

A STUDY OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN FRANCE IN 19TH CENTURY AS PORTRAYED IN *THE NECKLACE 'LA PARURE'* SHORT STORY BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the social stratification in French in 19th century through the main character of *The Necklace 'La Parure'* short story by Guy de Maupassant. This research applies sociological approach by Karl Marx and Max Weber. Sociology is a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a casual explanation of its course and effects. In accordance, the writer uses qualitative method to conduct the research aimed to describe and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, thoughts people individually or in groups. Specifically, this study focuses to analyze social life of the main character in the short story by Guy de Maupassant consisting the act and desire in having a bourgeois life, and the social stratification which repress the main character at that time. Moreover, the research uses the library research to collect the data of social stratification.

Keywords: study of social stratification, main character, *Guy de Maupassant* short story

Introduction

The story revolves around the spectacular diamond necklace that Mathilde borrows from Mme. Forester for a ball. That set of jewels gives Mathilde the best night of her life. It also ruins it a few hours later, when she loses the necklace and spends the next ten years paying to replace it. And it's also thanks to the necklace that we get the final, gut-wrenching twist at the end.

Interestingly, the original French title, "La Parure," doesn't exactly mean "The Necklace," although that's how it's always been translated. It actually means something more like "the finery," or "the set of jewels."

A young woman, Mathilde, is born to a low class family. With no money for a dowry, she is married to Monsieur Loisel, a clerk from the Board of Education. Mathilde always felt like she should have been born to the upper class and is unhappy in her married life, hating their home, their food, and her lack of fine clothing and jewelry. One evening, her husband presents her excitedly with an invitation to attend an event at the Minister of Public Instruction's home. To the surprise of M. Loisel, Mathilde—now Mme.

Loisel—throws the invitation down in dismay, weeping and complaining that she has nothing to wear to such an event. Her husband offers to give her the money for something suitable, and she calculates the maximum amount she could request without him refusing her immediately. When she requests this amount, her husband pales, thinking of the hunting gun for which he has been saving that exact amount; nonetheless, he agrees.

The day of the ball approaches and Mme. Loisel's dress is made ready, but she is still dismayed. When asked why, she replies that she is embarrassed to attend the ball without any jewels. Her husband, after being chastised for suggesting she wear flowers in her hair instead, suggests that she ask to borrow some jewels from her rich friend, Mme. Forestier. Mme Loisel agrees and goes to see her friend the next day, greedily choosing one of Mme. Forestier's finest necklaces.

At the ball, Madame Loisel is a hit - elegant, joyful, and desired for waltzes. She and M. Loisel return home at nearly 4 o'clock in the morning. Once they are home,

Mme. Loisel realizes that she lost the necklace. She and her husband discuss the situation frantically; Mme. Loisel that she felt it on her after leaving the ball, so it must be in the road somewhere. Her husband goes back out to look on the ground the entire way they just walked, though he must be at work in only a few hours. He returns empty-handed hours later.

The couple places a notice with the police department and, at the suggestion of her husband, Madame Loisel writes a note to her friend saying the clasp of the necklace has broken and they are having it repaired. After a week with no news, M. Loisel proclaims that they must replace it, and the couple finds a replacement for 36,000 francs. M. Loisel had 18,000 francs from his father's will and borrows the remaining sum, making "ruinous promises" (p.36) in the process. After all this, Madame Loisel puts the new necklace in the case belonging to the original necklace; she returns it without arousing suspicion.

To pay off the debt, both Monsieur and Madame Loisel must work tirelessly. They rent rooms and Madame Loisel learns to cook, clean for many, be "clothed like a woman of the people" (p. 36) and haggle at the market. Her husband works evenings and takes on side jobs bookkeeping and copying. After ten years, they are finally able to pay off all of their debts. Sitting at home, a hardened, old woman, Madame Loisel thinks back on how her life might have been, had she not lost the necklace.

One day, while taking a walk, Mme. Loisel runs into Mme. Forestier. She approaches her old friend, and Mme. Forestier almost doesn't recognize her. In a sudden burst of emotion, Madame Loisel reveals her entire story of losing the necklace, replacing it, and working off the cost of the replacement ever since. In response, Madame Forestier replies that the original necklace did not contain actual diamonds but rather fake diamonds, meaning the original necklace cost no more than 500 francs.

About the author

Maupassant, like his mentor, Flaubert, believed that fiction should convey reality with as much accuracy as possible. He strived for objectivity rather than psychological exploration or romantic descriptions, preferring to structure his stories and novels around clearly defined plot lines and specific, observable details. However, he argued that calling fiction "realistic" was not correct every work of fiction, he believed, was an illusion, a world created by a writer to convey a particular effect to readers. He was faithful above all to the facts and believed that close, focused observation could reveal new depths and perspectives to even the most common, unremarkable aspects of life. "The Necklace" clearly demonstrates Maupassant's fixation with facts and observations. Rather than explore Mathilda's yearning for wealth or unhappiness with her life, Maupassant simply tells us about her unhappiness and all the things she desires. At the end of the story, he provides no moral commentary or explanation about Mathilde's reaction to Madame Forestier's shocking revelation; he simply reports events as they happen. There is no pretense, idealizing, or artifice to Maupassant's prose or treatment of his characters.

According to Weber, status groups normally are communities. Status is defined as the likelihood that life chances are determined by social honor, or, prestige. Status groups are linked by a common style of life, and the attendant social restrictions.

Mathilde Loisel wants to be a glamour girl. She's obsessed with glamour – with fancy, beautiful, expensive things, and the life that accompanies them. Unfortunately for her, she wasn't born into a family with the money to make her dream possible. Instead, she gets married to a "little clerk" husband and lives with him in an apartment so shabby it brings tears to her eyes.

Act 1

We meet Mathilde, and learn about her dream of being wealthy and glamorous. M. Loisel delivers the invitation to the ball to Mathilde, who throws a minor fit and gets him to buy her a dress. She borrows the diamond necklace from Mme. Forestier.

"It annoys me not to have a single piece of jewelry, not a single ornament, nothing to put on. I shall look poverty-stricken. I would almost rather not go at all."

This quote shows us how Mathilda want to dressed like the wealthy women in the ball. Even though she was has the pretty gown, but it still incomplete because she has no jewelry to put on her body.

Now why does Mathilde want all of these expensive, material possessions? It doesn't sound like she just wants it because she's money-obsessed. No, for Mathilde, the rich life is attractive because it's glamorous, beautiful, exciting, fine, and unlike the dingy apartment in which she lives. The glamorous life has a certain kind of magical allure to it. A lot of the objects Mathilde wants are magical, like the "tapestries peopling the walls with ancient figures and with strange birds in a fairy-like forest". For Mathilde, being wealthy amounts to living in a fairy tale. Being middle class amounts to boredom. She wants the fairy tale.

Findings and Discussion

1. The high standard or life which brought the self-destruction of woman in French

The high standard of woman in French makes some of the woman in French under pressure and demanding the high social class things to be worn, because in French, the people like the finer things in life. So, every woman there wants to wear the good quality accessories and elegant dress wherever they are especially when they meet another people, mostly the wealthier society. In this novel, the author shows us how the woman in France always demanding the wealthier life even though they had been marriage, especially in a dance party where

all the wealthy society come and gather. Here, Mathilde believes that objects have the power to change her life, but when she finally gets two of the objects she desires most, the dress and necklace, her happiness is fleeting at best. At the beginning of "The Necklace," we get a laundry list of all the objects she does not have but that she feels she deserves. The beautiful objects in other women's homes and absence of such objects in her own home make her feel like an outsider, fated to envy other women.

According to Carl Max, social stratification in a capitalist society always involves class conflict. This novel shows us the conflict in the social status between Mathilda and her friend because of a necklace.

The other thing Mathilda wants is Men; rich, attractive, charming, powerful men. That passage we quote above finishes with: "the most intimate friends, men well known and sought after, whose attentions all women envied and desired". Just a little afterwards, we're told:

She would so much have liked to please, to be envied, to be seductive and sought after.

In this quote, what's interesting about Mathilda's man-craze is that she seems to be more interested in seducing men than in the men themselves. That's because what Mathilda really wants is to be wanted. More than being just desired, Mathilda wants to be glamorous, gorgeous, charming, graceful, and thoroughly decked out in diamonds.

It shows to us how a good dress is not enough to show that you are a wealthy family/people. In French, the standard of wealthy is when you are wearing a good dress and jewelry. Look at how Mathilda still not satisfied when her husband has gave her money to buy the beautiful dress. She still unsatisfied because she does not has jewelry. Even though her husband give her suggestion to wear flower, Mathilda know that the rich people would not wear flower but jewelry. The perceived power of object also happens for man, where the rich people

will wear the dark-colored suit which is understated and stylish.

“She’s rich, you understand?!”
 “I fell dirty! Humiliated!”
 “She has Jewelry!”

Those quote show us how the life of her friend oppressed her and make her jealous. She wants to own all of things that her friend has now. She wants a better life, with better economic conditions and she wants her jewelry.

Those quote show that the woman in French feel oppressed when they saw their friend who has better social status, better life and better economic condition. Mathilda feel that she deserve to got what her friend has. She wants to have good quality jewelry, elegant dress and etc. In this scene, Mathilda asks crying and tell her husband that her old friend was rich, it is different with her condition and she fell dirty, even humiliated. She differentiates her life with Jeanne’s life.

Mathilda : I will never go to Jeanne forestier’s again! Never again! (cry)

Monsieur Louisel: aren’t you friends?

Mathilda : She is rich, you understand. She is rich! I feel dirty! Humiliated!

Monsieur Louisel: We are not unhappy

Mathilda : Oh you! As long as you have your stew

Monsieur Louisel: everyone does not eat stew

Mathilda : Jeanne has a cook and two chambermaids. She drinks port wine! She has jewelry! And I have to put up with the stupidest maid!

Monsieur Louisel: it will get better.

In this quote we can see that the differences between the high class social status and lower class social status do not tolerance anything. Even though Jeanne is Mathilda’s friend, Mathilda still jealous even shy to realize that her life is not as well as Jeanne’s life.

"I'm utterly miserable at not having any jewels, not a single stone, to wear," she

replied. "I shall look absolutely no one. I would almost rather not go to the party.

"Wear flowers," he said. "They're very smart at this time of the year. For ten francs you could get two or three gorgeous roses."

" No . . . there's nothing so humiliating as looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women."

In this quote, you can see that to get noticed by the society in her surrounding, she has to show that she has the same thing with them. By the look how the way she dressed and how the way she act. What she worn show her truly self. The appearance is everything in French. From the top to down, all people will respect you if you dressed like wealthy family, but if you are not, they will underestimate you.

This quote shows us no matter how hard her husband try to convince her that it’s okay to wear a flower (roses), but she know that the rich woman will not wear any flower to replace the jewelry, they will show their richness with wearing their expensive diamonds and etc. probably, they will wear their best jewelry to the ball.

In this short story, Mathilda loses the diamond necklace after the ball.

She took off the garments in which she had wrapped her shoulders, so as to see herself in all her glory before the mirror. But suddenly she uttered a cry. The necklace was no longer round her neck!

"What's the matter with you?" asked her husband, already half undressed.

She turned towards him in the utmost distress.

"I . . . I . . . I've no longer got Madame Forestier's necklace. . . ."

He started with astonishment.

"What! . . . Impossible!"

They searched in the folds of her dress, in the folds of the coat, in the pockets, everywhere. They could not find it.

"Are you sure that you still had it on when you came away from the ball?" he asked.

"Yes, I touched it in the hall at the Ministry."

"But if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard it fall."

"Yes. Probably we should. Did you take the number of the cab?"

"No. You didn't notice it, did you?"

In this quote we can see how the wealthy appearance that she got, finally bring her into the long last suffering life. She lost the necklace and stress. The high standard of life make them got more difficulties in life.

"You remember the diamond necklace you lent me for the ball at the Ministry?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"How could you? Why, you brought it back."

"I brought you another one just like it. And for the last ten years we have been paying for it. You realise it wasn't easy for us; we had no money. . . . Well, it's paid for at last, and I'm glad indeed."

Madame Forestier had halted. "You say you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes. You hadn't noticed it? They were very much alike." And she smiled in proud and innocent happiness.

Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took her two hands. "Oh, my poor Mathilde! But mine was imitation. It was worth at the very most five hundred francs! . . . "

In this quote we can see how the life that she dream on makes her become more and more poor than before because she have to pay the debt to replacing her friend necklace that she thought it was the real diamond.

Conclusion

After seeing this work, we can see how the standard of wealthy family is really high in French. The stereotypes of the people there are based on what the other people wear. More expensive the dress that you wear, people will be more respectful to you. And it happens not only to women but also men. But, the most crucial impact is for the women because we know that women should wear many things such as bracelet or watch, earring, and also "Necklace". So, what we have to learn from this analysis is we have to

be happy with what we have and be grateful with our life.

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