Style as a "[M]anner of Seeing": The Poetics of Gustave Flaubert

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Chapter One—Introduction: Assembling and Defining a Poetics of the Novel

It is generally acknowledged among critics of nineteenth-century French literature that Gustave Flaubert set a precedent for the modern realist novel with his masterpiece, *Madame Bovary*. However, Flaubert himself would disagree with his classification as a realist, as he hardly remained loyal to a single literary genre or period. Rather, he longed to create a work of literature that would stand alone as an object of art, and to make this dream a reality he employed the techniques that he believed generated artful and expressive prose. Although *Madame Bovary* is not the "book about nothing" that Flaubert longed to write (Flaubert, "Letters" 301), it remains a classic of world literature and is indeed a work of art. Both Flaubert's narrative style and his view of the writing process display the sacrifices he deemed necessary for this great work of art to become a reality. As an author and artist, he was influenced greatly by other art forms of the nineteenth century, such as music and the visual arts, and, like other authors of his time, he sought to discover how literature fit together with these prominent forms of art. As an aficionado of art, Flaubert revealed his aesthetic views in his correspondence, and from these aesthetics and from his fiction Flaubert's poetics can be drawn. The most significant elements of Flaubert's poetics include an omniscient but objective narrative style, careful structure, the musicality of language, and the discovery of "the Other"; these literary elements form a poetics that offers him liberation from his own judgments and opinions, from the limitations of language, and from bourgeois society.

Flaubert's poetics have much to do with the realism of some of his most acclaimed works even though he did not solely devote himself to realism as a genre. In fact, early on in his writings, Flaubert embraced romantic ideals, producing utterly fantastic tales, but with *Madame Bovary* he determined to shift his focus and to portray French provincial life in a realistic way, a

task that would prove to be a daunting one for him. His novels *Madame Bovary* and *The Sentimental Education* as well as his story "A Simple Heart," found in *Three Tales*, are perhaps his most realistic works; however, while one cannot ignore Flaubert's realism in a discussion of his poetics, it should be noted that his poetics ultimately transcend the limits of realism as a genre. In order to gain a greater understanding of Flaubert's writing, then, it is necessary to describe, identify, and assemble his poetics from the aesthetic views that are manifested in his writing**s**, like putting together the puzzle pieces of Flaubert's literary mind. Targeting the techniques and strategies Flaubert consistently used in his writing and compiling the elements of Flaubert's literary style can help literary scholars to explain, understand, and appreciate his poetics. While various critics have researched and praised Flaubert's literary achievements, such as his narrative style and his musicality, few have discussed the way these techniques work together or have combined these techniques into a workable poetics. Benjamin Bart has done extensive research on the art of the Flaubertian novel, and he claims, "[Flaubert] did in fact have his own concept of the novel; and it can be drawn coherently from his letters. What is essential is that the bits and pieces, as they occur in the letters, are fragments which take on their proper meaning only within the framework which was always present in Flaubert's mind and with which his numerous correspondents were in general quite familiar" ("Flaubert's Concept of the Novel" 84). While Bart does not discuss a poetics in particular, his study does illuminate the aesthetic views implicit in Flaubert's writing. Constructing Flaubert's poetics, then, helps to tie his aesthetic beliefs directly to his literature.

According to Leland Ryken, "[A]n 'aesthetic' is a philosophy of art. A 'poetic' is a philosophy of literature" (1). Therefore, a poetics is ultimately a set of principles underlying good, quality literature. Walter L. Reed explains, "Explicitly or implicitly, a poetics is

concerned with judging literature according to some standard of aesthetic good and bad" (63). Writing for an audience that desires to comprehend in greater detail the concept of a Christian poetics, Ryken further notes, "When we attach the adjective *Christian* to the word *aesthetic*, a whole further set of considerations is set into motion. At heart, these considerations involve relating the issues of aesthetics to Christian doctrine and biblical example" (1). Similarly, attempting to discover a *Flaubertian* poetics helps one relate those same aesthetic issues to Flaubert's life, views, literary works, influences, and those traits that set him apart from other writers. A Flaubertian poetics is *imitative* in nature because in each element of his poetics that Flaubert reveals in his works, he in some way imitates the reality of the human condition. This imitation is especially reflected in his realism, through which he demonstrates "fidelity to actuality" and "centers his attention to a remarkable degree on the immediate, the here and now, the specific action, and the verifiable consequence" (Holman 433). In this way, he focuses on the "thing imitated" (Holman 434). By discovering and understanding the poetics that are revealed in Flaubert's most realistic works, one can gain a fuller understanding of those works and of their literary features. Because Flaubert does not fit squarely into a specific category or label, such as romanticism or realism, "each work has its own unique *poétique* or aesthetic rationale" (Williams 168). However, his realism serves as a vehicle for displaying the poetics present in his most successful works of fiction, and realism is truly that imitative factor that ties together all elements of his poetics revealed in his works.

Tracing the poetics of Flaubert's realism proves problematic when one reads the novel in its generic context. Although the concept of a poetics dates back to Aristotle, the novel was still a developing genre during Flaubert's time, and in-depth studies of a poetics of the novel did not fully develop until much later. M. M. Bakhtin claims that the novel is "the sole genre that

continues to develop" (3), unlike other "fixed pre-existing forms" (3) like poetry, classic literature, or epic. According to Malcolm Bradbury, because the novel is quite different from other classical or traditional forms of writing, and because it is not "defined as clearly" as poetry or drama, a poetics of the novel may also be difficult to define (6). Bakhtin offers some insight into the difficulty of prescribing a consistent set of poetics for the novel:

> The novel is the only developing genre and therefore it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding. . . . In many respects the novel has anticipated, and continues to anticipate, the future development of literature as a whole. In the process of becoming the dominant genre, the novel sparks the renovation of all other genres, it infects them with its spirit of process and inconclusiveness. (7)

Because the novel holds a unique position in literary history and continues to change as a literary form, prescribing the same set of poetics for all novels or novelists would limit the novel's development. As the "dominant genre in contemporary literature," its continual contact with the contemporary world makes it an excellent avenue for the portrayal of reality (Bakhtin 11).

It is because the novel is a continually developing and widely studied genre that studies of the writing processes and poetics of specific authors and novels are so necessary. In Flaubert's case, a thorough exploration and description of his poetics and of his use of his poetics only enlarge one's understanding and appreciation of his literary style and realism. While with other developed genres a mold had already been formed in which authors could "pour artistic experience" (Bakhtin 3), in the nineteenth century, Flaubert was creating his own mold with his novel by which he would introduce his own aesthetic ideas to the world.

Some critics believe that trying to discover a poetics of the novel is largely unnecessary

because of the intricacies of this "problematical literary form" already addressed and because in the past the novel's poetics have remained mostly "implicit" (Reed 63). Reed illuminates a legitimate concern, as he notes that poetics "inevitably exist in the minds of authors and audience before being codified by critics and theorists" (63), and as the mystery of the novel and of its creation contributes to its beauty and to its position as being "beyond the pale of literary tradition" (63). However, Bakhtin argues that the forte of nineteenth-century poetics is a lack of unity, noting that "they are eclectic, descriptive; their aim is not a living and organic fullness but rather an abstract and encyclopedic comprehensiveness" (5). Not surprisingly, Flaubert's poetics embrace this propensity for description that Bakhtin discusses rather than the prescription and "exhaustiveness" of classical poetics, or "[t]he great organic poetics of the past" (Bakhtin 5). Bradbury offers a rationale for the study of a poetics of the novel by saying, "What surely is needed is an approach to fiction which concerns itself with the special complexities of novels and the distinctive kinds of artifice and imitation employed in their creation" (6). Therefore, by attempting to assemble the "complexities" of Flaubert's writing in a systematic way, one can discover the poetics underlying his literature and can gain a greater comprehension of the contribution of poetics to the study of literature. Poetics is ultimately "the grounding of aesthetics," and the subject of poetics lends greater understanding to aesthetics and enhances the "intelligible discussion of art" (Brooks 511). Therefore, identifying Flaubert's poetics aids in understanding how Flaubert's artistic and aesthetic views apply to his own works and to all of literature and in turn how those views both shape and reflect reality.

Since literature can be viewed as a sub-category within the larger realm of art, the principles Flaubert developed for defining great art influenced his poetics. He was particularly influenced by some of the French realist painters during the nineteenth century, and he possessed

a love of the visual arts. Viewing particular works of art "was thus a highly charged activity for Flaubert. The intellectual side of his encounters with images, whether actual or [artifacts] remained an important factor throughout his life, even later, when more technical and stylistic interests had come also to dominate" (Tooke 14). Flaubert's views of and responses to art colored all of his literary activity, and even though realist art began to surface in the nineteenth century, Flaubert did not follow the fads or fashions of the times when engaging with art, but he chose to view it through his own eyes. For instance, he relished trying to discover a painting's meaning even if he knew that he would not find one (Tooke 37). As evidenced in his own writing and correspondence, "[e]ven when Flaubert's tastes seem to correspond to what might be called the artistic taste of the time, they always have a particular slant, which makes them both original and highly personal" (Tooke 27). Flaubert remained religiously devoted to art throughout his life and literary career (Heath 93), and all forms of art, especially his own writing, were intensely personal to him. His poetics reveals the artfulness of his writing and help to make *Madame Bovary* "the first work to justify the idea, still revolutionary in its time, that the novel was truly the major art form of the modern era" (Gans 7). It is primarily in *Madame Bovary*, then, that Flaubert's poetics can be discerned.

Particularly, French realist painting contributed greatly to the poetics of realist literature. Ian Watt discusses the etymology of the term *realism* as it relates to the visual arts, to literature, and to Flaubert:

> The main critical associations of the term 'realism' are with the French school of Realists. 'Réalisme' was apparently first used as an aesthetic description in 1835 to denote the 'vérité humaine' of Rembrandt as opposed to the 'idéalité poétique' of neo-classical painting; it was later consecrated as a

> specifically literary term by the foundation in 1856 of *Réalisme*, a journal edited by Duranty.
>
> Unfortunately much of the usefulness of the word was soon lost in the bitter controversies over the 'low' subjects and allegedly immoral tendencies of Flaubert and his successors. As a result, 'realism' came to be used primarily as the antonym of 'idealism', and this sense, which is actually a reflection of the position taken by the enemies of the French Realists, has in fact coloured much critical and historical writing about the novel. (10)

In a similar vein, Heath notes, "Realism referred to the detailed treatment of the given world of people and things, this then being the limit of its vision: the ordinary, the everyday, no great—heroic, epic—figures or events; just the *human* comedy" (28). Nineteenth-century realist painters such as Gustave Courbet and Jean-François Millet captured honestly the essence of everyday people and situations in their works of art, and, interestingly, most nineteenth-century artists seemed plagued by the same question: "Where can truth be found?" (Vogt 130). For painters and writers labeled as realists, then, truth was found in the portrayal of the mundane life of everyday citizens.

However, Flaubert's literary art had "nothing to do with movements or schools" (Heath 29). Therefore, Flaubert did not choose to limit himself to realism in his writing of *Madame Bovary*, but this technique did offer him an alternative to the "empty rhetoric" (Heath 30) of romanticism with which he had previously engaged. In fact, the kind of realism Flaubert exhibited in his novel transcended genre and even literature itself, as it was all too familiar to him as a middle-class Frenchman living in the French countryside. Flaubert even despised it because he endured daily the kind of reality he was describing, yet he embraced "realism as aim"

in the execution of his literary art (Heath 29). As "the ultimate middle-class art," Flaubert's realism "[found] its subjects in bourgeois life and manners" (Holman 433). His own aesthetic guidelines do not necessitate the low subjects of realism but rather focus on the way ideas are presented. He confesses, "It is for this reason that there are no noble subjects or ignoble subjects; from the standpoint of pure Art one might almost establish the axiom that there is no such thing as a subject, style in itself being an absolute manner of seeing things" (301). Especially in *Madame Bovary*, one can observe that "the novel's realism does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it" (Watt 11). While Flaubert may not necessarily be concerned about displaying truth, he does "[attempt] to portray all the varieties of human experience" (Watt 11) through the style and artfulness of his writing.

It is clear that poetics were indeed important to Flaubert; he composed his greatest work, *Madame Bovary*, with extreme care, and he was ultimately willing to go to trial to maintain the integrity of his text, which for him was an *objet d'art*. Because Flaubert agonized over each word he placed on paper, he often only wrote five to six pages per week of *Madame Bovary*, choosing to write, rewrite, and revise the work for fifty-six months until he believed it was ready for publication. Flaubert first began *Madame Bovary* in 1851 after receiving a challenge from two trusted friends to abandon his overly romantic work in progress, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*. In 1856, Maxime Du Camp, one of Flaubert's friends who originally encouraged him to pursue the writing of *Madame Bovary*, printed Flaubert's novel in his literary magazine, the *Revue de Paris*. Much to Flaubert's dismay, before publication, the *Revue* wanted to omit from print about thirty passages and provocative details from the novel, but Flaubert thought this alteration impossible. Ultimately, the *Revue* opted to omit some of the details of the intimate carriage ride shared between Emma and Léon, which undoubtedly displeased Flaubert.

Although Flaubert disliked the attacks made against his work, he considered a trial a small price to pay for his literary art to prevail. Toward the end of *Madame Bovary*'s serial publication, the *Revue* received several letters of concern from its subscribers who stated their shock regarding the immoral content of Flaubert's work. Consequently, Flaubert, as well as Du Camp and those in charge of the *Revue*, were tried by the French Department of Justice for attacking both public and religious morality; the passages that attacked public morality were those that revealed the "glorification of adultery" (LaCapra 37), while those passages that assaulted religious morality were those that placed mundane objects and actions on the same level as sacred ones. Since the charges remained vague, the prosecution sought to specify their qualms by conducting a critical reading of the novel in the courtroom while pointing to specific passages that illustrated the lack of morality in Flaubert's work. Although Flaubert's trial brought him almost immediate fame, and although he was eventually acquitted, he grew distressed and disillusioned over it. Flaubert likely believed the trial mocked his quest for pure art through his writing, especially after struggling so long in his quest for the right word (*le mot juste*). Truly, although the public began to enjoy Flaubert's work after his trial, he remained defiant about any changes being made to his novel and defended his masterpiece unapologetically, saying that he only attempted to portray bourgeois morality as it truly was. Before Flaubert's trial, the *Revue* urgently requested that Flaubert omit still more passages from his work, but Flaubert's reply reveals his attachment to his novel as a work of art: "I consider that I have already done a great deal, and the *Revue* thinks that I should do still more. I will do nothing: I will not make a correction, not a cut; I will not suppress a comma; nothing, nothing! But if the *Revue de Paris* thinks that I am compromising it, if it is afraid, the simple thing to do is to stop publication of *Madame Bovary* at once" (qtd. in Steegmuller 221). Flaubert ultimately

believed that eliminating realistic and potentially offensive details from his work was equal to destroying the work as a complete unit and as a work of art. However, although Flaubert endured this intense struggle, the publicity resulting from public trial led to the publication of his novel in book form and finally to serious literary and scholarly recognition for Flaubert.

Despite the uproar surrounding *Madame Bovary*'s initial publication, two French writers and critics, Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve and Charles Baudelaire, strongly supported Flaubert's work. In his weekly book review in May 1857, shortly after the publication of Flaubert's work in a full volume, Sainte-Beuve, asserting that the disputes over Flaubert's book had never been strictly "literary," wrote, "*Madame Bovary* is first and foremost a book, a carefully composed book, amply premeditated and totally coherent, in which nothing is left to chance and in which the author, or, better, the painter does exactly what he intends to do from beginning to end" (392). Sainte-Beuve's admission that Flaubert was a "painter" clearly reveals the respect that existed at the time of *Madame Bovary*'s publication for this literary work of art. Although Baudelaire admitted that the trial helped to bring acclaim to Flaubert's novel, he stated that Flaubert's "excellent" (403) work would have jarred and inspired the public even without a trial. In the end, Flaubert believed he received a complete return for his work and for his trial after reading the reviews of these critics.

In addition to becoming an overnight success in France, Flaubert's work influenced those in the United States, and today Flaubert's work maintains an impact beyond Europe's borders. The continual study and critique of Flaubert's novel helped later writers to embrace his aesthetics, as Flaubert's influence on the Aesthetic Movement and particularly on Oscar Wilde is noteworthy. To Flaubert, art was more important than life, and just as that ideal is portrayed in his most acclaimed novel, it has been embraced by readers and critics since the time of *Madame*

Bovary's publication.

Gustave Flaubert's ability to portray beautifully "[t]he surface details, the common actions, and the minor catastrophes of a middle-class society" (Holman 434) set a precedent for modern literature in the nineteenth century. In *Madame Bovary*, he consistently utilizes concrete details to depict characters, settings, and concepts. His familiarity with his own province and his keen awareness of reality influenced his literary style and enabled him "not only to determine . . . broad tonality but also to select those minute elements which serve, almost unnoticed, to give accents to a landscape" (Bart 38). As a result of these realistic details, Flaubert's prose comes to life through his description. Reflecting on Flaubert's novel, Flannery O'Connor fondly describes a point where Flaubert uses detail to portray a "very concrete clerk in his list slippers" (70). As she reminds her own readers that fiction has to do with "everything human" (68), she also asserts, "It's always necessary to remember that the fiction writer is much less immediately concerned with grand ideas and bristling emotions than he is with putting list slippers on clerks" (70). It is in this way, then, that Flaubert values and "praise[s] characterization" (Holman 434) in his work. The reader of Flaubert may not believe that the intricate details present in his work are even significant in regard to what Emma actually experiences; however, Flaubert's careful attention to such detail helped him to "create a believable village to put Emma in" (O'Connor 70). Thus, these detailed descriptions are what make Flaubert's literary style so magnificent and well-known.

Flaubert's unique literary style in *Madame Bovary* contributed to "the successful embodiment of a new esthetic" (Bart 203) in literature, and it is partly because of these aesthetic principles seen in Flaubert's work that it is recognized as the first modern novel. Although these poetics are implicit in his own writing, discovering and describing them allows for a more

holistic understanding of Flaubert's works, of the writing process, and of the novel as a genre. Although Flaubert implemented both romantic and realistic methods when portraying his subjects in his writing, his poetics are most clearly revealed in his most realist works and especially in *Madame Bovary*, his first published work. With the publication of *Madame Bovary*, realism, or "the most original feature of the novel form" (Watt 11), marked Flaubert's style and colored for him all "manner[s] of seeing" (Flaubert 301) as a writer. Since Flaubert clearly devoted his literary career to following his own aesthetic principles, and since those aesthetic views greatly influenced his writing, students of Flaubert's works can greatly benefit from uncovering, understanding, and even implementing the poetics found in his most acclaimed works of literature.

Chapter Two—The Truthful Author as Artist: The Poetics of the Impersonal Authorial Voice

Flaubert led an interesting life for a writer of his time period. He lived at home with his mother in Croisset for most of his life, never married, and despite the pressure he received from his colleagues to move to Paris, a center of intellect and culture, he refused to do so; when composing his works, he believed that he could best portray French provincial life while living such an existence. Many critics agree that Flaubert's immersion of himself in his work so fully from home contributed greatly to the realism of his depictions of French culture and countryside in his writing. Yet, Flaubert set himself apart from other French realist writers, such as Honoré de Balzac, through his unique narrative style, and in his works, he provides the reader access to his characters' consciousness through his narration, using an authorial voice that is "present everywhere and visible nowhere" (LaCapra 128). In his works that display his realism, he chooses not to allow his voice to intrude in his writing, and instead he distances himself from his characters and portrays their experiences in an objective manner; it is this objectivity that contributes to the realistic display of **"**bourgeois life and manners" (Holman 433). Flaubert's omniscient and objective narrative style, consistently and artfully displayed, is a significant aspect of his poetics.

Flaubert's commitment to objective narration allowed him to remain outside his story and to uncover the art of his realism. In Flaubert's writing, "realism becomes impartial, impersonal, and objective" (Auerbach 482). The realistic elements of Flaubert's text reveal the biases and judgments of his characters, yet, curiously, Flaubert incorporates much less dialogue than he does description into his text. While dialogue often is an effective and realistic way to portray the thoughts and opinions of characters, it actually is more subjective than it is objective, as it

displays a character's subjective perception absent the commentary or perspective of an outside narrator. By using an omniscient but practically invisible narrator to tell his story, Flaubert attempts to depict the opinions and judgments of his characters impartially, from a distance; his narrator still presents characters' convictions from their points of view, but because he remains outside the events of the story, he is able to display the true consciousness of Flaubert's characters in a way that the characters themselves cannot. In fact, the descriptive elements of his work are the "[l]ong units" that "emphasize the landscape of thought" (Porter and Gray 99) of his most significant characters. As an author, he is god-like and remains outside the world of his novel, seeing and revealing all that he can about his fictional world; yet, his judgments, opinions, and conscious remarks only occasionally appear within his works, and when they do, they are usually subtle. Without his own intrusions that would add subjectivity to his work and that would affect his readers' judgments, his portrayals of the events of his stories and of the lives of his characters adhere to realism's attempt at objectivity. Flaubert's writing, then, forms "a text in which no one speaks," not even the author, and thus remains "a text which is simply *written*" (Culler 110). Because Flaubert's narrator remains consistently impartial as well as omnipresent, he serves as a window for the objective portrayal of the internal struggles of the characters in his works. In his writing, "[Flaubert's] innovation was this: the author would no longer identify with the characters, inhabiting their world in the form of a personal narrator, but must remain apart from it and them. The truth about human society could only be observed from without, not lived from within" (Gans 5). The "truth" that Flaubert concerns himself with in his writing is the reality and actuality of everyday people and events, and his fidelity to his narrative style allows him to portray that truth effectively. In fact, "By refusing either to endorse or to condemn [the] dreams [of his characters], the author suggests that within the world no truer perspective is

available" (Gans 7).

One particular aspect of Flaubert's narrative technique is dubbed free indirect discourse, or *style indirect libre*, and this type of narration allows multiple voices to seep through his writing. This technique includes the implementation of varying perspectives, and these perspectives are mainly those of his characters. Instead of these perspectives appearing in dialogue, however, the consciousness of a particular character is rendered by the narrator, as he takes part in both "the narration of a character's silent thought and the analogous rendering of spoken discourse" (Oberman 2). Jane Austen invokes a similar style, and particularly in *Emma*, at times it is difficult for the reader to determine a break between the narrator's voice and Emma Woodhouse's voice. This difficulty mainly occurs because "their voices share a similar style and vocabulary, and this connection helps the narrator to fuse her voice to Emma's less noticeably" (Oberman 4). In like manner, Flaubert may frequently fuse his voice with his heroine's voice, and thus his narrator at times only appears to be objective.

In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert's narrator utilizes free indirect discourse by reporting the details of his tale from a point outside the world of his text, and he consistently refuses to comment on the story or to pass judgment on his characters, instead allowing the reader to judge his characters based on what they see through those characters' eyes. When the narrator does reveal judgment in the work, he does so through the descriptions of the thoughts and impressions of his characters, and the frequent shifts in character perspective help to highlight Flaubert's desire for objective narration. Loosely defined, "[f]ree indirect style is reported speech masquerading as narrative. It means a break in continuity and a certain shock to the reader. It is essentially an oblique construction and provides a discreet but effective vehicle for irony and ambiguity and for the description of reveries, dreams, and hallucinatory states" (Ullmann 116).

Free indirect discourse develops mainly out of a transition from direct discourse to indirect discourse and then to the style that characterizes Flaubert's writing. For example, the difference between direct discourse, indirect discourse, and free indirect discourse is equivalent to the difference between the statements "He said (thought), 'I am happy,'" "He said (thought) that he was happy," and "He was happy" (Ramazani 38). The latter transition from direct discourse to free indirect discourse generally "entails the deletion of the introductory verb phrase" (Ramazani 38). In this way, the dreams of Flaubert's characters seem much more permanent when they are depicted through Flaubert's use of this type of discourse than when they are depicted through dialogue, as this technique successfully "blurs the demarcation between narration and experience, perception and deception" (Ramazani 44). Flaubert's presentation of many viewpoints in the novel keeps any one character's perspective from dominating and contributes to the complexity of his work, especially regarding moral judgment:

> The modulations of perspective or voice, which may at times be abrupt or extreme, create such a multiplicity of points of view that they seem to cancel out or erase one another. . . . This effect is in one sense that of language writing or speaking itself but not emanating from a secure or fixed source and not communicating a precise message or evaluative position with respect to characters and events. (LaCapra 147).

When considering Flaubert's use of free indirect discourse, readers needs to understand this technique "in the larger context of shifting narrative perspectives that typifies his approach to narration" (LaCapra 127). Flaubert's use of free indirect discourse in his writing, then, showcases his objectivity and omnipresence as an author but also influences the apparent lack of a moral center in his fictional works. His novel does not include a sole character who sets the

moral standard for the work; rather, his reader chooses to judge Emma's and other characters' behavior as immoral as a result of the narrator's portrayal of that behavior in an objective manner. In fact, Flaubert went to trial for his novel largely because the work did not encourage a certain moral standard; however, if he had included a moral center in his work, he would have violated his commitment to his objective narrative style.

To understand and appreciate the significance of Flaubert's narrative style in *Madame Bovary*, it is helpful to contrast him with contemporary novelists. Flaubert was a French author who wrote during England's Victorian period. It was common among his Victorian counterparts to intrude upon a story with their own authorial commentary. While this technique also allows for enjoyable reading and still remains a reliable form of narration, Flaubert as a narrator remained outside his narrative, and his free indirect discourse may be as close to objective reporting as one can observe in nineteenth-century literature. While Flaubert remained an "apostle of detachment" (Lowe 15) in his narration, other writers of his time, especially Victorian authors, addressed their readers directly:

> The "terms" on which nineteenth-century fictional narrative thereby sought to stand with the consuming public are to be marked by the way these texts singled out readers figured alternately as "gentle," "worthy," "courageous," "courteous," "benevolent," "cultivated," "kind," "good," other-wise merely "general," or all things to be wished at once, as, for instance, in "Dear, good, gentle, Christian friends." (Stewart 136)

George Eliot is well-known for her sympathetic authorial intrusions, and in *Middlemarch*, "Eliot enters into the intimacies of [her characters'] lives by way of running commentary" (Smalley 3). Where Eliot would comment, however, "Flaubert provides only symbolic suggestions" (Garrett

67), and all of his energy is "channeled into rendering . . . the experience of a single obscure village doctor's wife and the tract of the outer world that she inhabits" (Smalley 52). Flaubert sets a precedent for modern literature with his focus on his title character and with an objective but extensive portrayal of her inner consciousness (Smalley 2), and his commitment to this type of narration in some way displays the "final excommunication [of direct address] from the modernist novel as text" (Stewart 171).

Flaubert's loyalty to his objective and omniscient narrative style is displayed most clearly in *Madame Bovary*. While the narrator's third-person objective voice remains evident throughout the novel, Flaubert's opening scene is characterized by an unusual rendering of a first-person account. His narrator begins the novel by introducing his audience to Charles Bovary as a young schoolboy, but the narrator is actually one of Charles's fellow classmates: "We were in study hall when the headmaster entered, followed by a new boy not yet in school uniform and by the handyman carrying a large desk" (Flaubert 1037). In this way, Flaubert's narrator is able to join in when the class ridicules the boy, yelling "Charbovari!" (1038). Shortly after this incident, Flaubert's narrator switches to a third-person perspective, and instead of adding confusion to the narrative, the narrator's brief use of first person allows him to take on a "demoralizing" role (Culler 112). This narrative strategy helps to foreshadow the narrator's belittling of Charles throughout the novel, but by abandoning the first person narrator early in the work, Flaubert also reveals his need not to include an explicit moral standard in his work. Within the narrative, a "*process* of rejection is displayed in those opening pages of *Madame Bovary*" (Culler 110), as Flaubert's narrator ultimately discards the first-person point of view early in the novel, perhaps to make a particular point about Flaubert's narrative style:

> Having allowed us to enter this novel in the traditional way and to set about

> identifying the narrator who speaks, the text stops short by telling us that the narrator we have identified knows nothing about the events in question, can remember nothing about the character whose history we have taken him to be recounting. There may be a suggestion that most novels are unrealistic in the amount of detail the narrators are supposed to recall, but that is very much incidental to the main point: that the text is not narrated by anyone and that the attempt to read it as if it were can lead only to confusion. (Culler 112)

The opening of Flaubert's novel appears problematic on the surface, but if one reads this scene with Flaubert's narrative preferences in mind, he or she will recognize the first instance of a shift in perspective that contributes to the narrator's attempt at objectivity.

Flaubert's narrative style in *Madame Bovary* particularly allows the reader to catch a glimpse of his main characters' thoughts, dreams, and illusions presented from the objective narrator's point of view, but it also allowed him to depict the everyday subject matter of the novel in an artful manner. Flaubert frequently discussed the progress of *Madame Bovary* with his mistress Louise Colet, and in a letter he recounted to her his struggle with the composition of his novel in comparison to the ease he experienced when drafting his earlier work, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*:

> Now I am in an entirely different world, that of close observation of the most trivial details. My attention is fixed on the mouldy mosses of the soul. It is a long way from the mythological and theological extravagances of Saint Antoine. And just as the subject is different, so I am writing in an entirely different way. I do not want my book to contain a single subjective reaction, nor a single reflection by the author. I think it will be less lofty than Saint Antoine as to ideas (which I

> don't think very important), but it will perhaps be stronger and more extraordinary, without seeming so. (qtd. in Steegmuller, "Letters" 155)

The content of Flaubert's novel is anything but grand, but his presentation of those items and people associated with everyday bourgeois life is thoughtful and magnificent. For instance, his depiction of Emma's thoughts early in the novel after her wedding is filled with beautiful metaphors that fully display Emma's consciousness, yet the descriptions of Emma's despair still originate from some point outside of her:

> She reflected occasionally that these were, nevertheless, the most beautiful days of her life—the honeymoon days, as people called them. To be sure, their sweetness would be best enjoyed far off, in one of those lands with exciting names where the first weeks of marriage can be savored so much more deliciously and languidly! The post chaise with its blue silk curtains would have climbed slowly up the mountain roads, and the postilion's song would have reechoed among the cliffs, mingling with the tinkling of goat bells and the dull roar of waterfalls. They would have breathed the fragrance of lemon trees at sunset by the shore of some bay; and at night, alone on the terrace of a villa, their fingers intertwined, they would have gazed at the stars and planned their lives. It seemed to her that certain portions of the earth must produce happiness—as though it were a plant native only to those soils and doomed to languish elsewhere. (Flaubert 1060)

Flaubert's narrator utilizes free indirect discourse in this passage with his declarations of "[s]he reflected" and "[i]t seemed to her" to reveal Emma's regret that Charles does not value those items that characterize upper-class life and that her marriage is not an idyllic love scene in a

romantic novel. If Emma were able to articulate her beliefs and feelings or to recognize her own petty desires, then her dialogue would be sufficient to describe her disappointment after her marriage. However, Emma does not possess the ability to articulate what Flaubert describes, and thus Flaubert's narrator can shed light on Emma's unbearable anguish from outside the story through his omniscient and objective narration.

Throughout the novel, various shifts in narrators frequently provide insight into a character's motives, but the narrative style of *Madame Bovary* aims to leave any type of judgment up to the reader. While composing his novel, "Flaubert strove for an impartiality which would allow the facts, presented in a style in harmony with them, to determine the reader's reaction and his final judgment. One critical element in that reaction and judgment is aesthetic distance for the reader, which is in turn a reflection of Flaubert's own attitude toward the material" (Bart, "Art, Energy, and Aesthetic Distance" 85). Shortly after Flaubert's narrator describes Emma's dissatisfaction with her marriage to Charles, he states, "But even as they were brought closer together by the details of daily life, she was separated from him by a growing sense of inward detachment" (1060), and this detachment imitates Flaubert's narrative style, which detaches one character's consciousness from another. It is clear to the reader that Emma allows this increasing detachment to occur between her and Charles, but the narrator does not fault Emma for this occurrence. As evidenced in Flaubert's work, "the author, detached from his fictional universe . . . neither share[s] nor condemn[s] her illusions" (Gans 5). By embracing the aesthetic distance that Flaubert's narrator models in the text, Flaubert's readers can attempt to make an objective judgment of this frustrated, middle-class married woman based on the detailed accounts of her inner struggles presented by the narrator throughout the work.

However, while objective narration remains Flaubert's goal, one could argue that he does

not entirely embrace objectivity in his account and thus does not fully arrive at his goal. Like Austen, Flaubert likely "fus[es] [his heroine's] subjectivity to the narrator's omniscience" (Oberman 2), and by blurring the lines between his narrator's voice and Emma Bovary's voice, he "manipulates readerly perceptions of [Emma's] character" (Oberman 4). Flaubert's reader remains more familiar with Emma than with Charles, for instance, and Flaubert may manipulate the shifting narrators in the account to portray a more sympathetic view of Emma. In this way, Flaubert "subtly undermines the reader's confidence in the objective value of the statements that appear to emanate from Emma's point of view but are given in the third-person, past tense of the narrative voice" (Oberman 3). It is quite possible, then, that Flaubert's narrator does not possess a completely objective voice, yet objectivity remains Flaubert's aim throughout his novel.

Instead of developing his own perceptions of his characters, Flaubert, through his narrator, allows the perceptions of particular characters to comment on other characters' experiences and desires. These depictions of characters' perceptions represent the various shifts in viewpoint that are present in Flaubert's narrative. Early in Emma's affair with Rodolphe, he is enamored with her as the object of his desire, but once Emma declares her love for him, he quickly loses interest in her. However, somewhat ironically, Emma grows increasingly attractive to Charles in the midst of her affair with Rodolphe:

> Never had Madame Bovary been as beautiful as now. She had that indefinable beauty that comes from happiness, enthusiasm, success—a beauty that is nothing more or less than a harmony of temperament and circumstances. Her desires, her sorrows, her experience of sensuality, her evergreen illusions, had developed her step by step, like a flower nourished by manure and by the rain, by the wind and the sun; and she was finally blooming in the fullness of her nature. (Flaubert

1153-54)

Interestingly, the context of this passage reveals that the narrator describes Emma from Charles's perspective, yet the narrator's objectivity helps the audience to comprehend the naïve conclusions that Charles draws about his wife. It is clear from the narrator's description that Emma's happiness results from her living in a romantic dream with her lover, but Charles remains oblivious to her interactions with Rodolphe. While his perception reveals the true source of Emma's pleasure, it masks his own inclination to be too trusting of his wife. Toward the conclusion of Flaubert's novel, Emma lies on her deathbed, and the narrator captures for one of the first times in the novel Emma's understanding of her husband's sincerity: "And in his eyes she read a love such as she had never known" (Flaubert 1229). Even though Charles appears naïve throughout the novel, in the moment of her death, Emma finally recognizes Charles's unconditional love for her. In this way, the narrator utilizes an objective view of Emma's perception to comment on the character of her husband. Throughout Flaubert's work, one could argue that the narrator actually "contest[s] the possession of Emma with Charles as well as with Emma's other men. He struggles with them for the right to describe her, to dress and undress her with words—a right that in the case of a fictional figure is tantamount to full possession. In a sense the narrator becomes one of Emma's men, fascinated by her . . . just as she becomes his creation" (LaCapra 156). Clearly, even though he remains outside the text, Flaubert's narrator becomes another storyteller among the many narrators present in the novel, and he utilizes the shifts in character perspective to attempt to give an impartial account of the story.

Flaubert's characters who act as "narrators" are not the only ones who tell the story of *Madame Bovary*; Flaubert's main narrator uses everyday objects to provide significant

commentary for the consciousness of the characters. Early in the novel, after Emma marries Charles and grows disenchanted with her marriage, the narrator reveals Emma's "chronic discomfort" (Auerbach 488) in his portrayal of "the most everyday situation imaginable" (Auerbach 488):

> But it was above all at mealtime that she could bear it no longer—in that small ground-floor room with its smoking stove, its squeaking door, its sweating walls and its damp floor tiles. All the bitterness of life seemed to be served up to her on her plate; and the steam rising from the boiled meat brought gusts of revulsion from the depths of her soul. Charles was a slow eater; she would nibble a few hazelnuts, or lean on her elbow and draw lines on the oilcloth with the point of her table knife. (Flaubert 1075)

The narrator uses the characteristics of the familiar objects and spaces associated with mealtime to highlight the dreariness and boredom that Emma experiences in her married life. Especially in this scene, "Flaubert describes [Emma's state of mind] in several pictures which portray Emma's world as it now appears to her; its cheerlessness, unvaryingness, grayness, staleness, airlessness, and inescapability now first become clearly apparent to her when she has no more hope of fleeing from it" (Auerbach 483). Even though Emma's disillusionment is clearly prominent in this passage, the narrator does not mention it explicitly but allows the objects to point to Emma's frustration and to her distaste for Charles. Flaubert's responsibility in his novel includes "selecting the events and translating them into language" through his narrator (Auerbach 486); however, the narrator is the one who speaks instead of Emma, giving expression to her inner thoughts and feelings. Her consciousness is the central theme of the meal she shares with her husband, and the objects which appear to have a significant role in the text are actually

"subordinated to the dominant subject, Emma's despair" (Auerbach 483). In this way, then, everyday items that characterize bourgeois life are consistent commentators in Flaubert's novel.

In a similar vein, the narrator's descriptions of landscapes highlight the moods and experiences of Flaubert's characters. When Emma enters into an affair with Léon, she goes to visit him every Thursday, and one afternoon, the narrator uses the landscape to illuminate Emma's anticipation of her meeting with her lover:

> [The] open fields swept upward again in a monotonous curve, merging at the top with the uncertain line of the pale painting: ships at anchor were crowded into one corner, the river traced its curve along the foot of the green hills, and on the water the oblong-shaped islands looked like great black fish stopped in their course. From the factory chimneys poured endless trails of brown smoke, their tips continually dissolving in the wind. The roar of foundries mingled with the clear peal of chimes that came from the churches looming in the fog. The leafless trees along the boulevards were like purple thickets in amongst the houses; and the roofs, all of them shiny with rain, gleamed with particular brilliance in the upper reaches of the town. Now and again a gust of wind blew the clouds toward the hill of Sainte-Catherine, like aerial waves breaking soundlessly against a cliff. (Flaubert 1195)

As Emma's carriage rolls through the countryside, the positive depictions of the landscape emphasize her elation at the thought of being with her lover, Léon, but some of the distinctive aspects of the landscape, such as the fog and the leafless trees, may hint that Emma's adulterous relationship will bring her only temporary fulfillment. As reflected in the narrator's description of the landscape during Emma's journey to Léon, landscape throughout the novel acts as

speechless commentary on the characters' thoughts and experiences.

Flaubert's unique narrative style offered him freedom from his own opinions and judgments; "[w]ithin the . . . language of free indirect discourse, the beginnings of a process of liberation are revealed" (Gans 109). While Flaubert's narrator remains omnipresent throughout *Madame Bovary*, he also attempts to tell the story from an objective point outside the world of the text in order to recount the subjective convictions and perceptions of the characters faithfully and sufficiently but without passing judgment. Flaubert's commitment to his narrative style reveals that this type of narration is no easy task for a novelist, as he "must bring unity and meaning" into his intricate depiction of various perspectives and shifting viewpoints (Bart 85). Although he aims for objectivity in his writing, his views occasionally seem to collapse into those of his heroine, making objectivity difficult to maintain throughout his work. While the facts displayed in the narration actually uncover the characters' thoughts and experiences, Flaubert's writing goes beyond simply communicating facts (Ryken 139), as he portrays the world of his novel quite beautifully, indeed more beautifully than his characters could depict it. Good literature like *Madame Bovary*, then, aims for objective narration that does not sacrifice the beauty of the written word. As a result of Flaubert's intricate narrative style, the reader is free to respond to Emma Bovary as he or she pleases, with the help and guidance of an omniscient yet invisible narrator.

Chapter Three—Poetics and the Power of Language: Flaubert's Need for Artful Structure

Just as Flaubert's impersonal authorial voice is rooted in language's power to communicate truth, Flaubert recognized the way that the structure of language also enhances language's power to communicate, and he demonstrates the power of his own prose through his work's "highly artistic structure" (Nabakov 152). Understanding the structure of Flaubert's works, or their "planned framework" (Holman 513), including the parts of his works that make up the whole as well as the elements that connect those parts, can help uncover the unique artistry of his literature. Flaubert displayed care and deliberation in planning his works, and the discipline he demonstrated through creating his literature was more deliberate than that of other writers. The "planning phase" of the writing process allowed him to perfect the structure of his works (Williams 168). The time Flaubert allotted for the completion of his novels and short stories also allowed him to create for each of his stories a meaningful arrangement, which is a more narrowed aspect of structure and refers to the organization of the parts of the work. An additional poetic that underlies Flaubert's writing, then, is its purposeful structure that results from discipline and planning.

Part of the beauty of Flaubert's writing results from his concern for its structural precision. Flaubert's commitment to the intense labor required for structuring his works reveals that his writing was exact and was never completed in a hurry. The overall structure of his literary works is determined by the arrangement of their "formal properties," such as their plot and grammatical elements; for example, "individual scenes" and "carefully balanced sentences" (Falconer) are some of the parts that make up the plot of a novel, and in Flaubert's case, one could argue that "the plot itself is the structural element" of his works (Holman 513). It is evident in Flaubert's correspondence that structuring his stories was extremely important and

personal to him, and part of structuring his works included organizing or arranging their plot elements in a particular way. Flaubert's concern for this arrangement or order can be observed in a letter to Louise Colet, where he particularly admonishes her for "asking [him] to violate the inner poetics that determined [the] pattern" or arrangement of his work ("Letters" 310). On the other hand, structure in general underlies the aesthetics of a work, and Flaubert's fiction displays the way that "[b]eauty is sometimes the shape of the book, the book as a whole. . ." (Forster 152). Within a narrative, structure typically is "the most reliable as well as the most revealing key to the meaning of the work" (Holman 514), and Flaubert's structure only enhances the meaning and purpose of his writing.

While the overall structure involves the shape of the work as a whole, a work's arrangement reflects the order of particular plot elements. Flaubert's arrangement of *Madame Bovary* is one of the structural elements of the novel and helps to emphasize those plot elements that are not evident on the surface and that are most significant to his overall purpose; his ordering of his work especially uncovers the significance of the "threes" apparent throughout the novel. Three is an important number to Flaubert, as his novel is divided into three parts which each include "numbered but untitled chapters" (Porter and Gray 100). The three-part structure of *Madame Bovary* helps to reveal the artistic achievement in Flaubert's work. When most people read a work of literature, "[t]wo-ness is natural to [them]; three-ness suggests an external world whose complexity often exceeds the limitations of [their] bodies and [their] understanding" (Porter and Gray 95). Readers expect symmetry in the surrounding world and in a literary work, so the "three-ness" of Flaubert's novel interrupts the traditional relationship between author and reader in such a way as to introduce the possibility of a split perspective, which ultimately underlies irony and ambiguity. While third occurrences in Flaubert's plot are certainly

significant, the third appearance of an event, character, or opportunity is portrayed as negative rather than positive, uncovering Flaubert's pessimistic attitude toward the subject matter of his novel. For instance, Emma tries three times without success to seek happiness and to escape boredom, first by marrying Charles, then by seeking a friendship with Léon, and finally by entering into adulterous relationships with both Rodolphe and Léon (Porter and Gray 96). These steps Emma takes propel her closer to her own demise, and the order of these important plot elements points to Emma's imminent downfall and helps the reader to recognize her increasingly flawed behavior.

Also, the order and manner in which characters and objects appear in Flaubert's work help to unveil a "dramatic progression" (Porter and Gray 102) that signals Emma's downfall. For instance, the third time that the blind man appears in Flaubert's work is his most climactic appearance, and the song he sings toward the conclusion of the novel serves to haunt Emma at the moment of her death (Flaubert 1235). Flaubert utilizes various motifs and objects that occur in groups of three to give significance to his story; for example, Emma becomes the third individual in the novel to take the name Madame Bovary, and her adoption of this title actually contributes to the loss of her own identity. Concepts that appear frequently throughout the novel, such as references to Emma's habitual reading of romantic novels, help to highlight the monotony and "inauthenticity" present in her life and character (Porter and Gray 102). The structure of the characters and symbols within Flaubert's novel, then, helps to depict Emma's gradual demise.

Flaubert's deliberate structuring of his plot elements also reveals his skilled use of irony. Throughout *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert showcases the "reduplicating" of situations in order to disclose unexpected irony in characters' beliefs and perceptions (Porter and Gray 100). For

instance, all of the characters in adulterous relationships become disillusioned by adultery; in fact, Emma is surprised to discover in her affair with Rodolphe "'all the platitudes of marriage'" (Porter and Gray 96). These "situational echoes" throughout Flaubert's work are consistently ironic, and because of this consistent structure or framework, as the novel progresses, the reader expects to observe the failure of Emma's relationships (Porter and Gray 96). Her dependence on her two lovers only drives them further from her, and when Rodolphe ends his affair with Emma abruptly by giving her a letter, she nearly allows herself to die, and this scene is echoed in her eventual suicide toward the conclusion of the novel (Porter and Gray 100-01). Interestingly, this irony becomes apparent to all but Emma and her lovers.

The way Flaubert manipulates grammar uncovers another structural aspect of his work, and his manipulation of language through his attention to grammar contributes to the fluidity of the book's style. Marcel Proust notes that Flaubert excels at "express[ing] the continuity of time and its unity" in his writing (qtd. in Nabakov 173). Particularly, Flaubert orients his readers to his use of time in *Madame Bovary* through his variation of tenses. Tense generally is one aspect of syntax, which is an element of grammar as a "level of structural organization. . . . In this sense, grammar is the study of the way words, and their component parts, combine to form sentences" (Crystal 208). Throughout the novel, "imperfects ('he was going') are blended with . . . past tenses to create 'typical' scenes that seem to be both uniquely taking place at a given moment and to be repeated an indefinite number of times" (Gans 7). These clever tense combinations not only reveal the vividness of a particular scene in Flaubert's text but also continually emphasize the flow of ideas and actions in his work. His consistent use of the imperfect tense may also influence his proclivity in his plot structure to duplicate situations, especially ironic ones.

Not surprisingly, Flaubert's "carefully calculated" structure (Flaubert, "Letters" 305) is not just limited to *Madame Bovary* but also plays a large role in his short story "A Simple Heart." The title refers to Flaubert's main character, Félicité, who is a servant girl in the house of her mistress, Madame Aubain. Félicité's life seems quite simple, as she always does what she is told and constantly displays compassion for her mistress and for the children she has a responsibility to care for. However, shortly into Flaubert's tale, both Félicité and Madame Aubain experience tragic losses, with Félicité losing her nephew Victor at sea and Madame Aubain losing her daughter Virginie due to a serious illness. Unfortunately, the losses do not stop there: other loved ones pass away, Madame Aubain becomes unable to pay for her home, and Félicité loses her sense of vision, her hearing, and her beloved parrot, Loulou.

Although this string of losses highlights the main plot of Flaubert's tale, the overall shape of his work, as a representation of the story's structure, gives greater meaning to the losses that the characters experience. In "A Simple Heart," Flaubert disregards the conventions of traditional storytelling and structures his story and the events and characters within it according to the figure of what John R. O'Connor calls the "double cone" (812). Throughout Flaubert's story, the series of misfortunes and trials that Madame Aubain and Félicité face seem to be strung together haphazardly and seem to lack the causal connections found within the typical plot of a short story. To Flaubert's reader, Madame loses her daughter and Félicité experiences the death of her nephew for what seems to be no apparent reason. However, the chain of personal losses during the first half of the tale gives the story the structure of a downward or "diminishing spiral" (O'Connor 814), and this "shape" accompanies the sense of increasing loss in the story.

Although a physical sense of loss pervades Flaubert's story, a steady sense of mental and spiritual gain develops later in the story and is extremely important to the shape of the tale as a

whole. After Félicité loses most of what is familiar to her, including her parrot, she has Loulou stuffed, and her fascination with the stuffed parrot begins to grow until he becomes her most important possession. As the story continues, Félicité's physical condition steadily worsens, but her dreams become greater, and her mental clarity steadily increases. As would seem fitting, Flaubert includes in the conclusion of his tale an account of the most permanent loss, Félicité's death. However, the description of her death is nothing like one would expect:

> An azure vapor ascended to Félicité's room. She opened her nostrils, inhaling it with mystic delight; then closed her eyes. Her lips smiled. The beating of her heart grew slower and slower, each time more feeble, more gentle, as a fountain is exhausted, as an echo disappears; and when she drew her last breath, she fancied that she saw, in the opening heavens, a gigantic parrot soaring above her head. (Flaubert, "A Simple Heart" 74)

It is significant that Flaubert includes so much sense imagery in the final scene of his story, when Félicité has lost her ability to use most of her senses. On the surface, it appears to Flaubert's audience that "depriving Félicité of her being" actually leads to his "reducing her to pure function" (Brombert 46). However, while the text on the surface exposes her moment of death, what occurs beneath the surface, in Félicité's mind, reveals that death for Félicité is actually a moment of gentle spiritual pleasure that contributes to the upward spiral structure that is present at the conclusion of the story (O'Connor 817). Flaubert uses imagery in his description to emphasize Félicité's death in her consciousness as the grandest, most magnificent moment of her life. Since Loulou was Félicité's most cherished treasure, the portrayal of the parrot escorting her into heaven remains extremely significant, as it indicates her spiritual condition even though her life has physically ended. The events of Flaubert's plot, then, demonstrate a downward spiral

of loss throughout the story, while the actions and ideas that occur internally within Félicité's mind and heart uncover a picture of an upward spiral that propels her toward a more fulfilling existence.

Flaubert's portrayal of a double cone structure in his story is exhibited most clearly in this final scene of "A Simple Heart." Flaubert's tale ultimately reveals that "[t]he description, in the final sentence, of Félicité's death is the moment toward which the whole text has been tending, the moment at which the apex of the diminishing spiral of her material life touches the center of the base of the now fully expanded spiral of her mental life" (O'Connor 817). The final line of the work lends itself to what Sartre calls "an imaginative totalization of the work" (qtd. in O'Connor 817). In this way, Flaubert's descriptions of Félicité's final heartbeats and her glimpse of the parrot act as the resolution of his tale. Flaubert even comments on his preferred narrative plot for any story, describing the fate of a character yet to be created: "The more unhappy his real life, the happier his dreams. The imagined world should accompany his life in the world, then become a part of it, and finally dominate—then the denouement" (qtd. in O'Connor 812). Everything that has previously been ripped from Félicité's life has now been restored to her with a final breath, and the downward spiral with which Flaubert found himself preoccupied through the portrayal of successive losses has by the end of the story reversed itself to display Félicité's mental and spiritual fulfillment, thus demonstrating the double cone structure.

In his most acclaimed short story, Flaubert cleverly reveals the dichotomy of his story's title and structure, as simplicity is "not at all . . . at the heart of 'Un cour simple,' whose success depends on a complex mastery of narrative techniques" (Brombert 52). The "suggested meanings" (Brombert 44) of Flaubert's tale, not obvious in a cursory reading of the text,

"straddle and intermingle" (Brombert 44) to reveal a complex and beautifully structured work of literature. In this way, the frustration that Flaubert experienced when writing and structuring his works reveals that "Flaubert's art is supremely self-conscious" (O'Connor 814). When writing "A Simple Heart," then, he remained loyal to its spiral structure, attempting to emphasize the story's mental and spiritual implications. Just as the story derives its true meaning from beneath the surface of the plot, Félicité demonstrates that the greatness of a person's life may also be found beneath the surface of his or her deteriorating physical condition.

While "A Simple Heart" as a story possesses a clear structural shape, *Madame Bovary*'s meaning and significance is reflected more clearly in the structure of the parts that make up the whole work rather than in the shape of the work itself. Interestingly, the despair that Emma Bovary experiences in her marriage and daily life and her subsequent destructive decisions are truly enhanced by the various structural intricacies of the novel. In this way, the subject matter and the structure of Flaubert's work complement one another. In contrast to *Madame Bovary*, the subject matter of "A Simple Heart," consisting of a seemingly inexplicable string of personal losses, actually contradicts the story's overall structure, which helps to reveal the heroine's mental and spiritual fulfillment and which portrays her selfless character in a positive light. The true meaning of this tale, then, is actually uncovered by the general structure or shape of the work. While Flaubert structures these two works differently, the structure of each work lends greater significance to the work's content and discloses the complexity of the main characters.

Throughout his literary career, Flaubert nearly idolized the writing process, agonizing over each word he composed in a process known as his search for *le mot juste*. The time he dedicated to this exploration naturally allowed him time to concern himself with the structure of his works. It is evident from his careful story structure that "writing for him was anything but a

matter of haste, that instead it was an activity involving the most painstaking labor, the most elaborate mental and physical toil taking place over an often seemingly interminable duration" (Gourgouris 344). It seems, then, that Flaubert's stories possess no accidental structures. However, it is important to remember that "[g]iven Flaubert's richly deserved reputation . . . it appears strangely paradoxical to recall that of the half-a-dozen major works . . . only *Madame Bovary* and the *Trois Contes* [*Three Tales*] impress as symbolically ordered, finely proportioned aesthetic wholes" (Porter 101). It is the deliberate structure of *Madame Bovary* and "A Simple Heart," then, that aids in providing these tales with artistic unity and in adding to the power of Flaubert's language.

Chapter Four—Poetics in Light of the "Cracked Kettle": The Limitations of Language

Despite his reliance on elements of language related to narrative point of view and structure, Flaubert struggled with the limitations of language, especially when attempting to compose his most well-known works of fiction. Because Flaubert understood so well that language was not wholly adequate for communicating truth, he obsessed over the style of his writing and especially over his word choice. In Flaubert's mind, "language seem[ed] to have reached a moment of crisis" (Israel-Pelletier 183), and it is noteworthy that throughout his correspondence and his literary works "there is always the despairing sense of the ultimate inadequacy of language, however tempered and hammered into justness of expression" (Ormsby 69). Flaubert remained acutely aware when writing that language only limited his options for recounting all the possible human emotions and experiences, and, as he wrote, he approached his aim of finding a solution to these limitations with an almost religious fervor. Flaubert's understanding of language often created a barrier for him as an author, and his response to the challenge that language presented him demonstrates Flaubert's creative ability to overcome the inadequacy of language through his utilization of both linguistic and thematic details and reflects the poetics that underlie his works.

Flaubert's composition of *Madame Bovary* most clearly displays his awareness of the inadequacies of language and his subsequent attempts to overcome the obstacles that accompany those shortcomings. As Flaubert wrote his novel, his obsession with overcoming these obstacles was particularly apparent in his search for *le mot juste*, or the right word, which reflects both the potentialities and limitations of language. During the five-year period in which he composed the novel, Flaubert locked himself in the room he designated for writing and wrote late into the evening, obsessing over the arrangement of his text and reading it aloud to ensure its perfection.

Louis Bouilhet, a close friend of Flaubert, even rehearsed Flaubert's sentences with him frequently (Steegmuller, *Flaubert and Madame Bovary* 241). While he remained predominantly concerned with the aesthetic quality of his work, Flaubert's commitment to the accuracy of his composition was almost scientific:

> Flaubert demands first a complete mastery of one's subject so as to be able to display what appears to be true. Precision is the virtue requisite here. . . . If you knew precisely enough what you wanted to say, you would say it well. This is the basis for his insistence upon finding "le mot juste." The purpose of this precise knowledge, really this erudition, is to ensure that, when the novelist selects the detail or two for which he can find room, they shall be the perfect ones. (Bart, "Flaubert's Concept of the Novel" 86)

Clearly, Flaubert remained dedicated to perfecting his prose. In his correspondence, he asserts, "Prose was born yesterday: you have to keep that in mind. Verse is the form par excellence of ancient literatures. All possible prosodic variations have been discovered; but that is far from being the case with prose" (qtd. in Steegmuller, "Louise Colet II" 159). The novel is a much newer literary form than poetry, and during his literary career, Flaubert saw an opportunity with his novel to create an original work of art, in part, through his precision in discovering the right word. Flaubert remained under intense pressure while composing *Madame Bovary*, and although this pressure was frequently self-imposed, he believed that successfully conquering language's inadequacies was the key to creating a work of literature that would be an accurate and detailed portrayal of the reality of bourgeois life but that would also possess an artful and beautiful essence. His correspondence with Louise Colet while composing his work reveals that for Flaubert, writing *Madame Bovary* was truly a daunting and exciting task: "The entire value of

my book, if it has any, will consist of my having known how to walk straight ahead on a hair, balanced above the two abysses of lyricism and vulgarity (which I want to fuse in a narrative analysis). . . . [W]hen I reflect that so much beauty has been entrusted to me . . . I am so terrified . . . and long to rush off and hide" (qtd. in Steegmuller, "Louise Colet II" 157). Flaubert's approach to the composition of his work reflects his struggles with the inadequacies of language and his longing for a style that is as "precise as the language of the sciences" (qtd. in Steegmuller, "Louise Colet II" 159).

Flaubert's characters even recognize and lament the limitations of their written and spoken words, and their conclusions about the inadequacy of language in some way reflect the beliefs of their author. In Part Two of *Madame Bovary,* after Rodolphe, Emma's lover, begins to grow bored with their affair, the narrator reveals Rodolphe's increasingly jaded attitude toward Emma's consistent and passionate declarations of love:

> He had had such things said to him so many times that none of them had any freshness for him. Emma was like all his other mistresses; and as the charm of novelty gradually slipped from her like a piece of her clothing, he saw revealed in all its nakedness the eternal monotony of passion, which always assumes the same forms and always speaks the same language. . . . Since he had heard those same words uttered by loose women or prostitutes, he had little belief in their sincerity when he heard them now: the more flowery a person's speech, he thought, the more suspect the feelings, or lack of feelings, it concealed. (Flaubert 1151)

Emma strongly believes that her words and claims of love awaken the same kind of passions in her lover, and they arouse new emotions within Emma as they relate to situations she has only

read about in books but has never before encountered personally. She mistakenly believes that the romances described in the novels she has read offer a true reflection of reality, and as a result, she echoes the language of the books she has read. However, to Rodolphe, such language is formulaic, and it only represents an endless droning that reminds him of the other lovers he has sought after in the past for his own satisfaction and gratification. The conclusions about language presented in this part of *Madame Bovary* compose one of the most famous passages in the novel and indeed echo Flaubert's own beliefs: "Whereas the truth is that fullness of soul can sometimes overflow in utter vapidity of language, for none of us can ever express the exact measure of his needs or his thoughts or his sorrows; and human speech is like a cracked kettle on which we tap crude rhythms for bears to dance to, while we long to make music that will melt the stars" (Flaubert 1151-52). Clearly, Flaubert, through his narrator and even through Rodolphe, demonstrates this curse of the "cracked kettle"; no linguistic description can fully account for what occurs in the depth of one's soul or for the truth behind human beliefs and perceptions, and too often language proves to be not wholly adequate for communication. In Emma's case, her words, as pre-existing forms that she naively espouses as her own, are received merely as empty and lifeless professions of "love."

Because of this view of language and in light of the "cracked kettle," in *Madame Bovary*, inanimate objects are "speechless players in the drama that unfolds" (Ormsby 70) and thus help to shape reality for Flaubert and his characters. Since Flaubert wrestled so frequently with the limitations that words placed on his own artistic expression, he chose to use everyday objects in his work to add insight into characters' experiences and internal conflicts. Particularly, various objects propel Emma's search for the romantic ideal in her life, and Flaubert's search for the right word seems to mirror Emma's search for the right symbols and objects with which to

surround herself. After the ball at Vaubyessard, Emma discovers a cigar case that supposedly belongs to the Viscount, and the discovery of this symbol of upper-class wealth acts as a catalyst for Emma's continually developing romantic dreams and longings. The narrator notes that "[o]ften when Charles was out she went to the closet and took the green silk cigar case from among the piles of linen where she kept it" (Flaubert 1070). The cigar case remains a constant reminder of the lifestyle Emma longs to live, and the narrator's references to the cigar case early in the work display Emma's desire to keep her dream alive even as she remains surrounded by unpleasant reminders of bourgeois life. Toward the end of the novel, while she is on her deathbed, Emma takes notice of a violet stole that the priest Bournisien carries with him when he comes to administer last rites for Emma. The narrator notes, "She slowly turned her face, and seemed overjoyed at suddenly seeing the purple stole—doubtless recognizing in this interval of extraordinary peace, the lost ecstasy of her first mystical flights and the first visions of eternal bliss" (Flaubert 1234). The stole represents Emma's fleeting romantic encounter with religion and her delight in the appearance of religious commitment even in her moment of death. Flaubert's use of objects to display reality in *Madame Bovary* demonstrates the "aesthetic potential of the ordinary" (Wise 39) in overcoming the inadequacies of language. Émile Zola, one of Flaubert's protégés, remarks that "[in Flaubert] the most trivial objects acquire voices; they are alive, they speak and all but move . . . . being observed by an author whose eye for such detail is the most remarkable feature of his talent" (qtd. in Ormsby 69). It is "in the ordinary use and experience of language" that words "set a limit to what we can mean and what we can be understood to mean" (Abrams), thus demonstrating language's inadequacy in unveiling the totality of reality. In response to this linguistic challenge, then, Flaubert's objects "rival the human protagonists in their eloquence" (Ormsby 70). In this way, details in *Madame Bovary*,

including both linguistic tags and material objects, reveal and shape the reality in which people live. In this case, the realistic details of the novel shape reality for both Flaubert and for his heroine.

Flaubert's careful structure and unique writing style offer particular solutions for communicating truth in the face of language's inadequacy. The "incessant play . . . of signification" (Abrams), especially evident in literary criticism since Derrida, is loosely connected to the crack in the kettle that Flaubert lamented in the nineteenth century. However, instead of believing that his meaning was impossible to determine, Flaubert responded to the cracked kettle by concerning himself with the aesthetic nature of his text. In this way, his style helped him to express what words alone could not, and his commitment to style helped to inspire him to meet language's challenge in his writing. His belief was that "[w]ords must connect justly with other words, but they must echo in actuality as well" (Ormbsy 70). For Flaubert, "[s]tyle was not only a barricade, imposing limit and order on the unruly; it was also the slow, stubborn, patient mending of that irreparable crack in the kettle" (Ormsby 70). Truly, as evidenced in Flaubert's writing and in his view of the writing process, "style was something physical" (Ormsby 69).

Flaubert's work to overcome the limitations of language in his writing helped to showcase the most artistic elements of his literature. Throughout his literary career, "Flaubert's interest in language, far removed from the linguistic preoccupations of the late twentieth century, hinged rather on his nearly religious belief that the fixation of *le mot juste* could lead to the revelation of [the] essence" of a work (Wise 35). He remained more devoted to "the concept which lay behind" his literary works than to the subject of a work (Bart 85); his literary style was of utmost importance to him and constituted this "concept," or the work's overall aesthetic

quality. As he wrote, Flaubert was guided by an undeniable sense of artistic purpose:

> Observation was a secondary virtue in literature, no more. The purpose of art . . . [was] to assimilate the True through the Beautiful as intermediary, for the aim of art [was] not the True but, beyond it, the Beautiful: not the technical details, the local color or the historical data, but the final *vérité artistique idéale*. When all the data were garnered, the work of art would still require the finding of its own particular poetics, which alone made the data important to the writer. (Bart, "Flaubert's Concept of the Novel" 86)

In this way, Flaubert's poetics give meaning to the subject and content of his works, and because they helped Flaubert to manipulate language in a way that benefited his writing, they helped lead him toward the aesthetic ideal that he desired so greatly to attain in his literature.

Since language presented so many difficulties to Flaubert while he composed his works, and since at times those difficulties even frustrated and alarmed him, he "[found] solace in crafting the perfect prose" (Williams 167). While writing *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert's physical habits were defined by a rigorous search for *le mot juste* as he sought to overcome the inadequacies of language. In a letter to Louise Colet written while Flaubert was working on the novel, he admitted that the "satisfaction of having found the [right] phrase" was "causing [him] the most exquisite pleasure" (qtd. in Steegmuller, "Louise Colet II" 158). Generally, his obsession with the style of his writing helped him to move toward the restoration of the cracked kettle, and his poetics helped to bring harmony to his style and to emphasize the beautiful quality or essence of his works. Fortunately, instead of discouraging him completely, the challenge presented to him by the inadequacy of language consistently inspired Flaubert to find new ways of expressing and shaping reality through the style of his prose. In this way, Flaubert's concern

with *le mot juste* and his careful attention to language, while serving individually as important elements of his poetics, ultimately contribute to his poetics as a whole.

Chapter Five—Flaubert's Acoustics: The Poetics of Musicality in the Prose of *Madame Bovary* and *The Sentimental Education*

In response to the limitations of language, Flaubert relied on his knowledge of music to help him infuse his prose with life and power. Although music may not be the first art form to cross one's mind when considering a poetics, for Flaubert, music remained part of his everyday existence and influenced how he composed, revised, and shared his literary works. Interestingly, Flaubert did not possess the educational or social background necessary for extensive musical training, yet some members of his family demonstrated musical ability (Jean-Aubry 14). While various nineteenth-century writers were renowned for their distaste for music, "instead of holding music in contempt, Flaubert found himself so engrossed by it at times that he had to be on his guard lest his work should reflect too precisely the pleasures of his musical experiences" (Jean-Aubry 13). His "long meditation[s] on art" (Tooke 170), including music, helped to influence Flaubert as an individual and artist, and his portrayals of music in his works often inform his characters' own experiences. As evidenced in his correspondence, the qualities that Flaubert believed made music beautiful are some of the same qualities underlying his poetics. For him, music was intimately connected to style, which not only influenced his poetics but also "provided a means of ordering the world" (Ormsby 70), particularly his literary one. Flaubert's works, and particularly his creation of "speaking" objects in his literature, as well as his view of the writing process, reveal that "style was not only physical in some vague sense; it was acoustic" (Ormsby 70). In this way, then, musicality of language can be considered one of Flaubert's poetics.

Any inspiring musical performance reveals that "[m]usic relies at every point on the interrelation of sounds to one another" (Begbie 54), and to Flaubert, no other truth seemed more

pertinent to the writing process. He worked as if he were a composer sounding out each note of his work, and he remained in his writing room late at night in order to read his drafts aloud and to ensure that each sentence sounded just right (Steegmuller 241). In this way, Flaubert was "in the habit of 'performing' his texts . . . as if they were a libretto" (Tooke 171). As a "language of the imagination" (Aronson ix), music served Flaubert as an inspiration for writing and as a significant subject within a literary work, and since his words often possess a musical quality, they actually "penetrate . . . deeply" when read (Begbie 86). Music in particular relates to Flaubert's writing and to his poetics because, according to his letters, he strove to give his prose both "rhythmic" and "sonorous" qualities that "give it the consistency of verse" (Flaubert, "Letters" 303-04).

Flaubert's habits in writing tie the "musical dimension" (Tooke 171) of his text directly to the composition of his most acclaimed work. While the writing of his earlier romantic work, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, came quite easily and quickly to him, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* developed as a result of five years of painstaking labor during which he repeatedly conducted an arduous search for *le mot juste*, and this search is related directly to the "acoustics" of Flaubert's texts. For Flaubert, "elements of sentence accord[ed] melodiously with their subject. Thus, the celebrated *mot juste* of Flaubert involve[d] far more than lexical correctness; it entail[ed] discovering the one word or phrase which [fit] the thing evoked with absolute accuracy while simultaneously linking it with the other words in the passage in a manner that please[d] the discerning ear" (Ormsby 66). Flaubert's own description of himself in one of his letters as "itch[ing] with sentences" (qtd. in Steegmuller 237) creates a curious word picture and sheds light on a man who was obsessed with the melody in his mind and who could not cease writing until that melody was perfected on paper. Flaubert was "a writer whose constant care was the

cadence of his phrases and the musicality of the words they contained. His correspondence shows him obsessed, to the point of a sort of martyrdom, with the choice of the sound-values and the melodious inflections of language" (Jean-Aubry 13). In his writing, he was constantly "tinkering obsessively with the nuts and bolts of French, weighing up syllables . . . [and] cocking his impossible ear to the purring of every syntactical position" (Ormsby 66) in order to ensure that his prose maintained a poetic quality that was aesthetically pleasing. Flaubert's writing demonstrates that, like music, good literature possesses "aesthetic integrity" (Begbie 51), which allows both author and reader to receive pleasure from how a text "sounds."

Flaubert admitted in his correspondence, "A good prose sentence should be like a good line of poetry—unchangeable, just as rhythmic, just as sonorous. Such at least, is my ambition. . ." (Flaubert, "Letters" 303-04). Music and poetry both try to harmonize elements that are in tension with one another into a beautiful whole; however, while it is the linguistic elements of poetry that give verse a musical quality, the harmony that results from resolution in music occurs apart from the lyrics or from language itself. In this way, music may serve the same purpose as poetry in helping to promote "harmony in discord" (Spitzer 415), but instrumental music especially harmonizes without the use of language and thus may not be as contingent on man's linguistic faculty as poetry is. Therefore, when Flaubert composed his works, creating prose that was akin to the "music" of poetry helped him to overcome the inadequacies of language. Furthermore, the scenes in Flaubert's novels where instrumental music is present in the background are extremely significant, as music itself, with its ability to harmonize apart from language, most likely further aided Flaubert in overcoming the very limitations of language.

In this way, then, the rhythm of Flaubert's text demonstrates one aspect of the musicality

of the form of his work. In *Madame Bovary*, his concern with the cadence of his writing and internal rhythm of his work can be observed in his frequent use of musical expressions and metaphors. For Flaubert, paying attention to the rhythm of his prose was an "ideal [technique] for [his] purposes in *Madame Bovary*" (Tooke 170), especially since the musical quality of his language helped him to express what he as an author could not express solely in words and since it allowed him to identify with his heroine, Emma Bovary. Generally, the rhythm present in Flaubert's writing is the kind of rhythm that "we can all hear and tap to" (Forster 164). When Emma consents to join Rodolphe for an afternoon horseback ride, the narrator describes this liberating and romantic experience in musical terms: "With her head slightly lowered, her hand raised and her right arm outstretched, she let herself go to the rhythmic rocking motion" (Flaubert 1131). Later, when Emma experiences an opera in Paris, the narrator utilizes a musical metaphor to portray her physical reactions to what occurs on stage: "Her heart drank its full of the melodious laments that hung suspended in the air against the sound of the double bases . . ." (Flaubert 1172). Throughout *Madame Bovary*, the "lovely waxing and waning" of this type of language helps "to fill [Flaubert's audience] with surprise and freshness and hope" (Forster 167). His obsession with the rhythm of his text as evidenced in various descriptions of Emma's experiences clearly demonstrates Flaubert's propensity to share Emma's longings and leads to the fairly consistent musicality of Flaubert's prose in his novel.

The rhythm present in the musicality of Flaubert's language helps to unify the sections of his work, and the overall unity of *Madame Bovary* is another aspect of the musicality of the novel's form. The novel consists of three parts, which Flaubert called structures or *mouvements* (Nabakov 126), and his terminology is reminiscent of the movements of a symphony. Just as a successful symphony results from "the relation between the three big blocks of sound which the

orchestra [plays]" (Forster 168), the success of Flaubert's work partly results from the harmony of its three parts due to the consistent musicality of his language. The artistic quality of Flaubert's novel was extremely important to him, and he longed to understand the parts of his work in relation to the greater context of the work as a whole (Williams 168). His ability to view the novel in its totality when composing aided him in producing "the range of artistic effects he desired" (Williams 168), and these effects help to tie his three movements together into one cohesive unit. To the reader, the unification of the movements of his work seems to resemble a general aesthetic impression that reveals the ability of Flaubert's prose as a whole to "lead a larger existence" (Forster 169). In other words, even though it is divided into specific parts or movements, like a symphony, the musical quality of Flaubert's entire novel leaves a lasting impression on the reader even long after the final note (or word) resounds.

Just as *Madame Bovary* includes countless musical references and allusions, music remains a significant element of Flaubert's plot and acts as the backdrop of the novel, particularly for the character of Emma Bovary. Especially in literature, music as a backdrop can be manipulated to illuminate the inner consciousness of characters; Flaubert utilizes music in *Madame Bovary* to uncover Emma's consciousness, but his use of music in the work also allows him to retreat into Emma's world. Since music is an "imitative art" (Begbie 81), it does not only complement Flaubert's imitative poetics, but it also influences Emma's response to high society and her desire to imitate her unfamiliar surroundings. With its "metaphysical overtones" (Aronson x), music aids in Emma's understanding of the world around her, and, more particularly, it helps her to fulfill her own longings for liberation from her middle-class existence, and these longings echo Flaubert's similar romantic desires. Indeed, music "plays a discreet, effective and prominent part in this picture of provincial manners . . ." (Jean-Aubry 19),

and music continually propels Emma's dreams of a romantic existence, acting as the catalyst for her desires. For instance, one of Emma's first interactions with the upper-class life about which she dreams occurs at the Vaubyessard ball. After Emma and Charles arrive at the ball, Emma prepares herself to enter temporarily the world of the upper class, and the music from this other world seems to beckon her: "The strains of a violin floated up the stairs; a horn joined in. As Emma went down she had to restrain herself from running" (Flaubert 1066). Throughout her time at Vaubyessard, Emma's growing longings seem to match the rhythm of the orchestral music, and this symphony propels her deep into her romantic dreams:

> Emma's heart pounded a bit as her partner led her out by the fingertips and she waited in line for the starting signal on the violin. But her nervousness soon wore off, and swaying and nodding in time with the orchestra, she glided forward. She responded with a smile to the violinist's flourishes as he continued to play solo when the other instruments stopped . . . then everything was in full swing again: the cornet blared, once again feet tramped in rhythm, skirts ballooned and brushed together, hands joined and separated; eyes lowered one moment looked intently into [hers] the next. (Flaubert 1066)

Music certainly accentuates Emma's enchanting experience, but even the "silent" music that remains at the end of the evening influences her yearning for anything but middle-class life. The narrator remarks, "The music was still throbbing in her ears, and she forced herself to stay awake in order to prolong the illusion of this luxurious life she would so soon have to be leaving" (Flaubert 1068); perhaps the musical elements of the scene at Vaubyessard also help to prolong Flaubert's romantic illusions. Clearly, the memories of the ball and its melodies continue to fuel both Emma's and Flaubert's disillusionment with bourgeois life long after Emma returns home.

Shortly after Emma and Charles arrive in Yonville, Emma becomes acquainted with Léon, the town law clerk and a fellow hopeless romantic. They assert the affections they share for particular forms of music, such as opera, and Léon confesses that "German music" is "the most inspiring" (Flaubert 1085), revealing his odd artistic taste. He goes on to praise the romantic arts in a manner that seems almost to foreshadow his future encounter with Emma at the opera: "Noble characters and pure affections and happy scenes are very comforting things. They're a refuge from life's disillusionments. As for me, they're my only means of relief, living here as I do, cut off from the world. Yonville has so little to offer!" (Flaubert 1086). Clearly, the arts, particularly romantic music and novels, serve to liberate these future lovers from the *ennui* they experience while attempting to survive middle-class life in Yonville. These early conversations between Emma and Léon only help to reinforce Emma's dissatisfaction with her husband, Charles, whose "conversation" the narrator notes "[is] flat as a sidewalk, a place of passage for the ideas of everyman" (Flaubert 1060), and they drive Emma's early searches for fulfillment of her romantic desires in men other than her husband.

In the scene in which Emma and Charles attend the opera, Flaubert uses an intensely emotional musical experience to illuminate significant "shifts" in Emma's consciousness (Lindenberger 160), much like portraying the transitions between movements of a symphony. Opera, as a "richer, grander, art form," reveals the more romantic and "ideal" (Tooke 170-71) aspects of Emma's consciousness, or the "higher narrative" (Lindenberger 160) of Flaubert's work in contrast with the "lower narrative" (Lindenberger 158) that continually reminds Flaubert's reader of Emma's mundane, provincial life and that rarely utilizes music as subject or background. When Emma arrives at the opera house, the narrator notes that merely being surrounded by the aura of the upper class fills her with hope that her longings will be fulfilled:

"She took pleasure, like a child, in pushing open the wide upholstered doors with one finger; she filled her lungs with the dusty smell of the corridors; and seated in her box she drew herself up with all the airs of a duchess" (Flaubert 1170). Interestingly, opera is "programmed to elicit exactly the response it receives from Emma" (Tooke 171-72). The opera episode is "narrated almost entirely from Emma's point of view," as she "sees only what can fit her own experience" (Tooke 174). In this way, then, Flaubert attempts to utilize this musical performance to portray Emma's subjective experience objectively from an outsider's point of view, yet he seems to experience difficulty separating himself from his title character. The narrator thoroughly describes those elements of the performance that carry Emma into the realm of "higher narrative" (Lindberger 160), and Flaubert seems to be carried away with her, as if he also allows himself a temporary escape from his mundane world: "She let herself be lulled by the melodies, feeling herself vibrate to the very fiber of her being, as though the bows of the violins were the sets, the characters, the painted trees that shook at the slightest footstep, the velvet bonnets, the cloaks, the swords—all those fanciful things that fluttered on the waves of music as though in another world" (Flaubert 1171). As the opera progresses, the focus of the "higher narrative" moves from the actual elements of the opera to Emma's, and perhaps even to Flaubert's, inner "longings" (Lindberger 160-61). Clearly, music, and particularly the opera scene, allows Flaubert's reader to catch a glimpse of the consciousness of both character and author.

Emma's reaction to the opera, and especially to the music and to the singers themselves, actually spurs on her love for Léon, and her emotional interaction with the opera acts as the catalyst for this new affair with her second illicit lover. During the performance, Emma finds herself resonating with the heroine on stage: "And at the moment Emma, too, longed that she might leave life behind and take wing in an embrace" (Flaubert 1171). Emma's passionate

responses to the singer's appeals reveal music's ability to "[grant] . . . words greater power than they would have by themselves" (Begbie 103) and to illuminate "word and music linking mind and emotion in an especially potent way" (Begbie 108). Towards the conclusion of the opera, however, Emma practically refuses to listen to the music, having just seen Léon between acts. By the third act, the performance has become mere background noise for Emma's growing longings for her future lover, and her own desires begin to consume her (Lindberger 161). As reflected in Emma's response to the opera, "Music is always a focus for strong emotion, and that emotion is often, if not always, love" (Tooke 169-70). In this affair that results from Emma's physical and emotional interaction with both Lagardy's opera and with Léon, Emma becomes "the artist" who "will play the leading role in creating a world of shared illusion" (Gans 111), as Emma is to Léon "the lover of all the novels, the heroine of all the dramas" (Gans 111); indeed, this illusion is not only shared with her lover but also with Flaubert, her own creator. This romantic world from the beginning is inspired by the music that gives expression to her desires, and the "physical phenomena of sound" (Aronson 9) ignite the desires of these bourgeois French characters and of Flaubert. Since the opera is such an experiential art form, it easily "evokes the response of all [of Emma's] senses simultaneously" (Aronson 9), but at the same time, it successfully exposes the "pettiness of [her] passions" (Gans 108); in this way, music provides an avenue for Flaubert both to collapse into his heroine's character and to separate himself from her when necessary. Particularly in her response to the opera, Emma exhibits music's ability to liberate both her and her author from the mundane elements of her daily life and uncovers music as the "vehicle for day-dreams" (Jean-Aubry 19) throughout the novel.

Emma even uses her desire for piano lessons to disguise her plans to meet with Léon. Long after Emma's first encounter with Léon in Paris, once the lovers begin to meet steadily, the

narrator notes, “It was about this time—the beginning of winter—that [Emma] became intensely musical” (Flaubert 1193). Emma attempts to convince Charles of her need for piano lessons, and Charles concedes that an occasional piano lesson may be to her benefit. However, Emma argues, “‘But lessons aren’t worth taking . . . unless they’re taken regularly’” (Flaubert 1194). Upon Emma’s receiving Charles’ blessing for regular lessons, the narrator remarks, “That was how she obtained her husband’s permission to go to the city once a week to meet her lover. By the end of the first month everyone found that her playing had improved considerably” (Flaubert 1194). Yet, for Emma, it is the “music” of her romantic rendezvous with Léon that matters; the piano lessons only fuel the passion between the lovers that allows them to declare each week, “Till Thursday! Till Thursday!” (Flaubert 1197). As evidenced in Emma’s affairs even late in the novel, music serves as the backdrop for Flaubert’s portrayal of Emma’s continually progressing romantic fantasies and delusions (Jean-Aubry 21), and the use of music in this way reveals Flaubert’s personal knowledge of music’s connection to a romantic worldview. It was through his mistress Louise Colet that Flaubert grew to know music so well, and musical references permeate his correspondence with her and highlight both the couple’s romantic declarations of love and Flaubert the artist’s assertions of love for his novel (Jean-Aubry 16). Throughout *Madame Bovary*, then, Flaubert’s use of music in his portrayals of Emma shows him to be well-versed in the use of musical allusions to achieve a romantic ideal of love, and thus these musical references further uncover his identification with his heroine.

Music also plays a significant part in Flaubert’s later novel, *The Sentimental Education*. Mainly, music comments on the growing infatuation between Flaubert’s main character, Frédéric Moreau, and Marie Arnoux, his love interest, and successfully romanticizes Flaubert’s opening scene. Flaubert’s characters think and feel in terms of music, and at the opening of the novel,

"Music forms the background for the first scene betraying the emotion of the hero . . . at the sight of Mme. Arnoux" (Jean-Aubry 24). Flaubert's narrator introduces these characters on a steamboat, and the ship's background music emphasizes the romantic atmosphere of the initial scene of the novel:

> It was an Oriental romance dealing with daggers, flowers, and stars. The ragged man sang it in a harsh voice; the throbbing of the engine broke the rhythm of the tune; he plucked harder; the strings quivered; and their metallic sound seemed to breathe sobs, and the lament of a profound and defeated love. On both banks of the river the woods overhung the water; a cool breeze blew; Madame Arnoux gazed abstractedly into the distance. When the music stopped her eyelids fluttered several times, as if she were emerging from a dream. (Flaubert, *Sentimental Education* 7)

Like *Madame Bovary*, *The Sentimental Education* reveals music as an important component and backdrop of the novel and displays the musicality of Flaubert's language. However, instead of highlighting the escalating romantic dreams of the characters, the introductory music foreshadows a desire for love that will never be fulfilled and hints at the failed romance between Frédéric and Marie.

Nevertheless, long before Frédéric senses the futility of his attraction to Madame Arnoux, when he sees her, music intensifies his internal emotional experience and highlights his personal struggles. On the boat where he first spots Madame Arnoux, Frédéric experiences "a feeling of benediction he connect[s] with her, an almost religious impulse" (Flaubert 7) after the music ceases, and in the first scene he relishes the "indirect overture" (Flaubert 8) and the "infinite, dreamy joy" (Flaubert 10) that surround this awakening love. Throughout the novel, music also

defines the growing attraction of Madame Arnoux to Frédéric (Jean-Aubry 24). Flaubert's narrator, however, also utilizes musical metaphors to emphasize Frédéric's frustration in his pursuit of Madame Arnoux: "Sometimes it seemed to him that music alone could express his interior turmoil, and then he dreamed of symphonies; or his imagination was gripped by the surface aspect of things, and then he longed to be a painter" (Flaubert 16). It is clear from the musical descriptions of Frédéric's character that he has a difficult time remaining consistent in his desires. Throughout the novel, music sheds light on Frédéric's conflicting emotions as he attempts to comprehend his own longings and ambitions. At one point, Frédéric dreams of himself as a successful government official, and the narrator notes that, in Frédéric's daydream, "his voice charged with thunder, full of musical intonations, ironic, pathetic, passionate, sublime" (Flaubert 80-81). Music is especially connected to passion and dreams in *The Sentimental Education*, and particularly for Frédéric, it exposes his passionate indecision. Later in the novel, while a waltz resounds from a piano during a meal at a local restaurant, the narrator reveals Frédéric's inner conflict regarding his inconsistent love affair with Rosanette, also known as the Maréchale: "[T]here was something insolent, intoxicated, and abandoned about her that exasperated Frederic and, at the same time, stirred wild desires in his heart" (Flaubert 198). Clearly, background music in *The Sentimental Education* emphasizes conflicts that are central to the novel and thus to Frédéric as a character.

Since Frédéric was a semi-autobiographical character for Flaubert, music likely played an important role in Flaubert's processing his own experiences and emotions (Jean-Aubry 23-24). As evidenced in the responses of Flaubert's characters to music in his fiction, "what music, at its deepest level, communicates transcends the self which listens and responds. It dwarfs the present moment into insignificance and reveals aspects of consciousness of which the listener

had previously been unaware" (Aronson x). For Flaubert, music intensified his own inner struggles and dreams, and it liberated him at times from the frustrations of his search for *le mot juste* and from his boredom and disappointment with middle-class life. Similarly, Flaubert's musicality throughout *Madame Bovary* and *The Sentimental Education*, which is demonstrated in the rhythm of his text, aids his reader also in understanding the consciousness of his characters, and these realizations make for an enjoyable and liberating literary experience. In the case of Flaubert's novels, then, "the role of the reader is 'to hear with the eyes'" (Stewart 38) and to incorporate the "loose sense of moving to a beat" (Stewart 37) when seeking to comprehend the intricacies of Flaubert's writing. His style is intimately connected to the musical aspects of his writing, and it contributes greatly to the overture of his most acclaimed works. In the absence of the right word, the presence of music in Flaubert's works reveals that good literature is able to overcome the inadequacies of language through the use of other modes of communication and artistry, such as music.

Chapter Six—Seeking the Other: The Poetics of the Exotic

A final element of Flaubert's poetics is found in his belief in the power of writing to help one seek and discover "the Other," which is at times both frightening and liberating. While writing today is a rather widespread skill, in the nineteenth century, the ability to write separated those in the middle and upper classes from those in the lower classes. Furthermore, individuals in these classes frequently had free time to compose their works. For Flaubert, although writing was part of his experience as a middle-class Frenchman, it consistently provided a means of liberation from the dreariness of his middle-class surroundings. His travels through the Orient had a profound influence on him as a man and author, as he faced exotic experiences that differed greatly from his usual provincial surroundings and encountered both the wonder and uncertainty associated with the Other. Yet, writing about his foreign experience was even more liberating than travel itself because writing allowed Flaubert better to understand himself as a result of embracing the Other. Indeed, "Flaubert always considered that the highest and purest pleasure of literature is its power to liberate those who practice it from the contingencies of life" (Brombert 5). Therefore, as evidenced in Flaubert's fictional works and letters, literature brings pleasure and also allows both author and reader to travel to another world, albeit a temporary one. Accordingly, in *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert shows his characters traveling widely, and both their mental and physical journeys offer liberation from a dull existence and provide a gateway to the Other. The characters of *Madame Bovary* display the way writing helps them to manage the world around them, and, like Flaubert does, they approach writing as a tool for exposing themselves to another world, thus freeing themselves from society's constraints. Particularly, for the heroine of *Madame Bovary*, writing provides a way to cope with daily life and to escape her mundane world by helping her strive for the romantic world of the Other.

Flaubert's oeuvre includes both the travelogue and the novel, and both of these forms of literature explore places that exist partly in the imagination. During his journeys, Flaubert allowed his imaginings of the new places he visited to influence his own writings about his foreign experiences. He demonstrated that travel writing is "a medium for bestowing meaning on the self and the social, natural, or metaphysical realities through which it moves. Performed as an art, travel becomes one means of 'worldmaking' . . . and of self-fashioning" (Adler 1368). Travel granted Flaubert access into the enchanting and exotic world of the Other, and by artfully recording his own experience in his travel journal while traveling through the Orient, Flaubert contributed to the composition of his own "self," which was further defined and developed in the context of the Other. This art of responding to the foreign Other set the stage for the novel that ultimately allowed him to escape from the perpetual boredom of middle-class life that confronted him in his homeland. Yet, somewhat ironically, Flaubert escaped his boredom by describing this boredom quite thoroughly in *Madame Bovary*. In this way the novel is a "[form] of imagining," and it "provide[s] the technical means for 're-presenting'" a certain type of "imagined community" (Anderson 24-25). Clearly, Flaubert's experience as a part of the French bourgeoisie served as the already existing form for his "re-present[ation]" of the "imagined communit[ies]" of Tostes, Rouen, and Yonville, and the world he knew so well was the one he presented through his heroine, Emma Bovary. Therefore, the opportunity to seek the Other through writing both while traveling and while remaining at home was extremely liberating for Flaubert. A similar search for the Other makes Emma Bovary's journey as a character so comparable to Flaubert's; indeed, her journey allowed Flaubert to embrace, at least temporarily, the dreams and views of his heroine. These poetics of the exotic, then, influence the imagined worlds of the Other that are depicted in Flaubert's travelogue and in *Madame Bovary*.

Physically, travel in the nineteenth century opened the door for the experience of exploring unknown worlds. The Grand Tour was an important tradition that developed during this time, and it provides some background for Flaubert's own journeys. While on the Grand Tour, young European aristocrats embarked on a journey that allowed them the opportunity to see the Eastern world and to gain wisdom from it before taking on any long-term commitments. In fact, for many young men, "the East was something [they] would find to be an all-consuming passion" (Said 5), yet that passion did not always manifest itself in positive ways. Said's groundbreaking work *Orientalism* sheds some light on the complexities of the Orient, as he notes that this region as a whole includes both familiar and unfamiliar elements of Western culture; its proximity to Europe and reception of European imperialism make it an area that characterizes Western experience, yet its mystery and strange nature make it the West's "most recurring [image] of the Other" (1-2). Consequently, because of the presence and unfamiliarity of the Other, the Orient and the nations associated with this region often posed a threat to a Westerner's sense of security and caused him or her to respond in a defensive manner. This frequent reaction to strange elements of the Orient led to the traveler's need to manage his or her experience of the Other, and this urge to manage one's journey has its ties to Orientalism, which Said defines as "the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient" (3). European writers in particular who traveled through the Orient often sensed an inclination to record in writing almost all elements of their foreign experience, and this compulsion displayed "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 3). Perhaps because of Europe's imperialist nature, the Western methods of responding to aspects of the Other in the East included gaining power over what was foreign. Regarding Eastern Europe, Said notes that various aspects of the Orient were seen by Europeans to be "in need of corrective study by the

West" (41). It was this contact with the Orient, then, that frequently drove Westerners to respond to their foreign experiences in writing, and this method of response brought them added comfort in the face of frightening aspects of the Other.

Like other nineteenth-century travelers, Flaubert's contact with the Other came mostly through his travels in the Orient, yet for him this contact was often more liberating than frightening. Flaubert's journey through the Orient corresponded with "the first wave of mass tourism" (Tooke 57) in France; however, Flaubert's travels were more involved than those of the typical tourist because of his desire to learn from his experience in the East and because of his own cravings for the exotic. Francis Steegmuller recounts what one man said during Flaubert's journey regarding Flaubert's motives for travel: "'This is a French gentleman . . . who is travelling all over the world in search of knowledge. . .'" (qtd. in 161-62). While traveling, then, Flaubert ultimately desired to explore and to write in order to gain understanding and to obtain wisdom. However, he also recorded his experience for his own personal enjoyment, writing down everything he observed for the pure joy of doing so (Tooke 53). Flaubert revealed his enchantment with foreign lands by remarking, "The sight of so many ruins makes you lose your desire to build anything new" (qtd. in Steegmuller 165). While interaction with the Other was bewildering for most Westerners, for Flaubert, contact with the Other was exhilarating.

Travel itself greatly influenced Flaubert's poetics, as experiencing the Other in the Orient provided liberation from *ennui*. The freedom Flaubert experienced on his journeys in the Orient offered him the pleasure of creating his own world, and travel itself allowed him to flee physically from the typical, suffocating surroundings of his bourgeois existence into the exotic and invigorating realm of the Other. Therefore, Flaubert's itinerary transported him to "a broader way of being, to alternative cultures whose external and internal differences [had] not

been homogenised or ironed out" (Tooke 57). Contact with the Orient, then, helped to blur the boundary lines between "sameness" and difference. Flaubert ultimately embraced this rather different world, which helped him to understand his own world; thus, "travel . . . contributed to the development of Flaubert's aesthetic" (Tooke 53) and influenced his poetics, especially since Flaubert found "artistic joy [and] delight" (Ryken 139) in seeking and discovering the Other.

Flaubert attempted to extend the liberating experience of seeking the Other through his travel writing even after his travels had ended. He captured his experience in the East in his unpublished travel account entitled *Voyage en Orient*, and his travel writings uncover the joy and liberation that writing brought him. In his travel notes, Flaubert asks, "Except for the voluptuous joy that I always feel when I sit around my writing table, what is there that would satisfy me? Am I not already in possession of everything that the world considers enviable? I have independence, freedom of fancy, two hundred pens, and a knowledge of how to use them" (qtd. in Steegmuller 165). As seen in his oeuvre, any type of writing offered a solution to Flaubert's *ennui*. Like travel, for Flaubert, writing presented a great opportunity to escape from the dullness of his everyday life, and while writing *Madame Bovary* he claimed, "[I]t is a delicious thing to write, whether well or badly—to be no longer yourself but to move in an entire universe of your own creating" (qtd. in Steegmuller 281). While this kind of literary universe may not necessarily represent the Other, Flaubert's confession reveals that the very process of writing was a cure for the monotony of life and provided a different outlet for dealing with the boredom of his own life; in this way, writing offered him a chance to travel imaginatively away from his surroundings (Tooke 53). Embracing difference, then, allowed Flaubert as an author to flee from the "sameness" of his everyday life.

In his travel journal, Flaubert demonstrated both comforting and unsettling emotions in

response to the Other, which represented both familiar and unfamiliar aspects of life for him. While remaining captivated by the exotic sense of the Other found in such strange locations, Flaubert experienced difficulty in responding to the unexpected during his journeys through foreign lands and recorded this trouble in his writing. Writing his experiences down allowed him to comprehend disturbing occurrences, and the act of composing a travelogue comforted him in the midst of environments that typically provoked fear. The simultaneous presence of wonder and fear instilled in Flaubert's mind by the East made for interesting journal material. Flaubert used his travel journal to separate himself in some way from his unusual surroundings, but by recording all that he experienced, he simultaneously immersed himself in the exotic world around him. Because the discrepancies he observed in the countries he visited had not been "homogenised" in his mind (Tooke 57), his record of his journey did not necessarily reveal consistent reactions to a unified experience. Instead of remaining concerned with the consistency of his account, Flaubert reacted to "imaginary boundaries between the East and the West" by recording all that he experienced (Gephardt 304). While in the Orient, Flaubert embraced "the tradition of constructing Eastern Europe as distinct from and yet closely related to the Western part of the continent. . ." (Gephardt 294), and this construction performed through writing turned the familiar elements of the Other into Flaubert's source of comfort while he was in a foreign land. Clearly, Flaubert's reflections on his expeditions in his travel notes revealed his "dealing with" the Orient (Said 3), as he wrestled with his surroundings and displayed his uncertainty concerning what to appreciate and what to critique. However, he remained content with the contradictions in his journal and with his seemingly conflicting responses to the Other. Throughout his journey, "Flaubert [found] himself engaged in a challenge to seek out beauty and harmony in the jarring mess of human lives" (Tooke 65-66). Therefore, it was this desire to find

beauty in the Other that both inspired and compelled him to record his experiences and that demonstrates the manner in which the boundary between sameness and difference is not always easily recognizable.

Particularly, as the narrator of his travel notes, Flaubert simultaneously revealed his newfound unfamiliarity with Eastern ideas and the comfort of writing in response to the Other; nevertheless, composing his travel notes allowed him to capture the journey in his mind. While in Jerusalem, Flaubert notes, "How keenly I felt the inanity, the uselessness, the grotesqueness, the very essence of the moment!" (qtd. in Steegmuller 188). Later, in a letter to his mother after he left Nubia, Flaubert's comment seems to conflict in tone and emotion with the one he made in Jerusalem: "The sky was beautiful last night, the stars were shining. . . . It was a real oriental night, the blue of the sky hidden beneath the profusion of the stars" (qtd. in Steegmuller 179). Flaubert seems to ascertain these emotions as he travels, and one could say that on his journey through the Orient, writing actually *becomes* his way of discovering the Other. In response to his mother's questions about the strange region, Flaubert writes, "You ask me whether the Orient is up to what I imagined it to be. Yes, it is, and more than that it extends far beyond the narrow idea I had of it. I have found, clearly delineated, everything that was hazy in my mind. Facts have taken the place of suppositions—so excellently so that it is often as though I were suddenly coming upon old and forgotten dreams" (qtd. in Steegmuller 163). Yet, although his journey brought him clarity and liberation from his usual environment, he still retained certain fears and uncertainties. He shared such fears in telling his friend Maxime du Camp, "'Never again will I see my mother or my country! This journey is too long, too distant, it is tempting Providence! What madness!'" (qtd. in Steegmuller 149). Interestingly, Flaubert actually articulated these inner conflicts through his writing, as if writing down his emotions helped him to cope with the

unfamiliar territories. Said remarks, "Every European traveler or resident in the Orient has had to protect himself from its unsettling influences. . . . In the Orient one suddenly confronted unimaginable antiquity, inhuman beauty, boundless distance. These could be put to use more innocently, as it were, if they were thought and written about, not directly experienced" (166-67). Although Flaubert remained enamored with the Other, his travel writings reveal that his journey into another world did not make him particularly joyful (Steegmuller 181). Flaubert even admitted to his mother one evening that "my heart was very sad, poor beloved darling" (qtd. in Steegmuller 179). Flaubert's occasional ambivalent reactions to his travels in the Orient, then, uncover the adventure and liberation that seeking the Other offered him and also reveal the consolation he received from the union of the unfamiliarity of his new experiences and the familiarity of his writing.

Flaubert's foreign encounters with the Other and his responses to those encounters in his writing helped him to differentiate between what was familiar and unfamiliar and allowed him to accept more readily those concepts that were strange or unusual. As evidenced in his travelogue, his record of his reactions to the Orient showcased frequent vacillations in emotion and uncertainty regarding the reconciliation of his immediate observations with his preconceived understanding of the East. Tooke remarks, "The shock of the new is a major feature of Flaubert's travel writing, and is sometimes so great that integration into any system, however flexible, seems out of the question" (54). Throughout his journey, he remained enamored with the "new," but his compositions reveal writing that is as "jaded" as physical travel itself (Tooke 58). Discussing his own frustrations with travel writing, Flaubert states that "the original colours become corrupted on the canvas which has received them" (qtd. in Tooke 59). While trying to comprehend "what link[ed] humanity" across cultures (Tooke 54), then, Flaubert struggled to

understand foreign Eastern concepts as they got lost in the sea of already accepted Western ideas (Tooke 57). He observes, “This is a great place for contrasts: splendid things gleam in the dust” (qtd. in Steegmuller 107). Clearly, this combination of “gleam[ing]” sunlight and ancient “dust” that characterized the Other made this exotic experience slightly disconcerting. As he used his journal to cope with these insights that the Other offered him, he sought comfort in the familiarity of his already established convictions: “[A]s my body continues on its journey, my thoughts keep turning back to bury themselves in days past” (qtd. in Steegmuller 105). In this way, Flaubert’s travelogue "[was] the ideal medium for testing [travel’s] two basic principles: that ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ are not discrete unities; and that differences in general are not irreducible” (Tooke 54). Like the liberation that writing his novels provided him, Flaubert’s travel writing liberated him from some of the anxieties associated with travel as he sorted through seemingly contradictory experiences resulting from familiarity with the Self and unfamiliarity with the Other. However, the unfamiliar elements of the Other did not always frighten him. Rather, in the Orient and in his travelogue, “Flaubert’s aesthetic [was] certainly more at home with monsters and the irreducibly Different than with sameness and homogeneity” (Tooke 57), and his relying on what was familiar while writing helped him to identify, comprehend, and even appreciate those factors present in the Orient that were truly foreign to him.

Even before he began his journey, Flaubert was enthralled by exotic lands and ideas, and his previous imaginings of the Other helped him to compose his own experience successfully. Clearly, both the majesty and the unsettling mystery of foreign lands came to life in Flaubert’s descriptions. Even though Flaubert had dreamt about these nations physically, his depictions of his journeys went far beyond a physical portrayal. Discussing the nation’s connection to imagination, Anderson defines a nation as “an imagined . . . community” (6), and Flaubert’s own

experiences support this definition. He used his previous knowledge of the places he visited, or his imaginings of them, to "[fuse] the world inside . . . with the world outside" (Anderson 30). While in the Orient, Flaubert noted that he was "enormously excited by the cities and the people. . . . It probably comes of my having given more imagination and thought, before coming here, to things like horizon, greenery, sand, trees, [and] sun . . . than to houses, streets, costumes and faces. The result is that nature has been a rediscovery and the rest a discovery" (qtd. in Steegmuller 106). In preparation for his journey and for his overly romantic novel *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, "Flaubert read, reread or consulted at least sixty ancient texts, histories, and scholarly commentaries" (Steegmuller 100). In a sense, then, he utilized both the knowledge he had already acquired as well as the memoir of his travels to "imagine physical places" (Howarth 509). John Finlay confirms this Flaubertian practice when he discusses Flaubert's impressions of Egypt:

> It is rather the Egypt which Flaubert made in his own mind and then found reflected in the one he visited. . . . He felt himself drawn to the south just as he said his barbaric ancestors had been drawn to the occupation and pillage of the whole Mediterranean world centuries before. He wanted and found there warmth and color, and clarity of vision, the insistence on which seems innate in French artists. (496)

Like other Frenchmen who had gone before him, Flaubert believed in the exotic beauty of the Other before he arrived in the Orient, and therefore discovering its beauty was his aim as he traveled and wrote in his journal. Consequently, his preconceived ideas about the East colored the observations present in his journal, and these observations are often surprisingly positive. In this way, Flaubert experienced difficulty separating himself from his surroundings, and his

travelogue reveals his experience with the Other's becoming part of the Self.

Flaubert's desire for seeking harmony in the reconciliation of Self and Other can be observed throughout his travel writing. Flaubert consistently utilized his imagination to take "forms already existing . . . and [to gather] them about a thought so much higher than they" in order to "harmonize them into a whole" (MacDonald 101). Flaubert's travelogue reveals his struggle to harmonize his observations and reactions, yet his honest reactions to these already existing lands make his travel writing artful and beautiful. Although his journal hardly appears uniform to an outside observer, his desire to harmonize his new experience with the Other with the life he had known so well in France continued to propel him on his journey, both physically and literarily. It is in this way, then, that Flaubert's travel notes "are so suited to their subject and to the writer's project" and "so acute, subtle and evocative" (Tooke 51). Flaubert's *Voyage en Orient* reveals the opportunity that writing offers to seek the beauty of the unfamiliar and to find the missing piece of oneself in the Other.

Like his travelogue, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* reflects Flaubert's fascination with the Other, especially when considering its composition. Regarding his writing, "Flaubert argued that travel should serve to 'enliven one's style'" (Gourgouris 345), and his travels thus influenced his novels, including *Madame Bovary*. Flaubert's experience with the Other certainly gave him more observations and experiences to draw from when writing, and his trip to the Orient even sparked the idea for *Madame Bovary*, as he returned from his Oriental journey "determined to get to work on a new project" (Gans 23). Interestingly, "Flaubert's writing both before and after his visit is soaked in the Orient" (Said 181), and these remnants of his Oriental journey partly inspired his literary masterpiece. The relics from his travels that represent the Other also served as inspiration for composition. Upon his return from the Orient, Flaubert added various artifacts

to his designated writing room: "There were new things in the study now: Egyptian necklaces and amulets, arrows from the Sudan, oriental musical instruments, Turkish lanterns, two mummy's feet stolen from a tomb" (Steegmuller 241). Therefore, Flaubert was both immersed in and consumed by the exotic findings of the Orient, and his "sighs for the Orient" (Steegmuller 230) were visible during the process of writing *Madame Bovary*. Even after his travels ended, Flaubert's encounter with the Other affected his interaction with the content of his novel:

> The two years in the East had been a purge, so to speak, of Flaubert's romantic longings: of his lusts after exoticism in all its forms, of his need for brilliant colour, heat, violence, grandeur, and filth. Now, with those boiling desires drawn off—at least for the moment—he had for the first time in his life the courage to concern himself with the details of daily existence in a small French town, which he saw with new eyes. (Steegmuller 238-39)

Flaubert spent much time frustrated over the progress of *Madame Bovary*, and the aggravation of that experience stemmed mainly from his hatred of familiar, everyday mediocrity. Yet, as a result of seeking what was unfamiliar through his travels and of purging his desire for the Other, Flaubert finally possessed the courage to journey into "the [middle-class] life which hitherto he had always avoided by seeking refuge in some exoticism of time or space" (Steegmuller 238). Truly, the enjoyment of exotic lands and the thrill of writing about those lands helped Flaubert to distance himself from his own romantic tendencies and prepared him to create his heroine, Emma Bovary, a middle-class doctor's wife living the mundane bourgeois lifestyle with which he was all too familiar.

Flaubert illustrates his experience with the Other through his main character, Emma Bovary, and just as he embraces the writing of *Madame Bovary* in part as a way to distance

himself from romanticism, his creation of his title character actually allows him to fulfill some of his romantic desires. As a bourgeois country doctor's wife, Emma in some ways represents the Other for Flaubert. Although he involved himself in several relationships, even adulterous ones, and although he shared Emma's boredom with middle-class life, the romantic, feminine desires of Emma Bovary were foreign to Flaubert and presented a great challenge to him. Even long before Flaubert began *Madame Bovary*, "The young writer . . . found feminine desire—the desire of the Other from a masculine standpoint—of greater interest than the more aggressive masculine variety" (Gans 20). Flaubert remained an expert at describing his own romantic inclinations and desires, yet this "feminine desire" is what he found mysterious and so difficult to compose. Even while he composed his work, Flaubert remained uncertain about his ability to portray effectively his heroine: "The husband did not baffle him; the medical background and the mediocrity he could describe—but the wife! A woman unbalanced in no mystical way but in regard to the matters of daily life, a woman who was pretentious, nervous, discontented, burdened by a dullard of a husband . . . how could he paint *her*?" (Steegmuller 222). Clearly, as with his findings in the Orient, the unfamiliarity of this French woman's desire contributed to the frustration Flaubert experienced as he wrote *Madame Bovary*. The actual composition of his novel, then, helped him to manage and to understand this feminine Other, yet Flaubert's immersion in the world of Emma as the Other also helped him to understand himself and his own desires. In this way, Flaubert's creation of his title character also demonstrates the way in which Self and Other are not always separate entities.

The theme of physical travel pervades *Madame Bovary*, and travel itself serves as a gateway to the Other for Flaubert's main characters. In most of Flaubert's fictional works, "travel on a small scale is everywhere. In all the walking and riding and contemplation of

conveyances, from carriages and boats, trains and horses . . . Flaubert's characters experience the motions and emotions of travel on a grander scale" (Tooke 53). The characters in *Madame Bovary* travel from rural France to Paris various times, and Emma makes multiple journeys on the *Hirondelle*. Part Two opens with the Bovarys' move to Yonville, which occurs because Emma "continually complain[s] about Tostes" (Flaubert 1076), the Bovarys' former home, and longs for a new destination. Emma must travel constantly in order to maintain her affairs with both Rodolphe and Léon; whether she rides on horseback, walks to the next town, or travels to view the most famous cathedral of Paris, her interactions with her lovers often occur away from home. Furthermore, physical travel continually kindles the desire for the Other for Flaubert's main characters. The event that acts as a catalyst for Emma's adulterous relationship with Rodolphe is a travelling event, an afternoon horseback ride through the French countryside (Flaubert 1130-33). Later, Emma's affair with Léon officially begins inside a cab as it journeys through Paris. While Emma and Léon consummate their relationship, the narrator's physical descriptions center on the carriage—what it passes, how long it travels, and the frustrations of the driver. The narrator notes, "There it turned back; and from then on it wandered at random, without apparent goal. . . . From his seat the coachman now and again cast a desperate glance at a café. He couldn't conceive what locomotive frenzy was making these people persist in refusing to stop" (Flaubert 1184). In a way, the carriage acts not only as a literal vehicle but also as a figurative one, as it propels these lovers closer to the Other and to realizing their own desires. Although the narrator does not describe the activity inside the cab, this "carriage with drawn shades that kept appearing and reappearing, sealed tighter than a tomb and tossing like a ship" (Flaubert 1184) helps to sustain the adulterous activity occurring between Emma and Léon at this point in the novel. The act of physical travel, then, like that displayed in the carriage

scene, is helpful in illustrating the journey to the Other in *Madame Bovary*.

For the novel's main characters, writing letters provides a means of seeking the Other. Writing by the characters in the novel removes them from their usual surroundings and specifically fuels Emma Bovary's romantic tendencies. Just as Flaubert viewed writing romantically, as it allowed him to escape reality, Emma seeks solace in reading romantic novels and in writing to her lovers. Her extramarital relationships do not progress solely on their own accord; rather, secret meetings and hidden letters drive the affairs that allow Emma to escape from the dull relationship she believes she has with her husband. For instance, the writing of letters helps to solidify the adulterous relationship between Emma and Rodolphe: "From that day on they wrote to each another regularly every night. Emma took her letter out into the garden and slipped it into a crack in the terrace wall beside the river; Rodolphe came, took it, and left one for her—one that was always, she complained, too short" (Flaubert 1134). Writing spurs on travel in the novel, which in turn spurs on infidelity and romantic searches for the Other. Throughout Flaubert's work, the traveling letters carry news of the lovers' romantic declarations and thus bring them closer to the exotic, passionate existence they desire.

Emma Bovary particularly exhibits her desire for the life of the Other by longing to be an upper-class lady. In *Madame Bovary*, Emma's *ennui*, or boredom, with the reality of bourgeois life pervades Flaubert's work, and her utter discontentment leads her to search for contentment in the realm of the Other. After Emma's initial encounter with her lover Rodolphe, she believes that she is beginning to fulfill her dream of discovering the reality of the Other in her own life: "She remembered the heroines of novels she had read, and the lyrical legion of those adulterous women began to sing in her memory with sisterly voices that enchanted her. Now she saw herself as one of those *amoureuses* whom she had so envied: she was becoming, in

reality, one of that gallery of fictional figures; the long dream of her youth was coming true" (Flaubert 1134). Throughout the novel, Emma seeks after the thrill and enchantment of the Other, believing that a change in social status, even in her heart, will permanently free her from the constraints of familiar bourgeois society.

Emma fulfills her desire for the Other through her extramarital affairs and continually seeks the Other through writing, just as Flaubert did as he journeyed through the Orient; as demonstrated by her actions in the novel, her desire for these sophisticated, extramarital relationships to become a reality in her life displays the Other's becoming part of the Self in *Madame Bovary*. Describing Emma's affair with Rodolphe, the narrator states, "Once again their love was at high tide. Now Emma would often take it into her head to write him during the day . . . And when Rodolphe arrived in response to her summons, it was to hear that she was miserable, that her husband was odious, that her life was a torment" (Flaubert 1149). For Emma, communicating her dissatisfaction with her middle-class life through her letters to her lovers takes her one step closer to realizing her romantic dream of finally possessing the Other, even if that possession is only an illusion. While she is familiar with the monotony of her existence, Emma longs for what is not familiar to her, and Emma's "sluggish, aimless wandering" (Christiansen) through her middle-class life ultimately leads her to seek liberation in the exotic unfamiliarity of the Other. Interestingly, though, she merely discovers different versions of the same dissatisfaction she originally experienced with Charles. Emma discovers that her longing for freedom, which she finds in a permanent state of "otherness," is "more fantasy than real possibility" (Christiansen), and her general discontentment mainly stems from her desire to find herself in the Other. When Emma first craves a relationship with a man other than Charles, the romantic and exotic elements of her potential liaisons are what make them so attractive.

However, once Madame Bovary finds herself in an adulterous relationship, the exotic element of that relationship begins to fade, as adultery no longer constitutes the Other but instead begins to define Emma and thus gradually becomes part of the Self. This desire for the Other, or for what was once unattainable, and the dislike of the familiar frequently manifest themselves in Emma's writing, and these consistent longings further serve to blur the lines between Self and Other in *Madame Bovary*.

While Flaubert's *Voyage en Orient* and his renowned work *Madame Bovary* contrast greatly in their content and even in their author's motivation for writing them, they both emphasize writing as a means of reaching the Other and as a tool for managing "foreign" experiences. Flaubert's writings remain consistent with Said's descriptions of Orientalism, as Emma Bovary and her creator Gustave Flaubert are attracted to and repulsed by the Other, respectively, and writing about their experiences with the Other helps them to link the familiar with the unfamiliar and to achieve their goals and desires. Most importantly, though, Flaubert's writing demonstrates the importance of the relationship between Self and Other, and as seen in Flaubert's interaction with his text and with his heroine, embracing the Other can help one better understand the Self, but the two categories may frequently overlap and thus may not be easily defined. In this way, then, Flaubert's understanding of the Other developed over the course of his literary career, and his writing consistently displays the liberation that seeking the Other through writing offers from the monotony and familiarity of life. However, the liberating contact with the Other that both travel and writing offered to Flaubert did not cease when he returned from his final voyage. Regarding Flaubert's habits after his travels abroad, Tooke notes, "He settles for Croisset and the internal voyage of writing. As for the notes of the Voyage, they become the half-finished building blocks of Flaubert's own Pyramids. The end of travel writing

is writing itself" (64). His physical journeys ended with the liberating experience of composing his greatest novel from inside his own home; therefore, Flaubert's physical journeys outside France were only the beginning of reaching for the Other—that is, for a life of great literary achievement for this bourgeois Frenchman.

Chapter Seven—Conclusion—Flaubert's Poetics: The Art of Liberation

As evidenced in each element of his poetics, Flaubert labored over every literary work he composed. While each aspect of Flaubert's poetics focuses on a particular aspect of his style, they all work together to demonstrate the liberation that writing offered him from the surrounding world and especially from the boredom and constraints he experienced while living a middle-class existence. Particularly, the poetics that underlies *Madame Bovary* helps to make the novel one of the greatest works of world literature and embodies a unique literary style that is worth studying and emulating. Altogether the elements of Flaubert's poetics offer liberation from judgments and opinions, from the limitations of language, and from bourgeois society, not just for him as an author, but for all those who read and study his works; understanding how his poetics work together may also aid literary scholars in their response to Flaubert.

Each element of Flaubert's poetics liberated him from something that constrained him, and as a whole his poetics reveals the freedom that writing offered him, and it highlights the realism present in his works. Flaubert's commitment to an impartial yet omniscient authorial voice freed him from his own judgments of his characters and at the same time makes the depiction of his characters more realistic. The carefully planned structures of his most realistic works of fiction liberated Flaubert from the limitations of language and yet allowed him to display the power of language in his writing. As he buried himself in the realistic details of his writing, Flaubert was also able to overcome the romanticism that was so prevalent in his previous literature. His play with the rhythm and "acoustics" of language reveals the way that the musicality of his works freed him further from language's constraints and helped him to conquer its inadequacies. In addition, the musical elements of Flaubert's texts frequently highlight important occurrences in a character's thoughts and consciousness. Thus, the poetics

that aided Flaubert in overcoming language's shortcomings helps to portray a more complete picture of reality in his literature. The liberating aspect of Flaubert's poetics also extends to his personal and travel writings, as he was able to experience freedom from himself and from bourgeois society by embracing foreign lands and people through writing. These unfamiliar people and ideas usually represented "the Other" for him, and by discovering and reacting to the Other in his writing, he also gained a greater understanding of himself. While certain elements of Flaubert's poetics do not seem to work together naturally, such as objectivity and musicality, all the elements of his poetics are key factors in making writing a liberating experience for Flaubert, and all are necessary for a thorough portrayal of reality. Interestingly, while each element of his poetics helped to free him from certain limitations, such as those that language presented to him, they each helped him to embrace realism as a new limitation in his writing, especially in *Madame Bovary*.

Thus, Flaubert's poetics, when viewed as a whole, highlight his desire and commitment to reveal a full picture of reality consistently in his writing, for both himself and for his characters. Particularly in *Madame Bovary,* the reality that Flaubert wanted to portray in his novel was that of Emma Bovary's daily existence, and her everyday experience of reality in some ways mirrors Flaubert's own experience. It is widely reported that one of Flaubert's most famous statements about the heroine of his novel was "Madame Bovary, c'est moi," which roughly translated means "I am Madame Bovary." Flaubert saw many of his heroine's characteristics in himself, and in addition to understanding her need to endure her middle-class life, he also comprehended her struggles with her own romantic tendencies. His intricate portrayal of Emma's real life was in some way a purge of his own romanticism.

Flaubert moved away from romantic literature with his composition of *Madame Bovary*,

and his realistic depiction of Emma in the work actually liberated him, as well as those who wrote after him, from the typical treatment of the "eternal feminine" (Lowe 25). Unlike so many other heroines of nineteenth-century novels, "Emma . . . seemed to [Flaubert] a woman such as one meets in actual life" (Lowe 26). Emma as a character is extremely believable, and her journey makes *Madame Bovary* a book immersed in real life, not in romanticism; in fact, Emma's search for romanticism is the one thing that Flaubert attempts to combat in his novel, and George Levine even notes that realism requires "rejecting the happy ending" that is so prevalent in romantic literature ("Realism, or in Praise of Lying" 356). Emma seeks the ideal, "that elusive goal so stressed in the early nineteenth century" but that does not exist in reality (Lowe 20). In this way, Flaubert's novel ultimately is a prime example of modern realism, "an allegory of the changes which come over the human psyche between birth and death, of a sensual being striving unsuccessfully and eventually perversely to be pure spirit, to be intellect and aspiration . . ." (Lowe 20). *Madame Bovary*, then, not only liberated Flaubert from the search for romanticism in his own life and through his writing but also helped set a precedent for the realistic treatment of heroines in modern literature.

In his personal life, Flaubert experienced several great losses, and his novel allowed him to attempt to reveal the truth about his own struggles and to attempt to do so in an objective manner. His views about his life and his occasional despair are reflected in the prose of his novel, as the composition of his work helped him to cope with his pain:

> The Gustave Flaubert who, at the age of roughly thirty, sat down to write *Madame Bovary*, had known a severe mental illness at the age of twenty-three, followed by the deaths in quick succession of his distinguished surgeon father, still at the height of his powers, of his only sister Caroline, to whom he had been very close,

> and finally, only two years later, of his beloved friend Alfred Le Poittevin. Pain and mortality . . . are at the heart of this tragic story, which is yet for some a comic masterpiece, set in a milieu which Flaubert chose deliberately, reflecting his overall view of modern life as well as of art. (Lowe 15)

In this way, the writing of *Madame Bovary* not only displays reality for Emma but also gives insight into Flaubert's similar struggles. He was devastated by the loss of his sister, and his composition of the novel may have helped him to overcome and even to explain this great loss: "In this way did Flaubert exorcise the pain of the loss of Caroline. This is one of the causes of his famous remark: 'Madame Bovary, c'est moi'" (Lowe 28). Flaubert's concern with displaying reality, then, can be observed not only in his careful and honest depiction of Emma but also in the way that this depiction of Emma uncovers truth about his own life. However, the composition of the novel was most likely not a complete purge of Flaubert's romantic tendencies or of his despair and pessimism, as Flaubert clearly and thoroughly depicts Emma's demise toward the conclusion of *Madame Bovary*.

An understanding of the manner in which Flaubert's poetics attempts to display truth through objectivity especially enhances the study of his works for literary scholars and educators, as they, like Flaubert, may benefit greatly from valuing objectivity in their studies. Particularly, students and professors of literature can learn how to display love for their writing while learning to maintain a proper distance from their characters or subjects as well as from their judgments and opinions, as this distance may allow them to see and to communicate truth in an objective way. Flaubert's narrator, who is omniscient yet invisible, allows his audience to understand the inner workings of his characters while attempting to resist authorial intrusion, and thus he encourages his readers to make their own judgments of his characters. For instance, in *Madame*

Bovary, Flaubert's readers learn to despise Emma's behavior not because Flaubert tells them to do so but because they have decided to do so as a result of the narrator's showing them her beliefs and mindset. However, while Flaubert's poetics appears workable and while his poetics is still worthy of emulation, the objective element of his poetics may not work fully the way that he wants it to work. His attempt to maintain objectivity in his authorial voice is extremely significant, yet complete objectivity may not be possible for Flaubert because of his intimate involvement with his heroine and with the novel's subject matter. He longs to portray truth in his work by offering insight into character consciousness objectively, yet Flaubert cannot detach himself completely from Madame Bovary, with whom he identifies so strongly.

While his wavering commitment to objectivity does not make his writing any less beautiful, this element of Flaubert's poetics may reveal that objectivity and truthfulness are not equal and perhaps that objectivity is not the sole avenue to truth. Through his narrative style, Flaubert allows the reality of bourgeois existence to be unveiled in his characters rather than in his authorial commentary, and in this way, he testifies to things as they are rather than to things as they should be. According to Levine, "Observing things as they are, even with quasi-scientific detachment, displaces false representations with authentic ones, and forces us, as readers, out of the kinds of delusions that lead to moral disaster—Don Quixote's, or Emma Woodhouse's, or Emma Bovary's . . ." ("Realism" 188). In *Madame Bovary*, realism seems to align itself with truth, as Flaubert portrays his characters as they are, offering specific details as they are seen through his characters' eyes, and this objectivity is part of what makes his masterpiece an appreciated work of art and is what makes it stand out above his romantic, more subjective works. However, some of the greatest truths about his novel and about his experience composing it result from an understanding of Flaubert's subjective involvement with and

reactions to his work. For instance, his narrator appears to remain objective while frequently collapsing into his character's consciousness and subjectivity, and his identification with Emma is anything but objective. While Flaubert's attempted objectivity has value for those studying his works, his poetics ultimately reveals the importance of achieving a proper balance between a subjective kind of identification with a subject and an aim at objectivity in one's studies and writing. This balance has significance especially for those in academic circles; while objectivity in writing and literary study is extremely important, a subjective kind of passion for one's material is a vital part of the portrayal of truth. In this way, then, by practicing a proper balance of subjectivity and objectivity in writing, literary scholars and students of Flaubert alike allow the truth to speak for itself and encourage their readers and colleagues to make their own judgments.

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