of the children." After Oscar Chopin's death and during her involvement in an adulterous relationship with Albert Sampite, Chopin had taken her children and retreated to her mother, "choosing a mother's love over a man's uncertain passions" (Toth 1990, 172).

[3] Chopin's repetition of the suffix "ing" in this passage echoes the poetry of Whitman in that "ing" appears to be one of his favoured word endings.

[4] Chopin translated Maupassant's "Solitude" 5th Mar. 1895 (Toth 1990, 480).

[5] Forensic identification of suicidal drownings notes that persons found dead clothed in a swim suit or entirely unclothed are likely to have been accidentally drowned (Simpson 94).

[6] Kate Chopin made this comment in her contribution to "Has High Society Struck the Pace That Kills?," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* 6 Feb. 1898:12 (Toth, 1984, 120).

[7] Psychological research finds hopelessness to be an even stronger correlate of suicide than depression (Lester 31).

CONCLUSION

[1] Leo Schneiderman discussing J. F. Masterson, *The Search for the Real Self* (New York: The Free Press, 1988) (Schneiderman 228).

[2] Trends of sadomasochism appear throughout the text of *Madame Bovary*, especially in the mistreatment of Rouault, Rodolphe, and Lheureux of Emma, and similarly in Emma's abuse of those weaker than she, such as her child, Charles, and Leon.

[3] Flaubert's gender-divided methodology for his suicidal characters suggests his psychological ambivalence towards the feminine. In particular both forms indicate maternal strife in that the ingestion of poison suggests repulsion of "poisonous" milk, (or as Freud defines it, "nourishment that makes one ill"), as does drowning represents a wish to return to the womb.

[4] K. Chopin, letter to R.B. Shepard, 8 Nov. 1899 (Seyersted 1987, 74).

[5] The facts that Flaubert's brain hemorrhage was possibly complicated by tertiary syphilis—for which he blamed women—and that, like Emma, he died in financial straits evoke considerable irony. They almost symbolize Emma's retribution.

WORKS CONSULTED

Primary Sources

Chopin, Kate. 1899. *The Awakening. Kate Chopin: The Awakening: Complete, Authoritative Text with Bibliographical and Historical Contents, Critical History, and Essays from Five Contemporary Critical Perspectives.* Ed. and intro. Nancy Walker. Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism Series. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993. 19-137.

Flaubert, Gustave. 1980. *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert. 1830-1857.* Ed. and trans. Francis Steegmuller. Cambridge: Harvard U.P.

——. 1857. *Madame Bovary.* Sommaire biographique, intro., note bibliographique Claudine Gothot-Mersh. Paris: Garnier Frères, 1971.

——. 1857. *Madame Bovary: Patterns of Provincial Life.* Trans. and intro. Francis Steegmuller. 1957. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

Whitman, Walt. 1965. *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition.* Eds and intro. Blodgett, Harold W. and Seulley Bradley. New York: New York U.P.

Ovid. 1967. *Metamorphoses.* Trans. Rolfe Humphries. Bloomington: Indiana U.P.

Secondary Sources: Theory

Chodorow, Nancy. 1978. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender.* Berkeley: U of California Press.

Fine, Reuben. 1979. *A History of Psychoanalysis.* New York: Columbia U.P.

Freud, Sigmund. 1920. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle. The Freud Reader.* Ed. and pref. Peter Gay. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989. 594-626.

——. 1923. *The Ego and the Id.* Ibid. 628-658.

——. 1917. "Mourning & Melancholia." Ibid. 584-589.

——. 1914. "On Narcissism: An Introduction." Ibid. 545-562.

Greenson, Ralph R. 1949. "The Psychology of Apathy." *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly.* 18: 290-302.

Jones, Ernest. 1963. *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud: The Last Phase (1919-1939).* Vol. 3. New York: Basic Books Inc.

Kernberg, Otto. 1975. *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism.* 2nd ed. New York: Jason Aronson, 1976.

Kristeva, Julia. 1987. *Tales of Love.* Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia U.P.

Lester, David. 1988. *Suicide from a Psychological Perspective.* Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Books.

Maccannell, Juliet Flower. 1992. "*Jouissance.*" *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary.* Eds. Elizabeth Wright, et al. Into. Elizabeth Wright. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Neuringer, Charles and Dan J. Lettieri. 1982. *Suicidal Women: Their Thinking and Feeling Patterns.* New York: Gardner Press, Inc., 1982.

Olafson, Erna, et al., eds. 1981. *Victorian Women: A documentary Account of Women's Lives in Nineteenth-Century England, France and the United States.* Stanford: Stanford U.P.

Sandler, Joseph, et al., eds. 1991. *Freud's "On Narcissism: An Introduction."* New Haven: Yale U.P.

Strong, Beret E. 1990. "Foucault, Freud, and French Feminism: Theorizing Hysteria as Theorizing the Feminine." *Literature and Psychology* 35.4: 10-26.

Secondary Sources: Criticism

Alford, C. Fred. 1989. "Narcissism: The Myth, The Disorder, and the Great Refusal." *Literature and Psychology* 35.1-2: 19-36.

Arnarvon, Cyrille. 1953. Introduction. *Edna.* By Kate Chopin. Trans. Bjørn Braatem and Emily Toth. Rpt. In *A Kate Chopin Miscellany.* Ed. Per Seyersted. Natchitoches: Northwestern State U.P., 1979. 168-188.

Barnes, Julian. 1985. *Flaubert's Parrot.* New York: Knopf.

Bart, Benjamin F. 1976. *Flaubert.* New York: Syracuse U.P.

Berman, Jeffrey. 1990. *Narcissism and the Novel.* New York: New York U.P.

Bloom, Harold. 1987. Ed. and intro. *Kate Chopin: Modern Critical Views.* New York: Chelsea House Publishers.

Bloom, Harold. 1988. Ed. and intro. *Gustave Flaubert: Modern Critical Views.* New York: Chelsea House Publishers.

Collas, Ion K. 1985. *Madame Bovary: A Psychoanalytic Reading. Histoire des idées et critique littéraire* 235. Genève [Geneva]: Librairie Droz.

Edelman, Hope. 1995. *Letters from Motherless Daughters: Words of Courage for Grief and Healing.* Rpt. New York: Bantom, 1996.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. 1979. "Kate Chopin's Awakening." *Southern Studies* 18: 261-290.

Gans, Eric. 1989. *Madame Bovary: The End of Romance.* Twayne's Masterwork Studies 23. Boston: Twayne Publishers.

Lloyd, Rosemary. 1990. *Madame Bovary.* London: Unwin Hyman.

Lowe, Margaret. 1984. *Towards the Real Flaubert: A Study of Madame Bovary.* Oxford: Claredon Press.

Malzahn, Manfred. 1991. "The Strange Demise of Edna Pontellier." *Southern Literary Journal* 23.2: 31-39.

Mitchell, Giles. 1987. "Flaubert's Madame Bovary: Narcissism and Suicide." *American Imago* 44.2: 107-128.

Mitsutani, Margaret. 1986. "Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*: The Narcissism of Edna Pontellier." *Studies in English Literature* : 3-15.

Pace, Jean. 1977. "Flaubert's Image of Woman." *The Southern Review* 13.1: 114-30.

Paris, Bernard J. 1981. "Third Force Psychology and the Study of Literature, Biography, Criticism and Culture." *The Literary Review* 24.2: 181-221.

Péraldi, François. 1978. "American Psychoanalysis." *Psychoanalysis, Creativity and Literature: A French American Inquiry.* Ed. Alan Roland. New York: Columbia U.P. 22-38.

Rankin, Daniel S. 1932. *Kate Chopin and her Creole Stories.* Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania.

Roscher, Marina L. 1984. "The Suicide of Edna Pontellier: An Ambiguous Ending?" *Southern Studies* 2: 289-297.

Rothfield, Lawrence. 1988. "From Semiotics to Discursive Intertextuality: The Case of *Madame Bovary.*" *Gustave Flaubert: Modern Critical Views.* Ed. and intro. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers. 219-244.

Schneiderman, Leo. 1980. "Modern Fictional Protagonists: Motherless Children, Fatherless Waifs." *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 50: 215-229.

Seyersted, Per. 1969. *Kate Chopin: A Critical Biography.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U.P.

——. 1979. Ed. and pref., and Emily Toth, comp. *A Kate Chopin Miscellany.* Natchitoches: Northwestern State U.P.

——. 1987. "Kate Chopin's Wound: Two New Letters." *American Literary Realism* 20.1: 71-75.

Showalter, Elaine. 1993. "Tradition and the Female Talent: *The Awakening* as a solitary book." *Kate Chopin: The Awakening: Complete, Authoritative Text.* Ed. Nancy Walker. 169-189.

Simpson, Keith. 1976. *Forensic Medicine.* London: Edward Arnold & Co.

Skaggs, Peggy. c.1985. *Kate Chopin.* Boston: Twayne Publishers.

Starkie, Enid. *Flaubert: The Making of the Master.* New York: Kingsport Press, 1967.

Steegmuller, Francis. 1939. *Flaubert and Madame Bovary: A Double Portrait.* Rpt. London: Constable, 1993.

Sullivan, Ruth and Stewart Smith. 1973. "Narrative Stance in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening.*" *Studies in American Fiction* 1: 62-75.

Taylor, Helen. 1989. *Gender, Race and Region in the Writings of Grace King, Ruth McEnery Stuart, and Kate Chopin.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U.P.

Thornton, Lawrence. 1980. "The Awakening: A Political Romance." *American Literature* 52: 50-66.

Toth, Emily. 1975. "The Independent Woman and 'Free Love.'" *Massachusetts Reviews.* 16: 647-664.

——. 1990. *Kate Chopin.* New York: Morrow.

——. 1984. "Kate Chopin on Divine Love and Suicide: Two Rediscovered Articles." *American Literature.* 63: 115-121.

Walker, Nancy. 1993. Ed and intro. *Kate Chopin: The Awakening: Complete, Authoritative Text with Bibliographical and Historical Contents, Critical History, and Essays from Five Contemporary Critical Perspectives.* Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press.

Williams, D.A. 1973. *Psychological Determinism in Madame Bovary.* Hull: University of Hull Publications.

Wolff, Cynthia Griffin. 1973. "Thanatos and Eros: Kate Chopin's *The Awakening.*" *American Quarterly* 25: 449-471.

Ziff, Larzer. 1987. "An Abyss of Inequality." *Kate Chopin: Modern Critical Views.* Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers. 17-24.

VITA

Surname: Martin Given Name: Linda

Place of Birth: Port Talbot, Glamorganshire, Great Britiain

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1990 to 1997
Malaspina University College	1986 to 1990

Degrees Awarded:

B.A.	University of Victoria	1992

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis:

Death of Desire, Desire of Death: An exploration of narcissism and death in *Madame Bovary* and *The Awakening*

Author 

Linda Martin
July 25, 1997