FLAUBERT'S VIEW OF LANGUAGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE MEANING OF THE NOVELS

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to further the inquiry into Flaubert's insights into language and their implications for the meaning of novels. In the perspective of assumptions underlying the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century views of language, the novelist's own attitudes towards language are examined. Discussion of his early autobiographical works focuses particularly on the problem of inarticulacy and how it is ultimately objectified into a literary theme in the mature works. The thesis then considers the attractions and dangers which Flaubert recognises in accepting language as a means of ordering what is external to us. The problems inherent in the idealistic search to match experience and words derive in Flaubert's view from the inorganic nature of words themselves and from the idealist's unawareness of the distance between verbal reality and the world he inhabits. By contrast, the bourgeois response is to use language as a self-generating, stereotyped system. A discussion of the complex problem of Flaubert's use of speech in the novel shows the author to be subverting not only the conventions of literary speech, but also the possibility of communication between characters. The discussion of Bouvard et Pécuchet, in the perspective of Flaubert's mistrust of the significance of words, seeks to highlight his belief in the absurdity of epistemological conceptualisation. In the last chapter, the subject of silence in the novels is considered: employed in an original way by Flaubert, it serves to illustrate the emptiness of human experience.
Table of Contents

Preface .................................................. 4
Introduction ............................................. 10
Chapter I : Self expression and inarticulacy .......... 29
Chapter II : Idealism .................................. 60
Chapter III : The Bourgeois .......................... 106
Chapter IV : The Functions of speech: Communication and Non-Communication ............................................. 152
Chapter V : 'Bouvard et Pécuchet' .................... 208
Chapter VI : Silence .................................... 235
Conclusion .............................................. 252
Bibliography ........................................... 258
Research on Flaubert has expanded rapidly in the last two decades. Discussion of the origin and genesis of the novels, analysis of the psychology of the characters, and examination of the novelist's aesthetic theories - particularly the doctrine of impersonality, the use of 'style indirect libre' and the search for 'le mot juste' - previously dominated Flaubert criticism, and there was little reference to his assumptions about the language out of which he fashioned his works. Recently, however, the work done by Sartre in his attempt to 'établir la constitution de Gustave' (1), and the parallel development of structuralism, have both had an immense impact on the focus of modern criticism.

_L'Idiot de la Famille_ (1971-2) puts forward the hypothesis that Flaubert's scepticism about language was fundamental to the development of his personality. The psychocritical stance adopted by Sartre added a new dimension to Barthes's suggestion that 'ce qui sépare la pensée d'un Balzac et celle d'un Flaubert' was a dramatic change in bourgeois consciousness brought about by the events of 1848, a view expressed in _Le Degré Zéro de l'écriture_ in 1953 and which has clear limitations in that it fails to take into account that Flaubert's scepticism about language is evident in his _Œuvres de Jeunesse_ written in the decade which preceded the 1848 revolution (2).

In the 1970's, the works of both Sartre and Barthes have been influential in stimulating a reassessment of Flaubert's work, and the structuralist view - expounded in later works by Barthes - that Flaubert questions the whole nature of metalanguage and that in his work 'il n'y a plus que la langue' (3) has paved the way for several critics to re-examine Flaubert's

attitudes to representation and communication, and, perhaps more significantly, to concentrate on the evidence of the novels themselves rather than on the Correspondance. In the well-argued preface to Flaubert: The uses of uncertainty, (1974) Culler acknowledges his debt to both Sartre and Barthes and expresses the need for a new formal teleology with which the novels may be explored as autonomous objects, concentrating on their internal structure rather than seeking any 'recuperative' discovery of meaning in the novel which may, he argues, be intolerant of anything in the text which fails to contribute to its symbolic signification. (4) Culler is critical of those who attempt to impose meaning on the novel: his view is that 'everything, from technical devices to thematic patterns, exists in order to bring into being the literary work whose function is simply to exist!' (5)

The structuralist approach thus involves exploration of the whole concept of meaning in the novel and of the way in which language is related to meaning, and the importance of its influence on critics is clear from the amount of research carried out on the subject of language in Flaubert's work. Many articles have concentrated on consideration of a single theme in a single novel: McConnell has analysed Emma Bovary's misconceptions about reality by considering the vocabulary at her disposal and her attitude towards their vocabulary; (6) Duchet has explored Flaubert's use of social discourse in Madame Bovary; (7) Herschberg-Pierrot has considered Flaubert's use of cliche in Bouvard et Pécuchet, (8) and the same theme has

(5) ibid., p17
(7) C. Duchet: 'Discours social et texte italique dans Madame Bovary', in Languages de Flaubert, Paris, Minard, 1976, pp143-163
been taken up in a wider context more recently by Amossy and Rosen\(^{(9)}\). Other critics have sought to explore more extensively, and their work has begun to treat the whole question of epistemology in Flaubert’s fiction. Bernheimer, writing in 1974, discussed the concept of knowledge put forward in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* with specific reference to the theme of language in the novel\(^{(10)}\) and in a more comprehensive work Knight analysed Flaubert’s view of the relationship between language and artistic representation\(^{(11)}\). The work of Felman\(^{(12)}\) and, more recently, Bem\(^{(13)}\) also contributes to our understanding of the role of language and of its relationship and expression in the novels; the debt of the latter to the structuralists, Sartre, Freud and Lacan is clear in her *Clefs pour l’Education Sentimentale* (1981)\(^{(14)}\). Whilst many of the trends in criticism popular in the 1970s are no longer in fashion, their impact on Flaubert criticism, particularly in the fields of linguistics and epistemology, remains.

The aim of this thesis is to further the inquiry into Flaubert’s insights into language and their implications for the meaning of novels. Modern criticism on Flaubert has failed to consider the assumptions about language at the time at which Flaubert was writing, and the novelist’s

\(^{(11)}\) D. Knight: Flaubert’s aesthetic values. An assessment of a formal perspective on language and representation, University of Warwick, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis 1977
\(^{(13)}\) J. Bem: Désir et savoir dans l’œuvre de Flaubert, Neuchâtel, La Baconnière, 1974. Other works by Bem are listed in the Bibliography.
uncertainties about language – treated by Sartre from a psychocritical point of view – require to be seen in a wider context than hitherto. Underlying the early autobiographical works, with their recurrent theme of inarticulacy, is the novelist's awareness of the gap between sign and referent, and Flaubert's pessimism about the individual's ability to comprehend and express his experience is a major theme of all the works of his maturity. The first version of *L'Éducation Sentimentale* treats the subject of idealism in a variety of ways and reveals the novelist's doubts about man's ability to understand and reach his ideal. Whilst Jules discovers the possibility of employing language in the creation of art – and, in the novel, artistic creation is no more than a possibility – the path of Henry prefigures the pessimism of the later novels. Developing the theme of romantic yearning, *Madame Bovary* and *Salammbô* explore the temptations offered by language and the illusory nature of idealism: the heroines of both novels accept words as organising principles for life and this naive, uncritical acceptance, compounded by the deceptive nature of linguistic signs which, being inorganic, can never express the organic quality of existence, is the object of Flaubert's criticism. Yet this criticism is tempered by sympathy: Emma is, as Baudelaire realised, 'sublime' (15), and idealism is clearly superior to the egotism of the bourgeois world. If the fault of the idealist is to fail to come to terms with experience, that of the bourgeois world is the complacent acceptance of a stereotyped, self-generating language allowing only a codified appreciation of the world, and bourgeois success is regarded by Flaubert as largely dependent on the individual's ability

to manipulate such a language in his own interests. The novelist's growing pessimism may be seen in his depiction of the bourgeois from Henry's father, a harmless, Prudhommesque caricature in the first version of *L'Education Sentimentale*, to Lheureux and Homais, successful in finance and politics respectively; and finally to the characters of *L'Education Sentimentale*, where the whole of society is constituted of bourgeois stereotypes: Left and Right are fundamentally identical and neither political nor moral progress is possible. The all-pervasive quality of the bourgeois mentality is, moreover, increasingly expressed by Flaubert's use of narrative technique: reality is frequently seen through bourgeois eyes.

The world depicted by Flaubert is one in which the individual can find no solace in human relationships, because he is unable to transcend his own frame of reference and hence understand the experience of another. Indeed, relationships are seen by the novelist in a particularly negative light since they are often characterised by the wilful manipulation of one character by another. Yet non-communication in the novels can also function as a primary source of comedy: the focus on individual relationships and intercourse is, more often than not, ironic.

The sterility of human existence and the inevitable failure of man to progress are nowhere better illustrated than in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Here the idealism examined in the earlier novels is seen in the context of the search for progress through science. Nineteenth-century faith in progress is treated ironically by Flaubert, whose protagonists are repeatedly frustrated in their pursuits by the constant gap between experience and
the language employed to describe it. The circular structure of the novel serves to reinforce the theme: Bouvard and Pécuchet's return to copying produces the impression of man imprisoned by language and capable of achieving nothing of significance. The novel is coherent to Flaubert's whole view of the relationship between language, experience, knowledge and progress.

For certain writers, pessimism about the isolation of the individual and about his ability to understand and express his experience is alleviated by the implication that silence rather than language might convey the individual's unexplored depths and the profundity of his experience. For Flaubert, however, the theme of silence emphasises man's inability to come to terms with the world. At best, in the early works, it has an ambiguous significance; and in the Trois Contes, in particular, it is used to great effect to put into perspective the autonomy of language. This juxtaposition compounds Flaubert's view of man's failure to penetrate the barrier of language with which he is confronted in his search for knowledge and understanding.

Flaubert's pessimism about human existence is undoubtedly fundamental to his undertaking to create art. Yet his belief that language does not coincide with experience accounts for the many difficulties he experienced when writing his novels. If Flaubert has, as is so often claimed, an affinity with modern writers, it must surely lie in his acute awareness, shared with Proust, Eliot, Ionesco and Beckett, of art as a

...raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating.\(^{(16)}\)

\(^{(16)}\) T.S. Eliot: _East Coker_, London, Faber and Faber, 1940, p14
Introduction

For the grammarians and philosophers of the seventeenth century, language is primarily an aspect of the rational behaviour of man. The function of words is to reflect ideas, and the very processes of thought are explained by the study of grammar. Lancelot and Arnauld, authors of the *Grammaire Générale et Raisonnée de Port-Royal* published in 1660, emphasise the primacy of thought over language. 'Le Grammaire Raisonnée' is not simply descriptive, for the task of the grammarians is to explain thought:

On ne peut bien comprendre les diverses sortes de significations qui sont enfermées dans les mots sans qu'on ait bien compris auparavant ce qui se passe dans nos pensées. (17)

Such a fundamental notion was highly influential; a century later, the writing of Beauzée follows the same trend:

La science de la parole ne diffère guère de celle de la pensée. (19)

Writers within this tradition recognised, for the most part, the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs - they did not claim a natural link between sound and meaning - but stressed the necessity of signification:

Le caractère arbitraire du signe ne saurait donc s'étendre au domaine de la chose pensée. (20)

Both English and French writers of the period express a desire for clarity of expression and precision in the use of language. Wilkin's *Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical language* (1668) has been described


(19) N. Beauzée: *Grammaire générale ou exposition raisonnée des éléments nécessaires du langage, pour servir de fondement à l'étude de toutes les langues*, (1767), Paris, Delalain, 1819, pX.

(20) Donzé, op. cit., p53. On the subject of a parallel tradition which held that language was not arbitrary, but that linguistic signs were 'naturally' linked to their objects, cf. G. Genette: *Mimologiques*, Seuil, Paris, 1976.
as 'an heroic attempt to wring a mathematically precise symbolism from the chaos of common parlance'\(^{(21)}\) and in France the work of Vaugelas in establishing the 'usage' of linguistic signs prefigures the concern to fix the language by determining and rationalising the link between the sign and its referent.

The primacy of semantic considerations over the formal aspect of language has been stressed by Land. For the grammarians of the seventeenth century, language has no structure of its own: it follows the structure of thought, and a perfect language is one which represents universal reason. This notion is fundamental to those writing in the tradition of the grammarians. In 1767 Beauzée states that:

\[
\text{La science grammaticale est antérieure à toutes les langues parce que ses principes ne supposent que la possibilité des langues, qu’ils sont les mêmes que ceux qui dirigent la raison humaine dans ses opérations intellectuelles; en un mot, qu’ils sont d’une vérité éternelle}\] \(^{(22)}\)

Universal reason thus underlies language, and there is therefore a close link between the desire to purify language, and the notion of the perfectibility of reason.

Yet 'La Grammaire Générale' implies, by its very nature, an analysis of

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\(^{(22)}\) Beauzée; *op. cit.*, pVI
language. It is according to Foucault,

L'étude de l'ordre verbal dans son rapport à la simultanéité qu'elle a pour charge de représenter. (23)

The study of discourse - a linear sequence of words employed to express a single thought - involves an awareness that language has a different sequence to thought. In this respect, it opens up the way for a marked diversification of ideas on language which is found in the eighteenth century. (24) The premises of the Port-Royal grammar remain influential; this is evident from the publication of grammars following a similar pattern throughout the century and during the beginning of the nineteenth century - Flaubert himself used the 'Grammaire des Grammaires, ou analyse raisonnée des meilleurs traités sur la langue française' (1812) (25) - but the development of different fields of enquiry in philosophy and also in archeology led to a divergence of views.

It is possible to trace the modification of Port-Royal 'linguistic theory' to English philosophy, notably that of Hobbes, who saw that thought depended on language and that abuses of language, especially as a result of inconsistencies in the meaning of words and through the deceitful use of words could hinder communication between individuals. It is likely that Condillac, whose work is central to the study of language in eighteenth century France, knew the work of Hobbes, but

(25) O.P. Girault-Duvivier: Grammaire des grammairies, ou analyse raisonnée des meilleurs traités sur la langue française, 1812. There were 12 editions during the nineteenth century; the final edition is dated 1879. For the reference to Flaubert, see Louis Kukenheim, L'esquisse historique de la linguistique française et de ses rapports avec la linguistique générale, Leiden, University of Leiden, 1962, p50.
the philosopher most influential in the development of Condillac's thought was Locke, whose *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) was acclaimed in France from the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Locke never departs from the notion that language and thought are identical: indeed, he states that:

> 'that then which words are the marks of, are the ideas of the speaker.' (26)

Neither does he recognise that language has its own structure, separate from that of thought. Nevertheless, his philosophy stresses the interdependence of language and thought rather than the primacy of ideas over words, and his constant references, particularly in Book Three of the *Essay*, to the imperfections of language and the abuses made of it show an awareness of the possibility of a gap between sign and signification. Stressing the role of language in communication, Locke discusses the problems caused both by the user's inability to employ language precisely and by the faults inherent in language itself. Whilst he rationalises, by reference to the conventional nature of language, the notion that

> 'the signification of sounds is not natural, but only imposed and arbitrary.' (27)

he recognises that meaning is relative: what is expressed is dependent on the concept held by the speaker:

(27) ibid, p425, (Book III, Chapter 4, paragraph 11)
Words can properly and immediately signify nothing but the ideas, that are in the mind of the speaker. (28)

He is also aware of the inadequacy of the definitions of words - particularly of abstract words - and sees as a fundamental problem the fact that words may be employed independently of ideas. Certain men use a language consisting of "empty sounds, with little or no signification" (29)

Others there be who ... familiarly use words, which the Propriety of language has affixed to very important ideas, without any distinct meaning at all. Wisdom, Glory, Grace, etc. are words frequent enough in every man's mouth! (30)

A further passage, written in the same vein, implies that language may be no more than a mechanism:

It often happens that men, even when they would apply themselves to alternative considerations, do set their thoughts more on Words than Things. Nay, because words are many of them learned before the ideas for which they stand, therefore some, not only Children but Men, speak several words no otherwise than parrots do, only because they have learned them and have become accustomed to these sounds. (31)

Language does not necessarily imply knowledge, nor does discussion necessarily produce knowledge: Locke highlights the problem of disputes which are purely verbal, arguments about politics and religion which are simply noise and wrangling about sounds. (32)

He is particularly critical of 'affected obscurity.' (33) He deplores

(28) ibid; p406 (Book III, Chapter 2, paragraph 4)
(29) ibid; p491 (Book III, Chapter 10, paragraph 2)
(30) ibid; p491 (Book III, Chapter 10, paragraph 3)
(31) ibid; p407 (Book III, Chapter 2, paragraph 7)
(32) ibid; p510 (Book III, Chapter 11, paragraph 6)
(33) ibid; p493 (Book III, Chapter 10, paragraph 6)
the interest and artifice of those who found no
easier way to that pitch of Authority and Dominion
they have attained, than by amusing the Men of
Business, and the Ignorant, with hard words, or
imploying the Ingenious and Idle in intricate
disputes about unintelligible terms and holding
them perpetually entangled in that endless labyrinth. (34)

For Locke, then, manipulation of the gap between the sign and what it
is meant to represent gives access to power. This is one potential
danger of the abuse of language which Flaubert actualizes in his novels.

For Locke, the study of language remained part of his philosophical
system, and the same is true of the philosophers of eighteenth century
France. It was not autonomous, but was an aspect – albeit an increasingly
important aspect – of the desire to understand human nature. This
explains why no single lines of development can be traced. Nevertheless,
certain ideas recur: and when considering the status of the linguistic
sign, it is not difficult to find precursors of Condillac in France.

L’Abbe Girard states in his Traité de la Justesse Française (1718) that
the signification of words is determined by the mind, and that meaning
therefore varies according to the users of the language. This idea he
sought to develop later in a widely circulated version of the same work,
Synonymes Français, leurs différentes significations et le choix qu’il
faut en faire pour parler avec justesse. (1736). The resemblance of
words, he claims

ne consiste que dans l'idée principale ... mais que
chacun diversifie à sa manière par une idée accessoire
qui lui donne un caractère propre et singulier. (35)

(34) ibid; p495 (Book III, Chapter 10, paragraph 9)
(35) L’Abbé Gabriel Girard: Synonymes Français, leurs différentes
significations et le choix qu’il faut en faire pour parler avec
justesse, 1736. Nouvelle édition par M. Beauzee, Paris, 1780,
(2 vols), vol 1, pX
Synonyms are coined in order that new meanings may be put forward in different contexts: their existence is proof that language and thought are not identical.

For Du Marsais, writing at the same time as Girard, language does not mirror reason, but imagination, images, for example, depend not on logical analysis but on the relationship perceived by the individual between two objects. In the Encyclopédie article 'Article', he questions the whole concept of a single underlying reality which can be mirrored by language:

En toute langue, et en toute construction, il y a une justesse à observer dans l'emploi qu'on fait des signes destinés par l'usage pour merger non seulement l'objet de nos idées mais encore les différentes vues sous lesquelles l'esprit considère ces objets. L'article, les prépositions, les conjonctions, les verbes avec leurs différentes inflexions, enfin tous les mots qui ne marquent point de choses n'ont autre distinction que de faire connaître ces différentes vues de l'esprit. (36)

Far from reflecting universal logic, language is a sign of man's individual perceptions. Words relate to man's way of thinking rather than to the object of his thoughts. This notion is further developed in Condillac's work.

For Condillac, as for Locke, language and thought are interdependent, yet Condillac is critical of Locke for not recognising the true importance of language, and he puts forward the notion that thought cannot exist without signs:

L'usage des signes est le principe qui développe le germe de toutes nos idées. (37)

Language is an activity fundamental to the development of ideas:

Nous avons remarqué que le développement de nos idées et de nos facultés ne se fait que par le moyen des signes, et ne se ferait point sans eux.\(^{35}\)

Hence it plays an important role in the development of the human mind; even if, for the eighteenth century, human nature is fixed and unchanging, man can develop mentally by increasing his knowledge:

le bon sens, l'esprit, la raison et leurs contraires naissent également d'un même principe qui est la liaison desidées les unes avec les autres; remontant encore plus haut, on voit que cette liaison est produite par l'usage des signes; et que, par conséquent, les progrès de l'esprit humaine dépendent entièrement de l'adresse avec laquelle nous nous servons du langage.\(^{39}\)

Yet the representational function of language, upon which progress depends, is not always fulfilled. Condillac's discussion of algebra implies the inferiority of language to a system of mathematical signs:

L'algèbre est une langue bien faite, et c'est la seule; rien n'y paraît arbitraire. L'analogie qui n'échappe jamais conduit seulement d'expression en expression. L'usage n'a ici aucune autorité.\(^{40}\)

Human language, having developed naturally, lacks this degree of perfection. Condillac, like Locke, illustrates this by focussing attention on man's abuse of language:

Il est curieux de remarquer avec quelle confiance on se sert du langage dans le moment même où l'on en abuse le plus.\(^{41}\)

He is critical of the deliberate obscurity of philosophers, yet aware also that the relationship between the sign and its referent is arbitrary.

\(^{38}\) Etienne Bonnot de Condillac: La logique ou les premiers développements de l'art de penser, ed. cit., vol 2, p413.


\(^{40}\) Etienne Bonnot de Condillac: La langue des calculs, in Oeuvres Complètes, ed. cit., vol 2, pp419-20.

\(^{41}\) Etienne Bonnot de Condillac: Essai sur l'origine de connaissances humaines, in Oeuvres Complètes, ed. cit., vol 1, p90.
Reference to usage is an attempt to rationalise the arbitrary nature of signs, yet Condillac remains aware of the potential emptiness of language, and stresses the need for precision:

> Il ne faut se servir des signes que pour exprimer les idées qu'on a soi-même dans l'esprit. (43)

Condillac, like his contemporaries, holds clarity as an ideal to be attained through the precise use of signs, yet his work produces an impression that he was conscious of the extent to which men consistently fail to achieve clarity of thought and expression.

What is significant in the development of eighteenth-century ideas is the growing mistrust of the sign as an adequate mode of representation and analysis. Destutt de Tracy recognises the importance of the Port-Royal Grammarians to his own philosophical system and goes on to acknowledge his debt to Condillac's belief in the importance of the sign to thought:

> Condillac est, je crois, le premier qui ait observé et prouvé que sans signes nous ne pourrions presque pas comparer nos idées simples, ni analyser nos idées composées; qu'ainsi les langues sont aussi nécessaires pour penser que pour parler, pour avoir des idées que pour les exprimer. (44)

Yet there is a potential distance between words and what they are meant to represent which cannot be ignored:

> Lorsque ensuite j'ai ressenti l'amour et vu la mer, j'assemble sous ces mots une foule de perceptions réellement éprouvées, mais je ne suis pas du tout sûr qu'elles soient exactement les mêmes que celles éprouvées par celui qui m'a appris ces mots. (45)

(42) ibid., p106
(43) ibid., p91
(45) ibid., vol I, p269
The notion of the void behind the sign imposes, in de Tracy's view, a limitation on conception and expression:

Il est impossible que le même signe ait exactement la même valeur pour tous ceux qui l'emploient .... Cette triste vérité est ce qui constitue essentiellement le vice radical de l'esprit de l'homme; ce qui le condamne à ne jamais arriver complètement à l'exactitude, excepté dans quelques cas fort simples. (46)

Thus de Tracy's optimism about the perfectibility of reason is conditioned by his reservations about the perfectibility of language:

L'homme aspire toujours à la perfection, quoiqu'il n'y parvienne jamais. Il est impossible de s'occuper un moment de Grammaire Générale sans être frappé des vices de tous nos langages. (47)

Whilst this plainly suggests an indictment of language, it is not clear from de Tracy's writing whether the nature of the sign-system itself is to blame for the failure of language, or whether man's inability to employ words in an exact and precise way is the cause of the problem:

Ces inconvénients des signes sont inhérens à leur nature ou plutôt à celle de nos facultés intellectuelles... ils sont donc impossible à détruire totalement. (48)

Exactly the same uncertainty as to the precise cause of the failure of language constitutes a dilemma with which Flaubert was constantly confronted.

The value of the sign is attacked from a different standpoint in Maine de Biran's philosophy, which stresses the importance of habit in systematizing the relationship between the sign and its referent. Maine de Biran, aware that signs are arbitrary, asserts that representation can only operate if the individual remains aware of his perceptions and ideas and attaches due importance to these rather than to the signs employed to represent them.

(46) ibid., vol II, p264
(47) ibid., vol II, p256
(48) ibid., vol I, p270
Maine de Biran clearly sees the problem of regarding language as a pure mechanism, devoid of signification, and in this respect prefigures Flaubert for whom the cliché reveals mental and spiritual sterility. The problem, for Maine de Biran, is that habit conditions the way in which signs are apprehended by the individual and language may, therefore, prevent the growth of awareness:

La rapidité progressive de termes articulés empêche le plus souvent tout retour réfléchi vers les idées, qui demeurent nulles, ou vagues, ou indéterminées. La facilité dégénère en automatisme. (50)

As P. Tisserand notes, an automatic functioning of language precludes both reflexion and progress, a persistent theme in the work of Flaubert:

L'habitude s'oppose avec une force croissante à de nouvelles vérifications et remplace la doute de la sagesse par une aveugle présomption. (51)

Thus in Maine de Biran's work, the Port-Royal concept of the identity of language and thought is denied by an awareness of the void behind the sign:

L'extrême facilité et rapidité du langage tend à ramener de nouveau à un aveugle mécanisme toutes les opérations auxquelles il sert de fondement.... c'est ainsi que nous parlons trop souvent à vide. (52)

If the Port-Royal concept of signification is undermined in the ways outlined above, it should be stressed that uncertainty about the

(50) ibid., p136.
(52) M.F.P.G. Maine de Biran: op.cit., p128
representative function of language was also provoked as a result of the eighteenth-and nineteenth-century enquiry into the origins and development of language. We have seen how investigation into language contributes part of a wider enquiry into human nature and human understanding, and it is from this basic area of study that consideration of the origins of language developed. Renan, in his De l'origine du langage (1848) is dismissive of the explications artificielles en tout ce qui tient aux origines de l'esprit humain. (53)

in the work of the philosophers of the previous century. Yet it is evident to the modern reader that both the historical project of the enquiry - which influenced the aesthetic theory of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century - and its philosophical concerns - certain of which resulted in the integration of the study of the origin of language into 'la Grammaire Générale' - are of the utmost importance to the understanding of prevailing attitudes in the early nineteenth century towards language. (54) These areas of study merit discussion because they provide a further dimension of views not only of language, but also of the nature of knowledge which language both expresses and enhances.

Certain writers argue for the mechanistic origin of language. For Condillac, language, which developed from gesture, is a product of the sensations, needs, understanding and imagination of man. For the Président de Brosses, words were originally man's attempt to decipher

and to evoke the natural world. (55) Theories such as these gave rise to a considerable interest in the study of onomatopoeia and etymology in the eighteenth century.

Yet the question raised by Warburton's study of hieroglyphics about the diverse ways in which ideas are represented and the assertion that a system of hieroglyphics differs fundamentally from symbolic writing in its mode of representation formed the basis for widespread interest in the nature of symbols and symbolic expression. (56) Elsewhere, notions of the simultaneous origin of language and poetry, together with a renewal of interest in the Orphic Myth and other ancient mystical traditions contributed to a resurgence of the belief in the divine origin of language, an idea which although not explicitly stated, underlies Rousseau's Réflexions sur l'origine des langues (1755). (57) Here, Rousseau contrasts man's original language with the degenerate state into which it has fallen. Language was originally poetical and


(56) William Warburton: The divine legation of Moses demonstrated on the principles of a religious deist, 1738-41. Condillac refers extensively to the translation of part of this work, the Essai sur les hiéroglyphes Égyptiens, Paris, 1744. The work was obviously widely known in France.

Cette langue aurait beaucoup de synonymes pour exprimer le même être par ses différents rapports. Elle aurait beaucoup d'augmentatifs, de diminutifs, de mots composés, de particules exclamatifs pour donner de la cadence aux périodes et de la raideur aux phrases,... elle négligerait l'analyse grammaticale pour s'attacher à l'emphase, au nombre, à l'harmonie et à la beauté des sons. (58)

The formalized and abstract language which has evolved from this is criticized as 'plus traînante, plus sourde et plus froide'. (59)

Rousseau's nostalgia for a language other than an autonomous system of signs is reflected in the works of Court de Gébelin, who places great emphasis, in *Le Monde Primitif* (1773), on the figurative nature of original language. (60) The primitive world was dominated by allegory, and both allegory and analogy are seen as manifestations of the supernatural which can be revealed to the modern world only through the intuitive language of poetry:

*La poésie... rend au réel sa véritable signification allégorique.* (61)

Language can therefore be revelatory. It is a source of initiation into the mysteries of the universe and allows man to transcend the actual world. The role of the poet as prophet is to point the way by which humanity will reach its ultimate state of perfection. This is stated by Victor Pavie in a letter to Hugo:

C'est alors que le caractère du poète s'agrandit,
qu'il n'écrir plus pour rimer, mais qu'il a une mission d'en haut, et que semblable à l'écho d'une grande voix, il transmet aux hommes des secrets, puisés dans la révélation d'une nature empreinte de Dieu. (62)

In the early nineteenth century, however, Romantic notions of the revelatory function of language were undermined by the development of philology. This initially takes the form of an historical enquiry into the human origin of language and develops, in Renan's work, for example, into an aspect of the belief in human perfectibility through science.

The philosophy of Vico, whose influence is clear in Rousseau's *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, was widely disseminated in the nineteenth century by Ballanche and by Michelet, who was responsible for translating the works of the Italian in 1827.\(^{(63)}\) Fundamental to Vico's thought is the belief that philology provides the foundation upon which must be based if it is to be valid: philosophy - the study of man as he should be - depends on philology - the understanding of man as he is and always has been - a knowledge which is derived from history, literature, and, most important, from language. History and language are seen not in isolation but united in a process of evolution which the philosopher must seek to explore if he is to understand what is absolute and immutable in human life. Vico's view is that only at the origin of language were words employed to embody ideas: modern language represents a corruption of


this ideal state, and only by comprehending and ultimately resurrecting
the original language can man trace the evolution and progress of humanity.\(^{(64)}\)

This notion was expressed in France by Augustin Chaho, whose aim is
identical to that of the Italian philosopher:

appliquer l'étude philosophique du langage à la
filiation de familles humaines; tracer à l'aide
du vocabulaire universel, écrit ou parlé, l'histoire
générale de l'esprit humain.\(^{(65)}\)

The creative nature of such an undertaking appealed to writers such as
Michelet and Quinet, the translator of Herder, partly because it provided
them with a substitute for the divine ideal:

Aux yeux de Quinet, l'homme est l'interprète et
'la parole vivante' de la nature. Son rôle a pour
reflet l'histoire appelée 'la conscience de l'univers
dans le monde vers la liberté et l'absolu'.\(^{(66)}\)

Quinet's orientalism and Michelet's resurrection of French history are
based on this notion of man as interpreter of the external world.

In this context, Michelet's view of language is of particular interest.
As a translator of Vico, Michelet is well aware of the potential void
behind words, and his *Histoire de France* provides constant reminders of
Vico's condemnation of the autonomy of fully-evolved language.\(^{(67)}\) Yet
prose is a medium through which perfectibility may be attained, and
Michelet's work is devoid of nostalgia for the poetry of primitive man:

Or, qui dit la prose, dit la forme la moins
figurée et la moins concrète, la plus abstraite,
la plus pure, la plus transparente... la prose

\(^{(64)}\) Gianbattista Vico: *The New Science*. Abridged translation of the
third edition (1744) by T.G. Bergin and M.H. Fisch, Ithaca and

\(^{(65)}\) Augustin Chaho: *Philosophie de révélations*, Paris, Librairie
Orientale, Prosper Donde-Dupré, 1835, p29.

\(^{(66)}\) B. Juden: *op. cit.*, p232

\(^{(67)}\) cf, for example, the story of the Duchesse d'Etampes, in *Histoire
est la dernière forme de la pensée, ce qu'il y a de plus éloigné de la vague et inactive rêverie, ce qu'il y a de plus près de l'action. Le passage du symbolisme muet à la poésie, de la poésie à la prose est un progrès vers l'égalité des lumières. C'est un réveillement intellectuel. (68)

Prosaic language as 'un réveillement intellectuel' thus replaces, in Michelet's view, poetry as revelation of the divine.

His belief in the transparency of prose implies, as Orr has suggested, a refusal to explore the autonomy of language. (69) There is an evident discrepancy in Michelet's work between the historian's faith in language and the continued demonstration of language employed as an instrument of betrayal, manipulated to satisfy the individual's self-interest, and suitable for that purpose precisely because of its autonomy.

Michelet's positive attitude towards language is by no means unique. It is reflected, for example, in Renan's De l'Origine des langues (1848)

'la marche des langues vers l'analyse correspond à la marche de l'esprit humain vers une réflexion de plus en plus claire. (70)

Yet Renan's view represents a shift away from the type of idealism implicit in the work of Michelet and Quinet. Renan, influenced by Bopp and William James, relies heavily on the nineteenth-century development of philology as an exact science. Language originates with man, and the classification of languages, together with the comparative study of grammars, allows for a scientific understanding of human nature. Philology, in a more modern

(70) Ernest Renan: op. cit., p14
sense of the word, is therefore part of the progress of modern man towards perfection. The study of philology necessitates an analytic use of language to establish and record verifiable facts. Words are used to demonstrate rather than reveal: logic replaces intuition. As Said has remarked, this field of enquiry forms part of the notion held by Cuvier and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire of science based on research and observation which, by its insistence on classification, description, analysis and research, invests language with considerable authority and implies certainty about its efficiency. (71)

Although science, in Renan's view, has replaced religion, there remains the belief that the new knowledge, like the old, can be attained and represented through language: the essence of things is demonstrable:

Pour moi, je ne connais qu'un seul résultat à la science. C'est de résoudre l'énigme, c'est de dire définitivement à l'homme le mot des choses, c'est de l'expliquer à lui-même, c'est de lui donner, au nom de la seule autorité légitime qui est la nature humaine toute entière, le symbole que les religions lui donnaient tout fait et qu'il ne peut plus accepter. (72)

'résoudre l'énigme': the phrase could almost describe the revelatory function of poetical language: for although Renan makes a distinction between religious symbolism, which is 'tout fait' and hence needing to be deciphered intuitively through the use of language, and scientific knowledge, which depends on an analytical and logical use of language,

it is clear that both religious and scientific idealism in the
nineteenth century imply the acquisition of knowledge which itself
depends on the significative function of language. The renewal of lyric
poetry by the Romantics, the resurrection of prose urged by Vico and
Herder and effected in France by writers such as Michelet and Quinet,
and the development of a functional and abstract language by the scientists
of the period all imply a belief in the power of language to transport
man from the realm of the known to that of the unknown. This belief is
the very essence of idealism.

One aspect of the reaction against this faith in language has been
described by Juden:

La prise de conscience de l'infini, l'éveil au
mystère de l'inconnaissable, a pour résultat de
mettre en doute l'efficacité de la langue. Le
poète sent ses moyens lui échapper. La parole
devient, comme Jules Lefèvre s'en aperçoit en
tirant une métaphore de Saint-Martin... 'un
miroir parjure' dont la surface reflète et brouille
les rayons de l'inconnu. Nul mot ne contient, ni
ne suggère la plénitude de la vision, encore moins
l'immensité du Tout; au mieux est-ce une approximation,
aucun une trahison de l'idéal. (73)

This forms the basis of Gautier's notion of Art as an end in itself;
beyond the artist's mode of expression there is no ideal. Art replaces
both religious and scientific idealism. One aspect of Flaubert's
originality lies in his ability to create art from the tension between
the temptation of the ideal in its various forms and his scepticism about
the language which constitutes this ideal.

(73) B. Juden; op. cit., p495
Chapter I: Self-Expression and Inarticulacy

(i) Self-Expression

The previous outline of attitudes towards language points to certain main trends which contribute to the consciousness of the period in which Flaubert was writing. Yet the problem when treating Flaubert's own views on language, despite the vast number of reflexions in letters and in the fiction, is that there is no obvious point of focus in his work, no single discussion of language which crystallises the assumptions underlying his novels. In contrast, recent studies of Balzac and Stendhal have found it possible to indicate the origin of beliefs implicit in the use of language in the fiction. The basis of Kanes' study of Balzac is La Dissertation sur l'homme, written in 1819, which formulates ideas on 'linguistics' and psychology, ideas which Kanes argues are fundamental to the novelist's conception of representation and interpretation. Crouzet is able to study Stendhal's attitude to 'la Grammaire Générale' and to concepts of language put forward by the 'idéologues', and demonstrates how these determine the nature of Stendhal's intervention in discussion of the state of the Italian language.

Flaubert was undoubtedly fascinated by language as a child, but it is necessary to avoid drawing too many conclusions from this. There is the much quoted letter to Ernest Chevalier, written at the age of nine:

et comme il y a une dame qui vient chez papa

et qui nous contes (sic) toujours des bêtises, je les écrirait (sic) (75)

Interesting as this may appear, to cite it as evidence of an infantile intuition of the contingency of language seems absurd. Moreover, the young writer's interest in 'jeux de mots', possibly prompted by his reading of Rabelais, is not unusual for a child of this age. All normal children are fascinated by the potential ambiguities of words. Equally natural, beneath the posturing, is his sensuous appreciation of language:

Je continue à m'occuper de grec et de latin et je m'en occuperai peut-être toujours. J'aime le parfum de ces belles langues-là. (77)

What is striking in Flaubert's case is the emphasis he puts on the potential meaninglessness of what he reads or hears:

Le mot le plus banal me tient parfois en singulière admiration. Il y a des gestes, des sons de voix dont je ne reviens pas, et des niaiseries qui me donnent presque le vertige. As-tu quelquefois écouté attentivement des gens qui parlaient une langue étrangère que tu n'entendais pas? J'en suis là. A force de vouloir tout comprendre, tout me fait rêver. (78)

This conviction that language is stupid leads him to an awareness of its possible absurdity. In a passage from Par les Champs et Par les Grèves, written in 1847, Flaubert, travelling through Nantes, sees a telegraph operator at work

Quelle drôle de vie que celle de l'homme qui reste là, dans cette petite cabane à faire mouvoir ces deux perches et à tirer sur ces ficelles; rouage

(75) G. Flaubert: Correspondance, Paris, Conard, 9 vols, 1926-1933, vol I, p1: to Ernest Chevalier; 31 - XII - 1830. All subsequent references to the Correspondance will, unless otherwise stated, be to this edition.
(76) ibid., vol I, p180: to Ernest Chevalier; 15 - VI - 1845.
(77) ibid., vol I, p94: to Gourgaud-Dugazon; 22 - I - 1842.
(78) ibid., vol I, p192: to A. Le Poitevin; ix - 1845.
Flaubert's conclusion to this passage stresses the alterity of language: signs are received and given out, but without being adapted to the individual's inner life or being made to express human feelings or thoughts. Communication is seen as a mechanism; on occasions it is a mechanism which fails to function.

Un même parlait à un sourd; après avoir essayé de se faire entendre en lui criant alternativement à chacun de ses oreilles, il s'est mis, de désespoir, à lui hurler dans le derrière. (80)

The writer here is detached, and the passage is humorous. But elsewhere Flaubert directs our attention to his own inability to communicate. His reaction, expressed in the Correspondance, is to withdraw from the world of the conventional and assert his own self in the face of language which is characterized as ulterior:

Il y a maintenant un si grand intervalle entre moi et le reste du monde que je m'étonne parfois d'entendre dire les choses les plus naturelles et les plus simples. (81)

Yet such an assertion, as Sartre has noted, (82) implies Flaubert's doubts about his ability to use a conventional language. Self-expression is accompanied on numerous occasions by an attempt to justify what has been

(79) G. Flaubert; Voyages: Par les champs et par les grèves in Œuvres Completes, Paris, Seuil, 1974. (2 volumes), vol II, p484. All subsequent references to Flaubert's works will be to this edition unless otherwise stated.
(81) ibid., vol I, p192; To Alfred Le Poittevin; ix - 1845.
(82) J.-P. Sartre, op. cit., vol I, p624
said, to affirm the validity of what has been expressed even if the mode of expression is obviously conventional: Thus he expresses himself 'comme dit le sage ancien'\(^{(83)}\) 'comme disent les philosophes'\(^{(84)}\).

On other occasions he is conscious of the failure of the self to express its own uniqueness: the self is defined against the conventional expression of others:

Je suis comme un muet qui veut parler\(^{(85)}\)

Serai-je toute ma vie condamné à être comme un muet qui veut parler et écume de rage? \(^{(86)}\)

He suggests to Louise Colet that his inner life cannot be expressed in conventional terms:

Que de fois, sans le vouloir, n'ai-je pas fait pleurer mon père, lui si intelligent et si fini
Mais il n'entendait rien à mon idiome, lui comme toi, comme les autres. J'ai l'infirmité d'être né avec une langue spéciale dont seul j'ai la clé. \(^{(87)}\)

Emphasis is continually placed on his inability to use language, particularly in the expression of sentiments and sensations; witness his sense of failure on rereading 'Smarth'.

Quand on écrit, on sent ce qui doit être, on comprend qu'à tel endroit il faut ceci, à tel autre cela; on compose des tableaux qu'on voit: on a, en quelque sort, la sensation qu'on va faire éclore, - on le sent dans le cœur comme l'écho lointain de toutes les passions qu'on va mettre au jour - et cette impuissance à rendre tout cela est le désespoir éternel de ceux qui écrivent, la misère des langues qui ont à peine un mot pour

\(^{(84)}\) ibid., vol I, p209: To Emmanuel Vasse, 4 - vi - 1841
\(^{(85)}\) G. Flaubert, Souvenirs, notes et pensées intimes, Paris, Buchet/ Chastel, 1965, p102. This section of the notebook is dated 21-v-1841.
\(^{(86)}\) G. Flaubert; Agonies, in O.C., vol I, p158.
\(^{(87)}\) Correspondance, vol I, p239; to Louise Colet; 11 - vii - 1846.
This must be seen less as a criticism of language than an expression of despair at his own inability to use it, a despair which, typically, he seeks to dissipate by ranging himself with other writers all of whom, he claims, experience the same anguish.

The same tension between the self and the language employed to represent it is apparent in Mémoires d'un Fou (1838), the first work in which Flaubert's aim is autobiographical. Although the Mémoires contain pronouncements about the failure of man to express his experience, these cannot be regarded as objective statements: they need to be considered in the context of the works.

The technique of the Mémoires is revealing, for Flaubert's adoption of the role of 'un fou' is in part a result of his self-consciousness about using language to express experience. A Romantic pose of this nature allows the author to stress the uniqueness and singularity of his mental life: the madman, like the popular concept of the Romantic poet, inhabits a realm beyond that which can be conveyed by conventional language:

j'avais un infini plus immense, s'il est possible, que l'infini de Dieu, où la poésie se berçait et déployait ses ailes dans une atmosphère d'amour et d'extase; et puis il fallait redescendre de ces régions sublimes vers les mots - et comment rendre par la parole cette harmonie qui s'élève dans le

(88) Souvenirs, Notes et pensées intimes, ed. cit., p66
(89) On this aspect of the Mémoires, cf S. Felman, op. cit., pp170-190.
Flaubert's aim is to convince the reader of the sublimity of this plane of existence and of its superiority over common experience expressible in words. Hence great importance is attached to the way in which the work is conceived. Its subject is inseparable from the mode of expression employed: Flaubert is concerned with:

"Tout ce qui me viendra à la tête, mes idées avec mes souvenirs, mes expressions, mes rêves, mes caprices... des sanglots partis d'abord du coeur et étalés comme de la pâte dans des périodes sonores et des larmes délayées dans des métaphores romantiques." (91)

Experience is to be presented rhetorically: the function of language is, as Felman has noted, strategic: Flaubert is seeking not so much to express sentiments or thoughts as to assert his superiority over the reader:

"Un fou! Cela fait horreur. Qu'êtes-vous, vous, lecteur? Dans quelle catégorie te ranges-tu? dans celle des sots ou celle des fous? - si l'on donnait à choisir, ta vanité préférerait encore la dernière condition." (92)

The persuasive function of rhetoric in the Mémoires prefigures the assertive use of language by Homais and Arnoux. Language is used to establish a position rather than to express a meaning, and may therefore be regarded primarily as an instrument of power.

Yet in spite of the creation of 'le fou' to undermine conventional experience and its normal mode of expression, Flaubert's technique does not solve the problem of self-expression. This is clear from the insistence with which the narrator continually returns to the problem of language and from the ways in which he is compelled to rationalize it.

(90) Mémoires d'un fou, in O.C., vol I, p231
(91) ibid., p230
(92) ibid., p230
At times, the anguish of the writer of Smarh pierces the facade of the Mémoires. Words are insufficient to the expression of ideas and sentiments:

Alors, j'avais des moments de tristesse et de désespoir, je sentais ma force qui me brisait, et cette faiblesse dont j'avais honte, car la parole n'est qu'un écho lointain et affaibli de la pensée. (93)

Though the individual may engage in contemplation of the ideas he is attempting to express, the nature of language invalidates such an exercise:

je fus épris d'abord de cette étude imposante qui se propose l'homme pour but et qui vient se l'expliquer, qui va jusqu'à disséquer les hypothèses et à discuter sur les suppositions les plus abstraites et à peser géométriquement les mots les plus vides. (94)

The insufficiency of language makes creation impossible:

Comment rendre par les mots ces choses pour lesquelles il n'y a pas de language, ces impressions de cœur, ces mystères de l'âme inconnus à elle-même? (95)

Flaubert claims that his own lack of facility with language is not unique: this state is seen to be universal:

Pauvre faiblesse humaine! avec tes mots, tes langages, tes sons, tu parles et tu balbuties; tu définis Dieu, le ciel et la terre, la chimie et la philosophie et tu ne peux exprimer, avec ta langue, toute la joie que te cause une femme nue... ou un plum-pudding. (96)

Language cannot express the self or anything else: it is external to the mind and its conventionality precludes representation of the...
individual's experience.

Mémoires d'un fou, therefore, attempts to deal with the problem of language on two levels: the undertaking to adopt the role of 'un fou' implies a desire to assert the authenticity of the mental life of the narrator in the face of failure to find an adequate means of representing this: yet the creation of a persona who is incapable of complete self-expression necessitates a re-examination of the problem, and further attempts to rationalize it, first by attributing it to 'la faiblesse humaine' and thereby generalizing it; and secondly by the implication that the nature of language itself renders expression impossible.

A further exploration of the space between experience and language is provided by Novembre (1840-42). The external quality of language is suggested by numerous references to its materiality: the narrator is attracted to the sound of Marie's voice:

Ses paroles avaient un son aigu et moelleux, comme les intonations les plus élevées de la flûte. (97)

Words are independent of expression:

je l'avais écouté avec avidité, j'avais regardé tous les mots sortir de sa bouche, tâchant de m'identifier à la vie qu'ils m'exprimaient. (98)

Communication is therefore limited; significantly, Marie's words serve only to feed the narrator's illusions:

Agrandie tout à coup à des proportions que je lui prêtait sans doute, elle me parut une femme nouvelle et, malgré mes rapports avec elle, toute tentante d'un charme irritant et d'attraits nouveaux. (99)

(97) Novembre, in O.C., vol I, p261
(98) ibid., p268
(99) ibid., p268
The narrator is aware, throughout Novembre of the temptations offered by words:

Certains mots me bouleversaient, celui de 'femme', de 'maîtresse' surtout; je cherchais l'explication du premier dans les livres.... Quant à une maîtresse, c'était pour moi un être satanique, dont la magie du nom seul me jetait en de longues extases.... (100)

Il y eut dès lors pour moi un mot qui semblait beau entre les mots humains: adultère. Une douceur exquise plane vaguement sur lui. (101)

Words feed the imagination; yet the state of 'rêverie' inhabited by the narrator is beyond the realm of words:

Vaguement je convoitais quelque chose de splendide que je n'aurais su formuler par aucun mot ni préciser dans mon pensée sous aucune forme. (102)

In Novembre as in the Mémoires the uniqueness of the individual's experience is tested against the language conventionally employed to describe experience. However, the concept of an ideal state is not put forward without a certain element of doubt: the narrator is troubled by the notion that the ideal may itself be nothing more than an illusion produced by words and perpetuated by literature:

Mais le bonheur.... ne serait-il pas une métaphore inventée un jour d'ennui? (103)

'Experience' based merely on words is recognized as being unrealized and unrealizable.

Ces passions que j'aurais voulu avoir, je les étudiais dans des livres. (104)
Ah, comme j'aurais aimé si j'avais aimé. (105)

Thus the narrator underlines the separateness of words from authentic individual experience.

Yet the solution to this problem is implicit in *Mémoires d'un Fou*. The notion of the ideal, dependent on words yet existing beyond conventional expression, is momentarily discarded in favour of Art as an ideal mode of expression which transcends the autonomy of language:

Combien de fois n'ai-je pas dit le commencement du 'Gaiour'... la platitude de la traduction française disparaissait devant les pensées seules, comme si elles eussent eu un style à elles sans les mots eux-mêmes. (106)

Through style, the artist can achieve a degree of self expression denied to him by conventional language. Thus both *Mémoires d'un Fou* and *Novembre* contribute to the development of an aesthetic which Flaubert attributes to Jules in the first version of *L'Education Sentimentale*. Here, traditional aesthetics is regarded as a collection of clichés:

Les théories, les dissertations, les réclamations au nom du goût, la déclamation contre la barbarie, les systèmes sur l'idée du Beau, les apologues des anciens, toutes les injures que l'on s'est dit pour défendre le pur langage, toutes les sottises qui sont écrites en discutant sur le sublime ne servirent plus qu'à lui faire connaître historiquement l'esprit différent des écoles et des époques dans toutes leurs vanités visibles, utiles encore pour nous par l'excès de leur ridicule même. (107)

Against the limitations implied by theories is set 'le pur langage'.

Although this is not defined in *L'Education Sentimentale*, Jules's success in the expression of thought and feelings is seen as a result of his ability to manipulate language:

C'est la concision de son style qui le rend si mordant, c'est sa vérité qui en fait la souplesse:

(105) ibid., p254
(106) *Mémoires d'un Fou* in O.C., vol I, p234
sans la correction du langage, sa passion
n'aurait pas tant de vêhémence ni sa grâce
tant d'attrait. (108)

The rhetorical mode is rejected:

Arrêtant l'émotion qui le troublerait, il
sait faire naître en lui la sensibilité
qui doit créer quelque chose; l'existence
lui fournit l'accidental, il rend l'immuable;
ce que la vie lui offre, il le donne à l'Art. (109)

The act of creation is thus of supreme importance. The path to which
Jules points is not followed by any of Flaubert's later characters, but
underlies the mature aesthetic of the novelist himself.

(108) ibid., p371
(109) ibid., p370
(ii) Inarticulacy

Although Flaubert's uncertainty about his ability to communicate his own experience is gradually transformed into a search for a perfect fictional style, the theme of inarticulacy occupies an important place in his work. The criteria by which this may be studied need to be clearly defined, for it is necessary to be aware of the difference between a feeling which is personal to Flaubert, and hence felt, and the conventional Romantic pose adopted in the Mémoires d'un Fou and Novembre; as Knight has rightly asserted,

Flaubert's handling of inarticulate characters does not really coincide with the Romantic cliché of thought lying too deep for expression. (110)

Moreover, there are many instances in Flaubert's work of crises in which words are inadequate to the expression of thought or feeling even though the characters attempting to communicate cannot be said to be inarticulate under different circumstances. Silence is often more meaningful than language where human relationships are concerned, and this theme will be treated elsewhere.

Inarticulacy has several facets: the individual's incomprehension in the face of language; his inability to use words to express sentiments and thought, and to communicate his experience which in turn leads to an inability to respond to the demands of the outside world. Ultimately, inarticulacy produces a sense of isolation and alienation.

There is, in the work of Flaubert, a group of characters for whom the inability to use language is a fundamental part of their psychological make-up: they include several characters from the 'œuvres de jeunesse'.

(110) D. Knight: op. cit., p190.
Charles Bovary, Dussardier, and Félicité in *Un Coeur Simple*. My aim is to show that Flaubert's view of inarticulacy changed considerably, particularly before he published his mature work.

Incomprehension in the face of language is a distinguishing feature of several characters of Flaubert's early work. Giacomo, in *Bibliomanie*, is an avid collector of books:

> Il aimait un livre parce que c'était un livre, il aimait son odeur, sa forme, son titre: ce qu'il aimait dans un manuscrit, c'était sa vieille date illisible, les lettres gothiques bizarres et étranges. (111)

It is important to recognize the degree to which Flaubert identifies with Giacomo: he invests him with 'une force intime que personne ne peut voir',(112) and the development of such a passionate, manic character deliberately draws attention away from the fact that Giacomo, for all his passion for books

> 'ne savait a peine lire!' (113)

The possession of books which have never been read binds Flaubert's inarticulate characters into a fraternity. Jules, in the first version of *Education Sentimentale*, is passive in the face of language:

> Jules commençait à apprendre l'hébreu; et s'efforçait aussi à lire le grec. Sa table était surchargée de livres; histoire, atlas, voyages, albums d'antiques. Il ne lisait pas tout cela, mais il rêvait dessus. (114)

The difficulty experienced in trying to learn a foreign language is

(111) *Bibliomanie*, in O.C., vol I, p79.
(112) *Agonies*, in O.C., vol.1, p15B.
(113) *Bibliomanie*, in O.C., vol I, p79.
(114) *L'Education Sentimentale* (1845), in O.C., vol 1, p324.
emphasized by the use of the word 's'efforçait'. Jules's aim prefigures the attempt on the part of Bouvard and Pécuchet to take notes in Arabic at the Collège de France, yet there is a noticeable difference: Jules's 'rêve' is not the object of ridicule by Flaubert: the irony of the later novels is missing here. A contrast may be drawn between the treatment of Jules and that of Henzy's father in the same novel: Monsieur Gosselin, although by no means inarticulate—in his use of clichés he foreshadows Homais—puts forward ideas from books he has never read:

Il admirait également Voltaire et Rousseau, qui étaient dans sa bibliothèque, qu'il n'avaient pas lus, qu'il n'eût pas compris. (115)

At the beginning of Madame Bovary, Charles's inability to understand his lessons is all the more ironic in view of the effort he makes when studying medicine:

Il n'y comprit rien; il avait beau écouter, il ne saisissait pas. Il travaillait pourtant, il avait des cahiers reliés, il suivait tous les cours, il ne perdait pas une seule visite. (116)

The irrelevance of the bound notebooks is typical of the irony with which Flaubert treats Charles in the early part of the novel and represents a change of attitude towards his character's incomprehension which becomes more marked as the novel continues.

One of the pieces of furniture at Tostes is a large and impressive bookcase:

Les tomes du Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales, non coupés, mais dont la brochure avait souffert

(115) ibid., p335.
The joke is aimed not only at Charles, but at the medical profession in general, represented by all who had possessed the books before Charles. His aim to keep in touch with scientific development is treated equally ironically:

Enfin, pour se tenir au courant, il prit un abonnement à la Ruche Médicale, journal nouveau dont il avait reçu le prospectus. Il en lisait un peu après son dîner, mais la chaleur de l'appartement, jointe à la digestion, faisait qu'au bout de cinq minutes il s'endormait. (118)

The disaster of the 'pied bot' operation is a result of Charles's inability to understand how to perform it properly, and it is hardly surprising, in view of his failure to comprehend scientific language, that the concentrated language of art leaves him bewildered when he and Emma see the opera Lucie de Lammermoor in Rouen:

Malgré les explications d'Emma, dès le duo récitatif où Gilbert expose à son maître Ashton ses abominables manoeuvres, Charles, en voyant le faux anneau de fiançailles qui doit abuser Lucie, crut que c'était un souvenir d'amour envoyé par Edgar. Il avouait, du reste, ne pas comprendre l'histoire - 'à cause de la musique qui nuisait beaucoup aux paroles. (119)

Once again, his desire to understand is expressed - 'C'est que j'aime... à me rendre compte' - yet the language of art is beyond his comprehension.

Félicité, in Un Coeur Simple, has equal difficulty in understanding. The Biblical stories she is told give rise to an imaginative vision:

Quant aux dogmes, elle n'y comprenait rien, ne tâcha même pas de comprendre. Le curé discourait, les enfants récitaient, elle finissait par s'endormir. (120)

(117) ibid., p.585  
(118) ibid., p.595  
(119) ibid., p.650  
Her awareness is limited to what she can visualize:

A cause des cigares, elle imaginait la Havane un pays où l'on ne fait pas autre chose que de fumer, et Victor circulait parmi des Nègres dans un nuage de tabac. (121)

Similarly, she is unable to understand the atlas which Bourais shows her:

Elle se pencha sur la carte; ce réseau de lignes coloriées fatiguait sa vue, sans lui rien apprendre; et Bourais l'invitant à dire ce qui l'embarrassait, elle le pria de lui montrer la maison où demeurait Victor. (122)

In cases such as these one may be justified in criticizing Flaubert for pushing the stupidity of Félicité to extremes.

These characters exhibit a fundamental inability to understand certain aspects of language and have to come to terms with what is external to them. They are linked by the alienation which their inarticulacy produces.

There are obvious similarities in the way in which this problem is posed; but their difficulties in producing language are far more complex, and the different reasons for man's inability to use language show the complexity of the problem.

The presentation of inarticulacy in the early works is inseparable from Flaubert's youthful Romanticism: In *Bibliomanie*, the aloofness of the hero in response to his alienation may be seen almost as a Romantic cliché.

Giacomo 'n'avait jamais parlé à personne... il était taciturne, sombre, et triste'. (123)

(121) ibid., p171.
(122) ibid., p171.
(123) *Bibliomanie*, in *B.C.*, vol I, p78.
His attitude strikes fear into others:

'personne n'osait lui parler' (124)

There is the suggestion that he is capable of communication, but that he chooses not to communicate. At the end of the story

'il était calme et paisible, et ne répondit pas, même par un regard, à la multitude qui l'insultait. (125)

He is cut off from other people by his monomaniac love of books, and is presented as a Balzacian monomaniac. His inarticulacy is not treated ironically by Flaubert, and he retains considerable dignity.

The hero of Rêve d'Enfer is also partly a product of Flaubert's Romanticism. The Duc Arthur d'Almaroës is an alchemist, but the Balzacian theme is here tinged with Flaubertian irony:

'ses livres entr'ouverts ne changeaient jamais de feuillets' (126)

Like Giacomo, he is cut off from those around him:

'il vivait donc ainsi seul. Son nom n'en acquerrait ainsi chaque jour qu'une existence de plus en plus problématique; les gens qui le servaient ignoraient le son de sa voix!' (127)

Flaubert goes to great lengths to show the extent to which he is different from the rest of humanity. He is 'd'une nature supérieure, d'un coeur plus élevé'. (128) His inarticulacy is inseparable from his superiority and the fear he inspires in others: his is 'une existence vague et indéfinie' which cannot be communicated by language. He is cut off from his fellow men to the extent that, like Félicité, he is described as an automaton.

(124) ibid., p79.
(125) ibid., p82.
(126) Rêve d'Enfer, in O.C., vol I, p90.
(127) ibid., p92.
(128) ibid., p91.
When confronted with Juliette, whom Satan has sent to him, he remains impassive:

Elle l'appela par son nom: il fut sourd à ses cris comme au bêlement du mouton, au chant de l'oiseau, aux aboiements du chien. (129)

No language has meaning for him. In spite of the ardour of Juliette's advances, he fails to react to her.

Giacomo and the Duke have in common their superiority over those around them, with whom they have no wish to communicate. A different, more common source of inarticulacy in Flaubert's characters tends to be fear, particularly of a more dominant character. In Un Parfum à Sentir, Marguerite's reaction to Pedrillo is often muted:

-'Marguerite, nous représentons maintenant, entre, tu vas nous servir, tu vas sauter, entends-tu? Fais de ton mieux.' Il n'y avait pas à répliquer, pourtant elle se hasarda à lui dire 'Pedrillo, tu vois bien qu'ils vont se moquer de moi, je suis mal habillée.' Elle voulait dire autre chose mais elle n'osa. (130)

The frequent recurrence of such passages in the Oeuvres de Jeunesse prefigures Charles's constant fear of speaking in Madame Bovary and reflects the tension often felt in human relationships in Flaubert's work.

The inarticulacy of Jules in the first version of L'Education Sentimentale has evident links with the feelings expressed by the narrator of Mémoires d'un Fou and Novembre. Jules is used by Flaubert in a discussion of the theme of Romantic reverie and the expression of inner feelings, a theme which characterizes the earlier works. He is passive in the face of

(129) ibid., p98.
(130) Un Parfum à Sentir, in O.C., vol I, p56.
language and his state of reverie appears to preclude the formulation of sentiment into language:

Quand je veux écrire je ne trouve pas un mot ou bien je ne pense plus à mon sujet. (131)

Yet Jules cannot, in spite of this, be said to be an inarticulate character. He discusses his inability to translate a poetic reverie into words in a highly articulate way, and the reader who, on reading Madame Bovary might question the likelihood of Charles writing long letters home to his mother accepts it as perfectly natural that Jules is able to write so expansively to Henry. (132) Our conclusion must be that although the question of Romantic inarticulacy - the difficulty of the artist in expressing himself through the medium of language - is important in the early work, a deeper kind of inarticulacy, inherent to the human condition, is fundamental to Flaubert's concept of man.

In Quidquid Volueris Flaubert creates the strange ape-man Djalioh, whose inarticulacy is his basic trait. The uncertainty with which the other characters in the story regard Djalioh is interesting:

Il était fantasque, selon les uns, mélancolique, disaient les autres, stupide, fou, enfin muet, ajoutaient les plus sages. (133)

Elsewhere in the work they regard him as

Un animal inerte et sans intelligence. (134)

and the ambiguity surrounding him prefigures that surrounding, for instance, Charles Bovary. Here the reader is guided by Flaubert himself to a sympathetic understanding of the character's inner life. He is

(131) L'Education Sentimentale (1845), in O.C., vol I, p289.
(133) Quidquid Volueris, in O.C., vol I, p104.
(134) ibid., p108.
unable to communicate his sentiments:

Quant à Djalioh, il regardait la jeune fille endormie: il voulait dire un mot, mais il fut dit si bas, si craintif, qu'on le prit pour un soupir. (135)

Flaubert, however, elaborates on this state:

Si c'était un mot ou un soupir, peu importe, mais il y avait là-dedans toute une âme. (136)

Djalioh resembles the narrator of Mémoires d'un Fou and Novembre in that his inner state cannot be expressed:

Il avait vécu longtemps, bien longtemps, non par la pensée: les méditations du savant, ni les rêves n'avaient point occupé un instant dans toute sa vie, mais il avait vécu et grandi de l'âme, et il était déjà vieux par le cœur. Pourtant ses affections ne s'étaient tournées sur personne car il avait en lui un chaos des sentiments les plus étranges, des sensations les plus étranges; la poésie avait remplacé la logique et les passions avaient pris la place de la science. (137)

He is not intelligent in any sense of the word: indeed, Flaubert refers to him as stupid. His attempts to express himself often culminate in a meaningless and grotesque imitation of speech:

Ses grosses lèvres, crevassées par la fièvre et couvertes de boutons, se remuaient vivement comme quelqu'un qui parle vite; ses paupières clignotaient et sa prunelle roulait lentement dans son orbite, comme les idiots. (138)

But Flaubert's aim is to convince the reader of Djalioh's profundity of feeling, rather than of his stupidity. He directs our attention, from the beginning of the story, to the word 'muet', and it is the sheer frustration of being unable to communicate feelings which forms the

(135) ibid., p103.
(136) ibid., p104.
(137) ibid., p105.
(138) ibid., p107.
nouvel's main theme. This is particularly evident at the wedding of Adèle, who is the object of Djalioh's desires, and Paul:

En voyant cet air de fêtes... en contemplant Adèle, son amour, sa vie, le charme de ses traits, la suavité de ses regards, il se demanda pourquoi tout cela lui était refusé, - semblable à un condamné qu'on fait mourir de faim devant des vivres et que quelques barreaux de fer séparent de l'existence. (139)

Even when he is with Adèle at the end of the story, he is forced to remain silent:

Seulement il bégaya et frappa la tête avec colère. Quoïl ne pouvoir lui dire un mot! Ne pouvoir énumérer ses tortures et ses douleurs, et n'avoir à lui offrir que les larmes d'un animal et les soupirs d'un monstre. (140)

Flaubert's concern is with the intensity of Djalioh's frustration, and the dominant impression left by the story is of Flaubert's pity for Djalioh's helplessness in the face of his inability to communicate. The ironic ending to the story - a reference to Paul's indifference to the death of Adèle - serves to underline the degree to which Flaubert identifies with Djalioh. His pity for the ape-man contrasts starkly with his condemnation of Paul.

The presentation of such a character clearly poses technical difficulties: only through the use of 'style indirect libre' can the author create an inarticulate character who is nevertheless able to voice the frustration caused by inarticulacy. The number of occasions on which Flaubert employs 'style indirect libre' is evidence of his desire to engage the reader's sympathy for Djalioh. In Madame Bovary, what is striking, by contrast, is Flaubert's detachment from his inarticulate characters.

(139) ibid., p106.
(140) ibid., p112.
This results in a greater degree of irony, and represents a change in attitude on the part of the novelist towards inarticulacy.

Charles Bovary is not the only inarticulate figure in *Madame Bovary*: Justin, le père Rouault and Catherine Leroux, awarded a prize at the 'Comices Agricoles', are all incapable of expressing themselves. But Charles is the only major figure for whom inarticulacy is a basic trait. Since Flaubert does not constantly direct our réaction, as he does in *Quidquid Volueris*, it is necessary to take particular care to view Charles as objectively as possible, and not to judge him from Emma's point of view. It is also important to understand the development of Flaubert's view of Charles as the novel progresses, for the degree of ambiguity here is greater than in any of the works so far discussed.

Charles's passivity when confronted with language is evident from the first chapter of the novel. More significant, however, is the way in which his inability to use language is presented. He cannot tell the teacher his name:

> Le nouveau articula, d'une voix brêdouillante, un nom inintelligible.
> - Répétez.
> Le même brêdouillement des syllabes se fit entendre, couvert par les huées de la classe.
> - Plus haut, cria le maître, plus haut.
> Le nouveau, prenant alors une résolution extrême, ouvrit une bouche démesurée et lança à pleins poumons, comme pour appeler quelqu'un, ce mot: Charbovari.
> Ça fut un vacarme qui s'élance du bond, monta en 'crescendo', avec des éclats de voix aigus
> (on hurlait, on aboyait, on trépignait, on répétait: Charbovari! Charbovari) (141)

The last paragraph typifies the way in which the inarticulate figure is now seen from the outside. Flaubert is more detached here than in *Quidquid Volueris*. He no longer explains or defends his characters: if the reader chooses to assume that Charles's discomfiture is caused by fear of the new situation, it is only because he can compare this passage with others in which Charles does not dare to speak. Furthermore, the pity expressed in *Quidquid Volueris* is absent: instead there is the heavy irony of Charles's punishment as he is told to copy out the verb 'ridiculus sum'.

At work he is painstakingly slow:

Nous le vîmes qui travaillait en conscience, cherchant tous les mots dans le dictionnaire et se donnant beaucoup de mal. (142)

When writing,

Il n'avait guère d'élégance dans les tournures (143)

and an earlier version of the novel, published by Leleu, adds

Il n'était guère avancé sur la syntaxe. Son orthographe était celle d'un septième. (144)

One is led to wonder quite how long it took him to write the long weekly letters to his mother.

His education is based on learning by rote because he is unable to understand anything he is taught. The fact that he is ultimately successful is as much an indictment of the educational system of the period as a comment on Charles himself.

(142) ibid., p576.
(143) ibid., p571.
In *Quidquid Volueris*, Flaubert seeks to show the depth of feeling behind Djalioh's inarticulacy. Charles, however, is altogether different. An early version of the first chapter establishes that he is unlike his classmates:

Il n'était pas de notre monde, d'ailleurs, il ne lisait pas tous les drames nouveaux, il ne faisait pas de vers! Il n'avait pas en tête de maîtresse future. Il ne rêvait pas Paris. (145)

The final phrase is revealing because it provides a sharp contrast between Charles and Emma, whose love for 'pays à noms sonores' (146) and fascination with the word 'Paris' itself are stressed. (147) Flaubert's inarticulate characters have no feeling for language or the sonority of words. The above analysis does not appear in the final version of the novel, possibly because Charles's freedom from the clichés of Romanticism might be read in a positive light. Instead, Flaubert's technique of impersonality means that we are left to wonder at Charles's mentality. Flaubert does, however, point out that he is not in the least analytical:

Il ne chercha point à se demander pourquoi il venait aux Bertaux avec plaisir. (148)

He cannot understand his first wife's criticism of these visits:

D'abord, elle se soulagea par des allusions. Charles ne les comprit pas! (149)

and he is amazed to realize, after her death, that she had in fact loved him.

The descriptions of the early relationship with Emma stress Charles's inability to communicate, behind which is an inability to conceptualize:

(145) ibid., p24.
(147) ibid., p593.
(148) ibid., p580.
(149) ibid., p580.
Le soir, en s'en retournant, Charles reprit une à une les phrases qu'elle avait dites, tâchant de se les rappeler, d'en compléter le sens, afin de se faire la portion d'existence qu'elle avait vécu dans le temps qu'il ne la connaissait pas encore. Mais jamais il ne put la voir en sa pensée différemment qu'il ne l'avait vue la première fois ou telle qu'il venait de la quitter toute à l'heure. (150)

Inarticulacy is no longer a Romantic pose: here it is rooted in an inability to form concepts and in this respect Charles is more limited than any of his predecessors in Flaubert's work.

His inarticulacy also results in fear. When the possibility of asking Emma to marry him occurs to him,

la peur de ne point trouver les mots convenables lui collait les lèvres. (151)

and it is le père Rouault who actually manages the affair.

During his marriage to Emma, his mediocrity is conveyed by constant references to his linguistic incapacity. Emma is frustrated because

Il ne put, un jour, lui expliquer un terme d'écriture qu'elle avait rencontré dans un roman. (152)

Emma's criticism may be justified: for even at the wedding he showed himself unable to respond adequately to the guests' innuendos:

Il répondit médiocremement aux pointes, caillouières, mots à double entente, compliments et gaillardises que l'on se fit un devoir de lui décocher dès le potage. (153)

This passage is interesting when compared with an earlier version:

(150) ibid., p582.
(151) ibid., p582.
(152) ibid., p588.
(153) ibid., p584.
Timide et embarrassé de son rôle, il ne répondit point à toutes les facéties, mots... gaillardises qu'on lui adressa dans le commencement pour le mettre en belle humeur, pour marquer que l'on prenait part à son bonheur, et les conviés le laissèrent tranquille. Il s'ennuya et attendit le soir.(154)

In this version, the words 'timide' and 'embarrassé' point to reasons for his inarticulacy, and it is this explanation which is withdrawn in the final version. The word 'médiocrement', added later, suggests a permanent rather than a temporary state, and this is coherent to the presentation of Charles throughout the novel.

Fear is, nevertheless, offered at times as a reason for Charles's inarticulacy. When relaxed,

Charles avait la manie de bavarder au coin du feu (155)

but at times of crisis he does not know what to say. During the argument between Emma and his mother, he is incapable of pacifying either of them: when Emma insists on sending Berthe to a wet-nurse, according to an earlier version,

Il n'osait même communiquer ses inquiétudes; (156)

In view of his own limitations, it is particularly ironic that he should attempt to teach Berthe to read, and it is not surprising that she ends up crying. Neither is it surprising that Charles cannot understand why he never comes to terms with the meanderings of Emma's mind. Whilst silence may well be of value in Flaubert's work, the evidence is that Charles's inarticulacy hardly conceals 'an imaginative capacity for understanding.' (157)

(157) Knight argues that Flaubert's inarticulate characters are privileged in that they have an increased capacity for feeling and understanding. cf. D. Knight, op. cit., p190 et seq.
After the death of Emma, Charles's reaction is unexpected. His Romantic ideas leave everyone astonished and even if his Romanticism is heavily clichéd, the degree of ridicule to which he is subjected by the novelist is greatly reduced. Nevertheless, his dignity is undoubtedly undermined on the occasion of his meeting with Rodolphe:

> Il ajouta même un grand mot, le seul qu'il ait jamais dit:  
> "C'est la faute de la fatalité..."  
> Rodolphe, qui avait conduit cette fatalité... (158)

The novel is not one in which external fate plays a significant part, and Flaubert points to Charles's error, thus placing the 'grand mot', by his immediate reference to Rodolphe's role. In spite of the sympathetic portrayal of Charles at the time of Emma's death, the fundamental irony remains, and the reader is left with an awareness of Charles's considerable limitations. Knight shows that, in certain cases, the narrative itself provides a comment on what inarticulate characters are capable of expressing, but in the case of Charles, the absence of any comment surely implies the void behind his inarticulacy.

This is not the case with the figure of Dussardier in *L'Education Sentimentale*. The reader's initial impression is of Dussardier's stupidity: when Hussonnet and Frédéric visit him in prison he is unable to understand that they wish to help him.

> 'Tu ne nous reconnais pas? dit Hussonnet  
> - Mais..... balbutia Dussardier  
> - Ne fais donc plus l'imbécile, reprit l'autre, on sait que tu es, comme nous, élève en droit.  
> Malgré leurs clignements de paupières, Dussardier ne devinait rien.... Les deux amis restaient étonnés de son silence. (159)

His enthusiasm for the revolution is expressed in clichés - 'tout le
terre libre.' (160) Yet his inability to express himself in an original
way masks a naive idealism which Flaubert portrays as touching. It is
presented somewhat ambiguously at first: when asked about his taste for
women,

Dussardier ne répondit pas. Tous le pressèrent
pour connaître ses goûts.
- Eh bien, fit-il en rougissant, moi je voudrais
aimer la même toujours.
Cela fut dit d'une telle façon qu'il y eut un
moment de silence, les uns étant surpris de cette
candeur, et les autres y découvrant peut-être la
secrète convoitise de leur âme. (161)

Flaubert refuses to identify fully with Dussardier. But his words are
not ridiculed; he is not treated with the same irony as Charles. At times
he is capable of expressing what others fail to comprehend: Dussardier
alone recognizes the extent to which the revolution has failed:

Si on était de bonne foi on pourrait s'entendre!
Mais non! Les ouvriers ne valent pas mieux que
les bourgeois, voyez-vous.... j'en deviendrai fou,
si ça continue. J'ai envie de me faire tuer. (162)

If this constitutes Dussardier's 'grand mot', then it is important to
recognize that it is treated differently from Charles's pronunciation about
the role of Fate. Dussardier's speech is portentous because it is the
utterance of a character who is not particularly articulate. It reflects
the significance with which Flaubert invests many of Dussardier's actions,
so that they take on the importance of symbolic gestures, and prepares
the way for the ultimate gesture:

Mais, sur les marches de Tortoni, un homme -
Dussardier, - remarquable de loin à sa haute
taille, restait sans plus bouger qu'une cariatide.

(160) ibid., p114.
(161) ibid., p29.
(162) ibid., p153.
This death is of great symbolic importance in the novel; it is also treated with dignity. Flaubert shows considerable sympathy for Dussardier. The idealism he displays is clearly worthy of merit in spite of its naivety.

Much greater emphasis is placed on the inarticulacy of Félicité in Un Coeur Simple, about whom Knight claims that her heart and her imagination dominate her whole conception of reality. Through Félicité's inability to communicate, Flaubert draws the reader's attention to the autonomy of language; speech is at times placed in an ironic focus. Seen from Félicité's viewpoint, Liébard's words are striking in their insignificance:

Il parlait des personnes dont les propriétés bordaient la route, ajoutant à leur histoire des réflexions morales. Ainsi, au milieu de Toucques, comme on passait sous des fenêtres entourées de capucines, il dit, avec un haussement d'épaules, 'En voilà une, Mme Lehoussais qui, au lieu de prendre un jeune homme....' Félicité n'entendit pas le reste; les chevaux trottaient, l'âne galopait. (164)

Bourais is also the object of satire for the way in which he ridicules Félicité's inability to understand the map he attempts to explain to her.

Nevertheless, her inarticulacy is not to be regarded as a positive characteristic simply because of its juxtaposition with bourgeois loquacity.

(163) ibid., p160.
For her inability to speak signifies fear and isolation as well as stupidity. At the time of her meeting with Théodore,

Il l'aborda d'un air tranquille, disant qu'il fallait tout pardonner puisque c'était la faute de la boisson.'

Elle ne sut que répondre et avait envie de s'enfuir. (165)

When Victor leaves on his voyage to America she feels unable to convey her sentiments:

Jamais elle ne parlait de ses inquiétudes (166)

When she finally comes to mention her fears to Mme Aubain, their inability to communicate is fully illustrated:

'Moi, Madame, voilà six mois que je n'en ai reçu (de nouvelles)
- De qui donc?
Le servante répliqua doucement
- 'Mais... de mon neveu'
- Ah! votre neveu! Et, haussant les épaules,
Mme Aubain reprit sa promenade, ce qui voulait dire 'Je n'y pensais pas!' (167)

When Félicité learns of Victor's death, her response to the suggestion that she should visit her sister is typical; her recourse to silence enhances the impression of her isolation:

Félicité répondit par un geste qu'elle n'en avait pas besoin.
Il y eut un silence. (168)

Whilst for most of her life

ne communiquant avec personne, elle vivait dans une torpeur de somnambule. (169)

(165) ibid., p167.
(166) ibid., p171.
(167) ibid., p171.
(168) ibid., p172.
(169) ibid., p176.
her deepest communication is, as Culler has shown, her conversation with
the parrot:

ils avaient des dialogues, lui, débitant à
satiété les trois phrases de son répertoire,
et elle, y répondant pas des mots sans plus
de suite, mais où son coeur s'épanchait. (170)

Félicité is not treated by Flaubert with the same degree of irony as
Charles; it is clear that there is considerable pathos in the test. She
is, nevertheless, a limited being, and there is no suggestion that her
inarticulacy implies a privileged state.

So, in the _Oeuvres de Jeunesse_, inarticulacy is treated in a sympathetic
way, and Flaubert can be seen to identify with characters who are unable
to express themselves. But this identification gradually disappears,
and when inarticulacy is treated in the later works, it is presented far
more impersonally; even when irony is not used Flaubert remains, for the
most part, detached. Thus the novelist's own doubt about his ability to
use language is objectified to become an important theme in his fiction,
and part of a wider criticism of man's inability to express his own
experiences and desires in an authentic way.

(170) ibid., p175.
Chapter II: Idealism

Flaubert overcomes uncertainty about his own ability to express himself through language by emphasising the need to transform language into style as the essential function of the artist. Art is raised to the level of the ideal. It is clear, however, that he was attracted throughout his life to the idea of language as a means of gaining an awareness which would transcend human knowledge. In a letter to Louise Colet, Art and Religion are seen as parallel, 'ces deux grandes manifestations de l'idée' (171) and the examination of religious idealism is an important theme of his art. The Romantic notion of the divine role of poetry has already been discussed, and among Flaubert's works La Tentation, in particular, explores a belief in the mystical significance of language and the possibility of acquiring through symbolism a knowledge of the Divine.

The words of 'La Foi' in the 1849 version of the work are highly significant. The divine Word, it is suggested, offers a knowledge of the Absolute which cannot be attained through human language:

La Foi: Converse avec Dieu seul et tu n'entendras plus les voix de la terre,... les profanes n'entendent que la voix et le témoignage de l'entendement mais les fils du Christ méprisent leurs sens et s'en rapportent à la parole du Verbe, car le verbe est immortel. Les sens mourront un jour et l'entendement s'évaporera comme l'odeur d'un vin répandu. (172)

Knowledge of the Word brings promise of 'cette compréhension incompréhensible', (173) an awareness beyond the realm of human understanding. Yet

(171) Correspondance, vol III, p368; to Louise Colet, 12 - ix - 1853
(172) La Tentation de Saint Antoine (1849 version) in D.C., vol I, p416
(173) ibid., p411
the notion of the soul's penetration by 'le Verbe', mysticism in short, is treated sceptically by Flaubert:

La Foi: Ne vivant plus de la vie, mais vivant du verbe, le verbe pénètre l'âme et la remplit de lui-même.

L'Espérance: Le ciel s'entrouvre, l'amour grandit, la joie s'augmente.

Antoine: O Jésus! doux Jésus!

La Foi: Hosannah! Gloire à Dieu.


Cris, sifflets, hurlements. (174)

The juxtaposition of Antoine's words with the din of les Pêchés implies the futility of invocation. Language is exposed as mere sound.

This is underlined by Flaubert's deflation of religious symbolism. As Benn has noted:

Le symbole par excellence, les religions antiques en faisaient l'objet de leurs cultes et la révélation suprême de leurs mystères. (175)

Yet Flaubert undermines the representative function of symbols. Antoine fails to grasp the symbolism of the Isaic myth:

Antoine: Quelle déesse?

Hilarion: La voilà

Et il lui fait voir tout au fond de l'avenue, sur le seuil d'une grotte illuminée, un bloc de pierre représentant l'organe sexuel d'une femme.

Antoine: Ignominie! Quelle abomination de donner un sexe à Dieu. (176)

Elsewhere religious symbols are integrated into the narrative and become part of a literary image, thus losing their fundamental significance:

Droit en l'air se tient un phallus dans une vulve comme un cierge dans un chandelier. (177)

(174) ibid., p417.
(175) J. Benn; Désir et savoir dans l'oeuvre de Flaubert, Neuchâtel, La Baconnière, 1979, p70
(176) La Tentation de Saint Antoine, final version,1874, in O.C., vol I, p554
(177) La Tentation de Saint Antoine, 1849 version, in O.C., vol I, p455
Flaubert further suggests that the notion of human access to the Divine through language is an illusion; in *La Tentation*, language is deliberately created by the Devil to torment humanity. This implication is also made by the disembodied voice in 'Smarh':

> Et puis je leur ai donné des chimères qu'ils n'avaient pas; j'ai jeté en l'air des mots, ils ont pris cela pour des idées, ils ont couru, ils se sont évertués à les comprendre, ils ont creusé leurs petits cerveaux, ils ont voulu voir le fond de l'abîme sans fin, ils se sont approchés du bord, et je les ai poussés dedans. (178)

Among those whose vanity has led them to devote themselves to the pursuit of the Divine Word, the Devil includes poets:

> Poète, c'est à dire.... s'avancer dans le monde et voir l'illusion vers laquelle on avance. (179)

It is not without significance that the 'poètes et baladins' sequence of the 1849 version of *La Tentation* contains criticism of the emptiness of poetic rhetoric. (180)

In spite of his aspiration to *Le Verbe*, man is barred from the Absolute. Saint Antoine's despair is based on his realization that

> le Seigneur.... ne m'a pas été prodigue; moi, qui n'avais d'oreilles que pour sa voix, qui n'ouvrais les yeux que pour sa clarté, il m'a privé de sa parole. (181)

Prayer is useless:

> Et j'avais cru pouvoir m'unir à Dieu
(Riant amèrement)
Ahl Démence! démence! Est-ce ma faute? La prière m'est intolérable. (182)

(178) Smarh, in *D.C.*, vol I, p187
(179) ibid., p215
(180) *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, 1849 version, in *D.C.*, vol I, p432
(181) ibid., p385
(182) *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, 1874, in *D.C.*, vol I, p566
Saint Antoine's despair here reveals the illusory nature of his final revelation in the 1874 version.

Man is tempted to seek the Absolute; yet human idealism is mocked:

Smarh: Je ne croyais pas l'infini si grand.
Satan: Et tu prétendais cependant l'embrasser dans ta pensée, car chaque jour tu disais 'Dieu, Eternité': et tu te perdis dans la grandeur de l'un, dans l'immensité de l'autre. (183)

The analogy between the Word and human language is therefore denied by Flaubert. The Absolute cannot be revealed by human words. If God exists, he is unknowable; He is indépendent et lumineux, au-dessus du dogme au-dessus de la foi, dégagé des moyens par lesquels on aspire à lui. (184)

It has, however, been argued that Flaubert as an artist achieves the aim of Nabuchodonosor:

Il compte rebâtir la Tour de Babel et détrôner Dieu. (185)

For Art confers privileges denied to those who aspire to a Divine Absolute. 'Le Verbe' is assimilated into Flaubert's art in the form of 'La Voix', a Romantic literary device which the artist employs with increasing originality.

At the beginning of 'Rêve d'enfer', 'une voix sortit de la terre'; (186) in Smarh, Satan initially takes the form of a disembodied Voice which, significantly, asserts its equality with the Divine Word:

(183) Smarh in O.C., vol I, p191
(184) La Tentation de Saint Antoine, 1849, in O.C., vol I, p443. The words are uttered by the Devil, but would appear to reflect Flaubert's own scepticism as expressed on occasions in the Correspondance. Cf, for example the letter of Madame Roger des Genettes in Correspondance, vol V, pp147-148; summer 1864
(186) Rêve d'Enfer, in O.C., vol I, p90
Tu verras que de telles œuvres me rendaient bien digne de créer un monde. (187)

In the definitive version of La Tentation,

Une voix s'élève, indistincte et formidable, - comme la rumeur des flots, comme le bruit des bois sous la tempête, comme le mugissement du vent dans les précipices. (188)

Here the elemental quality of the voice prefigures Iaokann's voice in Hérodiade. 'La Voix' is characterized by its detachment from a human source. It is supernatural; above all, it is autonomous.

In the Trois Contes the Voice takes several forms, the relationship between which has been explored by Issacharoff (189) The prophetic Voice of Saint Julien, apparently divine in origin, recalls the voice of the parrot in Un Coeur Simple, which Félicité believes to be divine, and prefigures the inspired language of Iaokann. Certain elements are common to each manifestation of the Voice. In Saint Julien, it directs the action: in Hérodiade it pervades the entire scene. It inspires human emotion: Félicité's love for the parrot is matched by the Tetrarch's fear of Iaokann's voice. Yet in all its various forms the voice remains autonomous. It cannot be comprehended. What the Voice says is outside the realm of human understanding.

In Un Coeur Simple the parrot mocks Bourais.

(187) Stéphane, in O.C., vol I, p187
(188) La Tentation de Saint Antoine, 1874 in O.C., vol I, p559
(190) Un Coeur Simple, in O.C., vol II, p174
It is the same voice as that of Hérodias. It deceives Félicité

Elle implorait le Saint-Esprit et contracta l'habitude idolâtre de dire ses oraisons agenouillée devant le perroquet. (191)

The prophetic mode employed in Saint Julien is particularly enigmatic:

Ahl ah! ton fils.... beaucoup de sang! ..... beaucoup de gloirel.... toujours heureuxi la famille d'un empereur.

Et, se baissant pour ramasser son aumône, il se perdit dans l'herbe, s'évanouit. (192)

There is no logical link between the different elements of the discourse, neither is there any indication of how future events will unfold. The language is allusive. The full significance of the words is not communicated.

In Hérodias the enigma is even more profound.

La voix s'éleva.

'Les portes des forteresses seront plus vite brisées que des écailles de noix, les murs crouleront, les villes brûleront; et le fléau de l'Éternel ne s'arrêtera pas. Il retournera vos membres dans votre sang, comme de la laine dans la cuve d'un teinturier. Il vous déchirera comme une herse neuve, il répandra sur les montagnes tous les morceaux de votre chair.'(193)

This speech derives from Biblical prophecy which makes full use of images to increase its communicative impact: in spite of this, the significance of the words is lost on the listeners:

De quel conquérant parlait-il? Etait-ce de Vitellius? Les Romains seuls pouvaient produire cette extermination. (194)

(191) ibid., 176
(192) La Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier, in O.C., vol 2, p178
(193) Hérodias, in O.C., vol II, p193
(194) ibid., p193
The reaction is, understandably, one of fear, and a desire to silence the voice - which, nevertheless, continues 'plus haut'. Although at the end of Herodias the Essene finally understands the enigmatic prophecy of Iokanann, it is clear that the Divine Word is autonomous: language is not revelatory, and does not allow man access to the Divine. For Flaubert, the creation of Art provides an alternative mode of understanding and transcending the real, but he is aware that this is not a universal solution, and in his mature work he deals with the problems caused by man's efforts to use language to come to terms with the real.

While Flaubert ultimately rejects the Romantic notion of language as a means of transcending human experience, he is aware of the urgency with which man seeks to surpass his human condition, and in his presentation of idealism was undoubtedly influenced by Cervantes' Don Quixote, in which this forms a major theme. In a letter to Maxime du Camp, Flaubert states:

Je retrouve toutes mes origines dans le livre que je savais par coeur avant de savoir lire: 'Don Quichotte'. (195)

Elsewhere, expressing admiration for the illusion of life created in the novel, he claims that the reader may see Quixote as an historical figure:

Est-ce qu'on ne croit pas à l'existence de Don Quichotte comme à celle de César? (196)

(195) Correspondance, vol IV, p442; to Maxime du Camp, 26-vi-1852
(196) ibid., vol III, p31; to Louise Colet, 25-ix-1852. Cf. also vol III, p53; to Louise Colet, 22-xi-1852: 'Ce qu'il y a de prodigieux dans 'Don Quichotte', c'est l'absence d'art et cette perpétuelle fusion de l'illusion et de la réalité....'
The role of language in Don Quixote is worth examining. The hero is not initially characterized by Cervantes as a man of action. His favourite pastime - like that of Emma Bovary - is reading, and the author describes at length the type of fiction which attracts his impoverished knight:

The reader must know, then, that this gentleman, in the times when he had nothing to do, - as was the case for most of the year - gave himself up to the reading of books on knight errantry: which he loved and enjoyed so much that he almost entirely forgot his hunting, and even the care of his estate... And of all of them he considered none so good as the works of the famous Feliciano de Silva. For his brilliant style and those complicated sentences seemed to him very pearls, especially when he came upon those love-passages and challenges frequently written in the manner of: 'The reason for the unreason with which you treat my reason, so weakens my reason that with reason I complain of your beauty;' and also when he read 'The high heavens that with their stars divinely fortify you in your divinity and make you deserving of the desert that your greatness deserves.'

These writings drove the poor knight out of his wits and he passed sleepness nights trying to understand them and disentangle their meaning, even though Aristotle himself would never have unravelled or understood them, even if he had been resurrected for that sole purpose. (197)

Yet confident in the validity of his own interpretation of the significance of words, Quixote sets out to order his life according to his reading.

Recognizing the power of proper names to bestow significance on the external world,

he went to inspect his hack, but though, through leanness, he had more quarters than there are pence in a groat, and more blemishes than Genella’s horse, which was nothing but skin and bone, he appeared to our knight more than the equal of Alexander’s

Bucephalus and the Cid's Babieca. He spent your days pondering what name to give him; for, he reflected, it would be wrong for the horse of so famous a knight, a horse so good in himself, to be without a famous name.... So after many names invented, struck out and rejected, amended, cancelled and remade in his fanciful mind, he finally decided to call him Rocinante, a name which seemed to him grand and sonorous, and to express the common horse he had been before arriving at his present state; the first and foremost of all hacks in the world. (198)

Reality is, in Don Quixote's mind, made more literary by the acquisition of a name. In the paragraph which follows, the knight restores his own lost nobility by adopting the title 'Don Quixote de la Mancha', and a 'good-looking farm girl' is transformed in his mind into 'a princess and a great lady.... Dulcinea del Toboso.... a name which seemed to him as musical, strange and significant as those others that he had devised for himself and his possessions.' (199) Reality is thus given the heightened significance of literature.

Don Quixote's actions are often imposed on him by the conventions of chivalric romance:

He now came to a place where the road divided into four, and there immediately leapt into his mind those crossways where knights errant used to stop to consider which of the roads they should take. So, following their example, he halted a moment, and after deep thought let go the reins, submitting his will to Rocinante, who followed his first instinct, which was to take the road towards his stable. (200)

The working out of fiction in the real world is absurd, yet its absurdity, indicated by Cervantes, remains hidden from the knight. For Don Quixote, the action is 'significant' in that it is part of a convention prescribed

(198) ibid., p34
(199) ibid., p35
(200) ibid., p50
by Romance. The irony with which Cervantes undermines this significance is not apparent to the knight: that the horse returns to its stable is of no consequence to him. His perceptions are ordered by the language of chivalry:

As everything that our adventurer thought, saw or imagined seemed to follow the fashion of his reading, as soon as he saw the inn, he convinced himself that it was a fortress with its four towers and pinnacle of shining silver complete with a drawbridge, a deep moat, and all those appurtenances with which such castles are painted. (201)

In Don Quixote, language dominates experience. The inn becomes a castle for the hero because, according to the conventions of chivalric literature, the knight approaches castles and not inns. Such transformations may be made because the hero lives by exploring the space in the relationship between words and objects, and is always able to substitute language for reality. Because the object and its name are not naturally but conventionally linked, language may be used in a purely subjective way.

In Don Quixote, the objective world merges with the knight's subjective vision to the extent that the 'reality' he inhabits is a mental reality, a product of his imagination. The external world - constantly indicated by the long-suffering Sancho Panza - is ignored by Don Quixote in favour of the fictional world constructed from the language of chivalric romance.

The consequences of an individual superimposing his own 'reality' on the external world are shown throughout the novel and point to the absurdity of attempting to merge art and life. Art, by its very nature, implies a selection of experience, but Don Quixote, far from selecting experience to create art, attempts to transform in an automatic way the whole of his experience into chivalric literature. The direct result is his mechanical failure to consider the demands of life: the reader is constantly amused, for example, by the knight's confidence that he can survive perfectly well.
at inns and hostels even though he insists on carrying no money with him. The whole narrative reveals the irony of the disparity between reality and fiction, between the object and the word, an irony never apparent to the knight, in spite of the many beatings his adherence to the code of chivalric literature brings him.

The second part of the novel makes it clear that Cervantes is writing a comedy of language: for here, Don Quixote is recognized by those who see him passing by as the hero of a work they have actually read - the first part of the novel - and in this way the knight completes his search for analogy between life and literature by turning his own life into a novel, the laws and conventions of which he must obey. The autonomous nature of language, which allows the establishment of analogies between the real and the imagined produces, in Cervantes' work, a perfect merging of the two: Don Quixote, imaging himself to be the hero of a novel, actually becomes the hero of the novel. In Foucault's words,

La vérité de Don Quichotte, elle n'est pas dans le rapport des mots au monde, mais dans cette mince et constante relation que les marques verbales tissent d'elles-mêmes à elles-mêmes. (202)

Cervantes allows his hero to transcend the external world by inhabiting a mental world of words. For this, if for no other reason, Don Quixote is essentially a comedy of language. Although the autonomous nature of language undoubtedly underlies the novel, the establishment of analogies between life and fiction is always possible for Don Quixote, and he is not destroyed by the disparity between the world as it is and the mental world he inhabits. One may make the observation that he never actually lives, but simply transforms himself into fiction, and from this derives

(202) M. Foucault; op. cit., p62
his originality.

The creation of a character of this nature was far from Flaubert's intention. He regarded Emma Bovary as typical rather than exceptional:

Ma pauvre Bovary, sans doute, souffre et pleure dans vingt villages de France à la fois, à cette heure même. (203)

Unlike Don Quixote she is forced into consciousness of the external world; her existence is a perpetual tension between the imagined and the real. It is through such tension that Flaubert's concern with the ironies and potential absurdity of language is conveyed to the reader. His work deals with the Romantic tendency to use language in order to transcend the real, and to establish an ideal as the object of human aspiration. This aim is typified by Hugo's intention to

créer un monde avec une parole. (204)

The ideal is thus characterized as being of a linguistic order, and aspiration towards it necessarily involves a rejection of the real. Yet the ideal can only exist within a work of art. Flaubert's aim is to show that, removed from the consciousness which created it and misinterpreted by the reader in such a way that it is seen as separate from the art which embodies it, an ideal is nothing more than a linguistic construct, and human aspiration to the ideal, in spite of the dignity it confers upon man, is doomed to failure. For Emma Bovary, Salammbô, Frédéric Moreau and Bouvard and Pécuchet, a quixotic transcendence of the real is impossible: the failure of Flaubert's characters to live out their dreams depends partly on the nature of language as it appeared to Flaubert, and partly on the tendency of his protagonists to prendre des conceptions pour des

(203) Correspondance, vol III, p291; to Louise Colet, 14-viii-1853
(204) V. Hugo: 'A Canaris' (Les Chants du Crépuscule, VIII), in Oeuvres Completes, ed cit., vol V, p476
rénités', which results in their inability to assess their experiences, and, ultimately, in their alienation from the world in which they live.

In *Don Quixote*, the danger of the possible meaninglessness of signs is only potential: the knight's world, composed of words which form a system parallel to external reality, even if far removed from it, remains inviolate. Flaubert, however, less optimistic than Cervantes, was fascinated by the idea that language might cover an intellectual void, and in his fiction he exploits various aspects of this hypothesis with increasing pessimism.

The organization of experience is only possible if the language adopted by the individual is flexible enough to relate to this experience. The clichés of Romanticism adopted by Emma are particularly inadequate because, like the language of chivalric romance parodied by Cervantes, they represent nothing more than a codification of a literary language which has lost its originality and which is only remotely related to actual experience.

Terms such as 'L'Amour', 'Le Bonheur', and 'La Passion' have become abstractions and it is ironic that Emma should seek to order her life by them. Throughout the novel, Flaubert indicates that a code such as this precludes the heroine's appreciation of her experience, and constantly prevents her recognition and acceptance of the real world.

Furthermore, a codified language lacks the organic, generative element proper to language, and this hinders thought and the interpretation of experience with the result that an imagined world is created, a world which is fixed and inorganic. Thus Emma fails to appreciate the true nature of her amorous exploits because they do not fit into her preconceived pattern, gleaned from her subjective interpretation of the
Romantic literature she enjoys, of 'félicité, passion, ivresse'. The potential danger of the arbitrariness of signs is fully realized in Flaubert's work. Emma is misled, as a result of the language she adopts. The patterns she constructs are impossible to find in the real world, and, unlike Don Quixote, she is unable to live in the realm of the fictional.

This is not to say, however, that Emma's plight, or that of Flaubert's other protagonists, is brought about solely by the fact that language is arbitrary. It is difficult to tell whether Flaubert's pessimism originates in his awareness of the inadequacies of language or in his belief that man is unable to use language efficiently. Henry James's celebrated protest at Flaubert's creation of Frédéric - 'why, why him?' - is the culmination of what appears to be a useful insight into Flaubert's heroes and heroines.

Our complaint is that Emma Bovary, in spite of the nature of her consciousness and in spite of her reflecting so much that of her creator, is really too small an affair... Why did Flaubert choose, as special conducts of the life he proposed to depict, such inferior, and, in the case of Frédéric, such abject human specimens? I insist only in respect to the latter, the perfection of Madame Bovary, scarce leaving one much warrant for wishing anything other. Even here, however, the general scale and size of Emma, who is small even of her sort, should be a warning to hyperbole. If I say that in the matter of Frédéric at all events the answer is inevitably detrimental, I mean that it weighs heavily on our author's general credit. He wished in each case to make a picture of experience - middling experience, it is true - and of the world close to him; but if he imagined nothing better for his purpose than such a heroine and such a hero, both such limited reflectors and registers, we are forced to believe it to have been by a defect of his mind. (205)

This criticism implies that the limitations of Flaubert's characters in their capacity as registers and reflectors are detrimental to Flaubert's expression of his vision. Yet it could be argued that such limitations are, in Flaubert's view, a fundamental characteristic of man. Man's inability to use language in order to register experience and his reliance on clichés and prestructured codes suggest an intellectual void, which conveys Flaubert's pessimism about the nature of man rather than any criticism of language as an organizing principle.

The truth of the matter appears to be that the absurdity of the attempted quixotic substitution of words for life - doomed to failure because of the demands of the real world on the individual - is compounded by the potential absurdity of language, which, autonomous, can be deceptive. If, for Cervantes, the life of the imagination can continue parallel with and analogous to the life of the external world, this is not the case for Flaubert. An examination of the heroes and heroines of his novels reveals that the use of a borrowed, prestructured linguistic code prevents the individual from transcending the real and at the same time brings about his alienation from the world he inhabits.
In its treatment of the dangers inherent in the language of Romantic idealism, the first version of *L'Éducation Sentimentale* (1845) prefigures Madame Bovary. The two heroes, Jules and Henry, are avid readers of Romantic literature: in the course of the novel, reference is made to one or other of them reading the works of Chateaubriand, Hugo, Lamartine, Dumas, Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Schlegel and Byron, and their aspirations clearly derive from what they have read. Yet the Romantic ideal is reduced to near absurdity:

'Te rappelles-tu notre passion pour l'Inde et pour la marche des chameaux au désert, pour le rugissement des lions?' (206)

Diverse elements which serve as expressions of the ideal in Romantic art are here ironically juxtaposed by Flaubert: divorced from the context of art, their original significance is lost. They are no more than clichés, and the context in which they are employed reveals the temptation on the part of the reader of Romantic literature to grasp at symbols of the ideal without comprehending their full significance. The ideal posited by Romanticism is thus necessarily unattainable.

Interpreted by a voracious reader such as Jules, Romanticism becomes a set of commonplaces by which a yearning for a different plane of existence can be expressed, yet the non-artist can do no more than aspire to this plane:

Sa vie, jusqu'à présent, avait été une vie plate et uniforme, resserrée dans des limites précises et il se croyait né pour quelque large existence toute remplie d'aventures et de hasards imprévus, pour les combats, pour la mer, pour des voyages perdus, pour des courses énormes à travers le monde. (207)

(206) *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, (1845), in *O.C.*, vol 1, p288
(207) *ibid.*, p308
Once again the juxtaposition of the different elements, together with
the use of certain adjectives which are imprecise and devoid of
significance reveals the protagonist's tendency to codify the language
of Romanticism, and implies the absurdity inherent in the wish to order
experience according to such a codification.

The effect of this quixotic desire is evident in Flaubert's character-
isation of Jules.

Ce qui le rendait à plaindre, c'est qu'il ne
savait pas bien distinguer ce qui est de ce
qui devrait être. (208)

Reading Romantic literature fires Jules's imagination to the extent that
he seeks to read the works in a purely subjective way, seeing in them
metaphors for his own condition rather than autonomous works of art. The
novelit... never far from the surface of the narrative in the first
Education Sentimentale, criticises this tendency in a passage which gives
valuable pointers to the reason for the destructive effect of Romantic
language in Flaubert's later works.

Pour trouver quelque chose d'analogue à ce qui se
passait dans son âme, il cherchait dans les poètes
et dans les romanciers, une situation semblable à
la sienne, un caractère comme le sien; mais ce qu'il
voyait partout manquait, pour effectuer la
ressemblance, de la précision qui fait ressortir le
dessin, du détail qui le colore, enfin de cette
particularité dont il était en quête; il croyait
que rien n'approchait de sa douleur, que toutes les
autres étaient bornées, que la sienne seule était
infinie.

Il relut René et Werther, ces livres qui dégoûtent
de vivre. Il relut Byron et rêva à la solitude des
grandes âmes de ses héros; mais son admiration se
ressentait trop de cette sympathie personnelle, qui
n'a rien de commun avec la contemplation désintéressée
du véritable artiste. (209)

(208) ibid., p308
(209) ibid., p321
Romanticism lends itself to subjective reading in that the worlds created and described are exteriorizations of the artist's yearning for an ideal, yet it provides no fulfilment of the reader's aspiration, and may lead to a mistaken apprehension of what is real and what is imagined which colours the individual's awareness both of experience and of art.

The tendency to adopt a purely subjective reading of Romantic literature may be initiated by its specifically egoistical nature, but the similarity between the heroes of Flaubert's work, of whom Jules may in many ways be regarded as a prototype, suggests that an inability to look objectively or critically at language is a particular feature of the mentality of Emma Bovary, Salammbô and Bouvard and Pécuchet. In Jules's case, Flaubert directs our attention to his protagonist's inertia:

Il savait bien cependant que, pour être heureux, il fallait se mêler à la danse, prendre un métier, un état, une manie, une marotte quelconque, et en faire secouer les grelots, s'adonner à la politique où à la culture des melons, peindre des aquarelles, réformer les mœurs, ou jouer aux quilles; mais il n'avait pas le coeur à tout cela, et la moindre initiative pour entrer dans la vie positive lui donnait des nausées, en même temps que la vie speculative le fatiguait et lui semblait creuse. (210)

Whether or not the sarcasm of this sketch reflects Flaubert's own attitude towards an active life, the point about Jules is clear. For such a character - as the case of Emma Bovary later proves - reading is an extension of day-dreaming.

Sa table était surchargée de livres... il ne lisait pas tout cela, mais il rêvait dessus. (211)
What is interesting — and unconvincing — about *L'Education Sentimentale* is the way in which such an uncritical character is transformed into an artist: The novel must be classed as a failure because of the way in which Jules is so clearly invested with Flaubert's own theories in the second half of the work. From 'Le Sentiment' comes 'L'Idée' — this transition is psychologically unconvincing when the reader takes into account Jules's tendency to dream — and from 'L'Idée' comes the desire to create a work of art:

Son état présent.... était le somme de tous les antécédents.... chaque événement en avait produit un second, chaque sentiment s'était fondu dans une idée.... Il y avait donc une conséquence et une suite dans cette série de perceptions diverses, c'était un problème dont chaque degré pour le résoudre est une solution partielle.

Mais puisque le dernier mot n'arrive jamais, à quoi bon l'attendre? Ne peut-on pas le pressentir? et n'y a-t-il pas au monde une manière quelconque d'arriver à la conscience de la vérité? Si l'art était pour lui ce moyen, il devait le prendre. (212)

For Flaubert, art is the only valid means of fixing and expressing the flow of experience, and style is therefore of the utmost importance. Art necessarily involves a constant renewal of language, and Jules becomes aware of this:

N'arrive-t-il pas, à certains moments de la vie de l'humanité et de l'individu, d'inexplicables élans qui se traduisent par des formes étranges? Alors le langage ordinaire ne suffit plus; ni le marbre ni les mots ne peuvent contenir ces pensées qui ne se disent pas, assouvir ces étranges appétits qui ne rassasient point; on a besoin de tout ce qui n'est pas, tout ce qui est devient inutile. (213)

The incompatibility of this insight with Jules's previous subjective

(212) ibid., p351
(213) ibid., p357
rejection of language as hollow underlines the inconsistency in his character:

Ah, quelle mensonge que la vie.... je suis maudit, tout m'a manqué, l'art et l'amour, la femme et la poésie, car j'ai relu mon drame et j'ai eu pitié de l'homme qui l'avait fait, cela est faux et niais, nul et emphatique. Qu'importe l'art, après tout? C'est un mot vide de sens, dans lequel nous plaçons tout notre orgueil et qui nous crève dans les mains dès qu'on le presse. (214)

Here the Romantic pose involves a belief that thought and feelings lie beyond expression: the true artist, on the other hand, is capable of moulding language to his own ends; Jules's theories show an awareness of the artistic use of language which was absent in Flaubert's earlier portrayal of the hero.

Whilst Jules becomes Flaubert's major preoccupation in this novel, it is Henry who is drawn with more consistency and who prefigures, to a greater extent than his friend, the heroes and heroines of Flaubert's later work.

The way in which he adopts, uncritically, the code provided by the language of Romanticism reflects Jules's error, but, in the case of Henry, no sudden insight is bestowed on him by his creator, and Flaubert works out the full implications of the adoption of a code which is incongruent with human experience and therefore inadequate to man's needs.

An initial reaction to Romanticism reveals that Henry responds as much to the sensual impact of language as to its meaning. During his first meeting with Madame Restaud, he asks:

...n'aimez-vous pas aussi à vous bercer mollement dans leur rythme (des poètes), à vous laisser emporter par le rêve d'un génie sur quelque nuage d'or, au-delà des mondes connus? (215)

(214) ibid., p314
(215) ibid., p287
More important, however, is the way in which Romantic literature, read uncritically, provides for Henry ready-made clichés for experience. Henry attempts, throughout his relationship with Madame Restaud, to assess his feelings according to words he has encountered in his reading:

'Qu'ai-je donc, qu'ai-je donc? se disait-il à lui-même. Est-ce que là ce que l'on appelle l'amour? Est-ce que j'aime?... et il se mit à l'aimer.' (216)

The experience of love is only valid for Henry if it relates to a preconceived and hence stylized idea contained for him in the word 'l'amour'. Thus influenced by his preconceptions, Henry attempts to mould his experience to language. Another of the key words of Romanticism is 'le bonheur'. Henry is not alone in his search for 'le bonheur': Madame Restaud also seeks it:

'La monotonie de leur existence, la régularité de leur bonheur même les irritait, leur faisant souhaiter un bonheur plus vaste, moins circonscrit. Ils la placèrent ailleurs, dans une patrie nouvelle, loin de l'ancienne, et séparée de tout leur passé par la profondeur des mers.' (217)

It is evident here that the word 'le bonheur' lacks signification for them, for they possess it yet continue to search for something beyond it, which they also term 'le bonheur'. The word used as an absolute is incongruous with the relativity of feelings which are actually experienced. Yet it is their language - the search for the absolute represented by 'le bonheur' - which leads them to America: this is the first of several important instances in Flaubert's novels where experience is actually adapted to fit the demands of language. But the novelist stresses that the twin patterns - that of words and that of experience - are divergent. For Flaubert there can be no success in the quixotic quest to merge reality and language.

(216) ibid., p242
(217) ibid., p330
Words which do not spring from man's experience remain separate from it.

Hence real experience is often unexpected because it does not fit into a pattern established by Romantic language:

Henry se reprochait de ne pas sentir les exagérations magnifiques qu'il avait lues dans les livres, et chaque jour, cependant, il lui arrivait au cœur d'inexprimables sensations qu'il n'avait jamais rêvées, des tressaillements inattendus qui le surprenaient lui-même. (218)

For the hero who lives in an imagined world, external reality is alien. The theme is one which Flaubert elaborates in Madame Bovary. The narrator stresses the danger of adopting Romantic 'exagérations' as the norm, but Flaubert sees man as imprisoned by his own subjectivity and blind to the autonomous nature of the codified and stylized language of Romanticism:

Henry is incapable of realising that Romanticism deals in 'exagérations'.

The logical consequence of the adoption of a code of this nature is that terms such as 'l'amour' and 'le bonheur' are regarded by Henry as absolutes, and the organization of experience is thus stultified by the organizing principle, language. This is revealed by a comparison of two letters from Jules to Henry. The first is written to Henry in Paris:

Comme tu es heureux, toil Ton père a bien voulu te laisser aller à Paris; tu es libre, tu as de l'argent, des maîtresses, tu vas dans le monde... (219)

When Henry goes to America,

.... Jules approuvait son départ, toute sa conduite en général, et il s'étendait sur l'amour qu'il portait à sa maîtresse, et sur le bonheur qu'elle lui donnait.

(218) ibid., p315
(219) ibid., p280
'Que tu es heureux, lui disait-il, comme j'envie ton sort. La destinée qui m'a tout refusé, à moi, t'a comblé, tu es libre'. (220)

The language used is inorganic: similar clichés – 'la maîtresse', 'le monde', 'le bonheur', 'l'amour' and 'la destinée' – recur throughout the letters. Experience is fixed by words, in that Jules's concept of Henry's life is limited by the stylized terms which he uses to describe it, and this in turn reflects the way in which Henry himself is blind to the organic nature of experience and is willing to adapt his thoughts and feelings to the language he has borrowed from Romanticism. For this reason, the concept of 'la liberté', expressed in both letters, is ironic: 'la liberté' is only available to those who free themselves from their own subjective worlds, who are capable of understanding what is external to them. For Jules, the artist, such freedom is a possibility; for Henry, the clichés of Romanticism simply give way to the clichés of bourgeois life: it is the path of the latter which leads to Madame Bovary and the novels of Flaubert's maturity.

In Madame Bovary, Flaubert makes it clear that only a particular type of personality would respond to Romantic literature in the way that Emma does, and the personality of the heroine requires careful consideration before any discussion of the influence literature has on her.

(220) ibid., p345
Throughout the novel, Emma's dislike of activity and her tendency to dream are emphasized by the novelist. When outlining the effect of her education, he draws the reader's attention to her sensual response to life in the convent:

Vivant donc sans jamais sortir de la tiède atmosphère des classes et parmi ces femmes au teint blanc portant des chapelets à croix de cuivre, elle s'assoupit doucement à la langueur mystique qui s'exhale des parfums de l'autel, de la fraîcheur des bénéfriers, et du rayonnement des cierges. (221)

Marriage and her life with Charles reinforce rather than negate the tendency to respond in a passive way to experience: she does not change as Jules does:

D'ailleurs, le souvenir du roman facilitant l'intelligence du libretto, elle suivait l'intrigue phrase à phrase, tandis que d'insaisissables pensées qui lui revenaient dispersaient aussitôt sous les rafales de la musique. Elle se laissait aller au berçement des mélodies et se sentait elle-même vibrer de tout son être comme si les archets des violons se fussent promenés sur ses nerfs. (222)

In both cases experience is reduced to sensation: thoughts are 'insaisissables', and analysis plays no part in her response to external reality. The different elements before her eyes simply merge to give her a general impression which, what is more, corresponds to what she expects to see.

Elle n'avait pas assez d'yeux pour contempler les costumes, les décors, les personnages, les arbres pointa qui tremblaient quand on marchait, et les toques de velours, les manteaux, les épées, toutes ces imaginations qui s'agitaient dans l'harmonie comme dans l'atmosphère d'un autre monde. (223)

(221) Madame Bovary, in O.C., vol I, p586
(222) Ibid., p650
(223) Ibid., p650
Refusing to analyse what is happening even so far as to answer Charles's inane questions, she identifies the opera with her own life:

Lucie s'avançait, à demi soutenue par ses femmes, une couronne d'orange dans les cheveux, et plus pâle que le satin blanc de sa robe. Emma rêvait au jour de son mariage. (224)

That her mind should return to the bouquet she held on her wedding is, of course, part of Flaubert's careful orchestration - the reader too is expected to add this to the pattern of symbols already established by the novelist - but Emma's reaction is not out of character. Failure to respond to experience she can regard only objectively has already formed an important part of Flaubert's depiction of her:

Cet esprit, positif au milieu de ses enthousiasmes, qui avait aimé l'église pour ses fleurs, la musique pour les paroles des romances, et la littérature pour ses excitations passionnelles, s'insurgeait devant les mystères de la foi, de même qu'elle s'irritait davantage contre la discipline qui était quelque chose d'antipathique à sa constitution. (225)

This lack of discipline is a direct result of her failure to come to terms with what is external to her.

The subjective nature of her response to what is outside her imagination is underlined by her fascination with 'pays à noms sonores'. (226) Her sensual appreciation of language is revealed by Flaubert even before the influence of Romantic literature on Emma is discussed. Moreover, the first meetings with Charles show a reticence on Emma's part which signifies either the inability, or the absence of desire, to reach out to the external world. Their non-communication produces the impression that each character is imprisoned in a world of his own.

(224) ibid., p550
(225) ibid., p587
(226) ibid., p588
When Emma's past is discussed in detail the reader is immediately aware of her tendency to create her own world. 'Paul et Virginie', for example, is read subjectively:

Elle avait lu Paul et Virginie et elle avait rêvé la maisonnette de bambous, le nègre Domingo, le chien fidèle, mais surtout l'amitié douce de quelque bon petit frère, qui va chercher pour vous de fruits rouges dans de grands arbres plus hauts que des clochers, ou qui court pieds nus sur le sable, vous apportant un nid d'oiseau. (227)

The key word her is 'rêvé' - what is external is important only if it enhances Emma's dream:

Elle rejetait comme inutile tout ce qui ne contribuait pas à la consommation immédiate de son cœur - étant de tempérament plus sentimentale qu'artiste, cherchant des émotions et non des paysages. (228)

Her reading of Walter Scott is equally subjective:

Avec Walter Scott, plus tard, elle s'éprit de choses historiques, rêvait de bahuts, salle des gardes et minstrels. Elle aurait voulu vivre dans quelque vieux manoir, comme ces chatelaines au long corsage qui, sous le treflé des ogives, passaient leurs jours, le coude sur la pierre et le menton dans la main, à regarder venir du fond de la campagne un cavalier à plume blanche qui galope sur un cheval noir. (229)

The various elements are not part of a single work by Scott, but are more in the nature of 'idées reçues' which spring to mind when Scott's name is mentioned. They form an immediate impression of a particular world yet the facility with which they are called together belies the true complexity of Scott's work and suggests the 'sentimental' as opposed to 'artistic'.

(227) ibid., p586
(228) ibid., p586. The distinction 'plus sentimentale qu'artiste' throws light on the character of Jules and the incongruités discussed earlier in this chapter.
(229) ibid., p286
nature which has conjured them up. The elements constitute 'the lowest common denominator' of Scott's work, the minimum needed to create a stimulating impression. Bersani's analogy between this tendency of Emma's and the techniques of modern advertising is not out of place. (230)

A mind such as Emma's, subjecting literature to her own affective view, necessarily fails to distinguish between true Romanticism and the paraphernalia thrown up in the wake of the Romantic movement:

A la classe de musique, dans les romances qu'elle chantait, il n'était question que de petits anges aux ailes d'or, de madones, de lagunes, de gondoliers, pacifiques compositions qui lui laissaient entrevoir, à travers la niaiserie du style et les imprudences de la note, l'attirante fantasmagorie des réalités sentimentales. Quelques-unes de ses camarades apportaient au couvent des keepsakes.... (231)

Between Paul et Virginie and Romantic keepsakes, no distinction is made, because neither is regarded objectively. Both serve to stimulate Emma's appetite, and, having the same function, they have, in her eyes, the same value. It is significant that the engravings she collects are described in similar terms to the dreams of Henry and Jules in the first version of L'Éducation Sentimentale:

Et vous y étiez aussi, sultans à longues pipes, pâmis sous des tonnelles aux bras des bayadères, djisapurs, sabres turcs, bonnets grecs, et vous surtout, paysages blafards des contrées dithyrambiques, qui souvent nous montrez à la fois des palmiers, des sapins, des tigres à droite, un lion à gauche, des minarets tartares à l'horizon, au premier plan des ruines romaines, puis des chameaux accroupis: le

(231) Madame Bovary, in O.C., vol I, p587
The incongruity of the different elements brought together not through any imaginative synthesis but simply because they are manifestations of the concept 'exotic' reveals an intellectual void which underlies Emma's relation to the objective world and to the world of art. Her appreciation of Lamartine points to a similar reduction of poetry to a set of 'idées reçues', and once again the incongruity of the different elements is emphasised:

Elle se laissa donc glisser dans les méandres lamartiniens, écouta les harpes sur les lacs, tous les chants des cygnes mourants, toutes les chutes de feuilles, les vierges pures qui montent au ciel, et la voix de l'Eternel discours dans les vallons.(233)

It is worth pointing out that Flaubert is critical of Emma's subjective vision rather than of Lamartine's poetry. It is a vision which is unstructured, undefined and unbalanced, and one which reveals clearly the difference between Emma's temperament and the artistic temperament as Flaubert conceived of it.

The limited reaction of such a mentality to the outside world is carefully demonstrated by Flaubert at the end of this critical chapter when the death of Emma's mother is narrated:

Quand sa mère mourut, elle pleura beaucoup les premiers jours. Elle se fit faire un tableau funèbre avec les cheveux de la défunte, et, dans une lettre qu'elle envoyait aux Bertaux... elle demandait qu'on l'ensevelit plus tard dans le même tombeau... Elle s'en ennuya, n'en voulant point convenir, continua par habitude, ensuite

(232) ibid., p587
(233) ibid., p587
par vanité, et fut enfin surprise de se sentir apaisée, et sans plus de tristesse au cœur que de rides sur son front. (234)

The gap between her view of what emotion should consist of and her actual feeling on the death of her mother reveals the extent to which her response to reality has been conditioned by her limited reaction to Romanticism. Furthermore, it indicates the growing distance between her concept of reality and what is in fact real, a distance which eventually leads to her death.

The linguistic implications of this gap are subtly explored by Flaubert. Emma's preconditioned response to the external world, gleaned from Romanticism, is expressed by means of a prestructured language. Words are of the utmost importance to Emma. 'Pays à noms sonores' feed her imagination. The word 'Paris' which recalls Hugo, Balzac and Eugène Sue, evokes images which Emma attempts to perpetuate simply by repeating the word:

Lui, il était à Paris, maintenant; là-bas! comment était ce Paris? Quel nom démesuré! Elle se le répétait à demi-voix, pour se faire plaisir; il sonnait à ses oreilles comme un bourdon de cathédrale; il flamboyait à ses yeux jusque sur l'étiquette de ses pots de pommade. (235)

At times she demands of language an almost magical function:

Au clair de lune, dans le jardin, elle récitait tout ce qu'elle savait par cœur de rimes passionnées et lui chantait en soupirant des adagios mélancoliques; mais elle se trouvait ensuite aussi calme qu'auparavant, et Charles n'en paraissait ni plus amoureux, ni plus remué. (236)

In this way she expects language to generate reality and is disappointed when it fails to change the world about her.

(234) ibid., p587
(235) ibid., p593
(236) ibid., p589
In her attempts to judge her own experience according to the clichés provided by the literature she reads, a typical and important example is her concept of 'l'amour'.

Flaubert shows, by the use of an image, the danger of attempting to use words as absolutes. Reality may be distorted if language is divorced from the actuality of experience. The implications are discussed by Cassirer:

Through fixation in the word, the context is lifted out of the continuous stream of becoming in which it stands; hence it is not apprehended according to its totality, but only according to a onesided determination. (238)

Emma's onesided view of Romanticism is therefore reflected in her use of language; her awareness of the world outside her mind is necessarily suspect. For her language, deriving largely from a subjective interpretation of Romantic literature, gives her a limited view of the world and hence her subjectivity is compounded. It becomes increasingly evident as the novel progresses that Emma is incapable of escaping from her own viewpoint.

We may regard this problem from the point of view of eighteenth- and early...
nineteenth-century attitudes towards language. It has been shown that, for writers such as Condillac, thought is dependent on language; hence the primary function of language came to be regarded as that of ideation. Trier writes that

Every language is a system of selection over and against objective reality.... every language creates a self-sufficient and complete image of reality. Every language structures reality in its own manner. (239)

Language both structures and mirrors the external world and thus allows the individual to understand his own experience of reality. In contrast, Emma's language, by virtue of its stylized nature, is shown to be inadequate for the organization and comprehension of reality. Giving predominance to words, she judges situations according to the language she has acquired from books. As in the first *Education Sentimentale*, certain key words emerge. The first occasion on which this becomes evident is important in terms of the structure of the novel; indeed, it is the contention of one critic that the passage is central to the novel's structure: (240)

Avant qu'elle se mariât, elle avait cru avoir de l'amour: mais le bonheur qui aurait dû résulter de cet amour n'étant pas venu, il fallait qu'elle se fut trompée, songeait-elle. Et Emma cherchait à savoir ce que l'on entendait au juste dans la vie par les mots de félicité, de passion et d'ivresse qui lui avaient paru si beaux dans les livres. (241)

This reveals the way Emma expects to be able to live according to a prestructured language, and similar passages recurring throughout the novel show how at important stages in her life she tests the language which she has learned. The terms are absolutes, yet she seeks to organize and to express her experience through them. Her reaction to Charles, for


(240) F.D. McConnell, op. cit.

(241) Madame Bovary, in O.C., vol I, p586
example involves testing the words 'la passion' and 'le bonheur':

Mais l'anxiété d'un état nouveau, ou peut-être l'irritation causée par la présence de cet homme, avait suffi à lui faire croire qu'elle possédait enfin cette passion merveilleuse qui jusqu'alors s'était tenue comme un grand oiseau au plumage rose planant dans la splendeur des ciels poétiques; et elle ne pouvait s'imaginer à présent que ce calme où elle vivait fût le bonheur qu'elle avait rêvé. (242)

Each of her relationships is tested against the criteria of Romantic language. The beginning of her marriage to Charles appears auspicious:

Elle songeait quelquefois que c'étaient là pourtant les plus beaux jours de sa vie, la lune de miel, comme on disait. (243)

The final 'comme on disait' shows the artificiality of the language, and it is doubly ironic that she rejects 'ce mari qu'elle ne connaissait pas' since, without the use of an authentic language she has no power of knowing anyone, or registering fully any type of experience. Her concept of 'le bonheur' and 'la félicité' fail to provide her with the tools for understanding her relationship with Léon:

Ah, il était parti, le seul charme de sa vie, le seul espoir possible d'une félicité! Comment n'avait-elle pas saisi ce bonheur - là quand il se présentait? (245)

The actuality of the affair is ignored in favour of her romanticizing. Moreover, the term 'le bonheur' is applied retrospectively; language is thus divorced temporally from the experience it is intended to organise and express, and its autonomy is further indicated by the novelist.

Later in the novel Emma's relationship with Rodolphe gives her the opportunity of testing once again the word 'l'amour':

(242) ibid., p587
(243) ibid., p588
(244) ibid., p599
(245) ibid., p616
Language at this point dominates her consciousness. The single word, 'l'amant' generates 'l'amour', 'la fièvre du bonheur', 'la passion', 'l'extase', 'le délie', and she transcends the world in which she lives to read a plane from which 'l'existence ordinaire n'apparaisait qu'au loin'. Yet her ecstasy at the point when she believes she has reached her ideal is undermined by Flaubert's revelation that the ideal is no more than a construct of language.

To a certain extent the generative aspect of language allows Emma to create a mental reality and to assume, like Don Quixote, roles dictated by her imagination. The role which she adopts as a charitable lady is obviously derived from her reading, and Flaubert underlines the irony of such an uncharacteristic stance:

Yet the extent to which she can fuse herself into different imagined personalities is shown by the novelist to be limited. Emma, unlike Don

(246) ibid., p629
(247) ibid., p596
Quixote, cannot live in a world of her own creation, removed from the world of Tostes and Yonville. The air of inevitability which pervades the novel is created partly through the sense of Emma's growing alienation, and this may be seen as a direct result of her inability to use language in other than a subjective way. Her need to communicate is evident at the beginning of the novel:

Quelquefois aussi, elle lui parlait des choses qu'elle avait lues, comme d'un passage de roman, d'une pièce dans le feuilleton; car, enfin, Charles était quelqu'un, une oreille toujours ouverte, une approbation toujours prête. Elle faisait bien des confidences à sa livrée; elle en eût fait aux bûches de la cheminée, et au balancier de la pendule. (248)

She regards Charles merely as a 'receiver' for her language and fails to explore the possibility that communication with him may be different from her preconceptions of 'conversation'. Moreover, what she seeks to express consists not of her own experience but of prestructured responses to what is real. Even at this stage of the novel, the reader is aware that she is unable to come to terms with her own feelings, and this prevents communication:

Peut-être aurait-elle souhaité faire à quelqu'un la confidence de toutes ces choses. Mais comment dire un insaisissable malaise, qui change d'aspect comme des nuées, qui tourbillonne comme le vent? Les mots lui manquaient donc, l'occasion, la hardiesse. (249)

Once again there is an element of ambiguity. Is this failure the fault of Emma, whose use of the clichés of Romanticism imprisons her in her own subjective world? Or is the fixed nature of language itself necessarily inadequate to the expression of organic reality? Whatever the case, Emma, unlike Jules, will never become an artist and seek to renew language in

(248) ibid., p595
(249) ibid., p588
order to increase the possibility of knowing and expressing experience, for she is never fully aware of the inadequacy of the language which she employs.

This increases her alienation in that the only experiences she can appreciate are those which can be seen in terms of the abstract, stylized language she adopts. Her visit to la Vaubyessard, for example, is an extension of her reading: the language of the guests fires her imagination in the same way as Romantic literature:

A trois pas d'Emma, un cavalier en habit bleu causait Italie avec une jeune femme pâle, portant une parure de perles. Ils vantaient la grosseur des piliers de Saint-Pierre, Tivoli, le Vésuve, Castellamare et les Cassines, les roses de Gênes, le Colisée au clair de lune. (250)

That their conversation consists of a list of commonplaces about Italy is not apparent to Emma, who remains fascinated by their words.

Another interesting attitude is that towards motherhood:

Elle déclarait adorer les enfants; c'était sa consolation, sa joie, et elle accompagnait ses caresses d'expansions lyriques qui, à d'autres qu'à des Yonvillais eussent rappelé la Sachette de Notre-Dame de Paris. (251)

Even that most natural experience, motherhood, is governed by language: she plays a role. Her rejection of the real in favour of the Romantic is clearly expressed:

'Je déteste les héros communs et les sentiments tempérés comme il ya dans la nature! (252)

and her fear of real sexual passion is evident in her relationship with Rodolphe:

(250) Ibid., p591
(251) Ibid., p610
(252) Ibid., p602
Alors souriant d'un sourire étrange et la prunelle fixe, les dents serrés, il s'avança en écartant les bras. Elle se recula tremblante. Elle balbutiait 'Oh! Vous me faites peur! Vous me faites mal! Partons'. (253)

Moreover, as Bersani points out, the ordinary becomes alien to a character whose conception of the world is governed by the clichés of Romanticism: (254)

Il arrivait parfois des rafales de vent, brises de la mer qui, roulant d'un bond sur tout le plateau du pays de Caux apportaient, jusqu'au loin dans les champs, une fraîcheur salée. Les joncs sifflaient à ras de terre et les feuilles des hêtres bruissaient en un frisson rapide, tandis que les cimes, se balançant toujours, continuaient leur grand murmure. Emma serrait son châle contre ses épaules et se levait.... Une peur la prenait, elle appelait Djali, s'en retournait vite à Tostes par la grande route, s'affaisait dans un fauteuil, et de toute la soirée ne parlait pas. (255)

This experience reveals not a recognition of the failure of man to use words to describe the external world, but rather a rejection of the world in favour of language. That she should be blind to reality is heavily ironic: had the scene been described in a Romantic novel, she would undoubtedly have responded to it.

Yet when confronted with the external world, her reaction is often one of surprise. This is clear in the passage in which her child breaks into her daydreams, and in which she notes with shock the ugliness of Berthe, which until this point she had never noticed. In spite of such confrontations, however, her language continues to restrict her perception of reality.

Flaubert plays increasingly on the irony of Emma's situation. When she

(253) ibid., p628
(254) L. Bersani; op. cit., p157
(255) Madame Bovary, in O.C., vol I, p589
is reminded of her past by a letter from her father, she regrets the loss of the illusions of which her girlhood had been constituted. Nevertheless, the way in which she looks back on the past betrays its reality:

Quel bonheur dans ce temps-là! Quelle liberté!
Quel espoir! Quelle abondance d'illusions! Il n'en restait plus maintenant. (256)

Yet her present unhappiness she finds difficult to analyse:

Mais qui donc la rendait si malheureuse? Où était la catastrophe extraordinaire qui l'avait bouleversée?
Et elle releva la tête, regardant autour d'elle, comme pour chercher la cause de ce qui la faisait souffrir. (257)

Flaubert's sense of irony is keen: the fact that she should look at her misery in terms of 'une catastrophe' reveals that she is still a victim of illusion. In Romantic literature unhappiness is often the product of 'une catastrophe', and she is not sufficiently aware of her life to be able to reject this terminology in favour of a more accurate analysis.

Much of the humour of the novel is of an ironic kind, and this is certainly the case when she finally comes to believe that she has understood the cause of her misery:

'Il lui semblait que la Providence s'acharnait à la poursuivre.' (258)

Although she apparently views her plight in conventional terms, Flaubert shows that she is not even capable of using the correct language: it is Fate, rather than Providence, which should be blamed for catastrophe: even the inept Charles is aware of this. (259)
Flaubert shows how Emma, trapped in her own subjective world, is forced into a static existence from which there can be no escape; and this point is made, significantly, by reference to her language. For Rodolphe, Emma lacks originality:

"tu es mon roi, mon idole; tu es bon; tu es beau; tu es intelligent; tu es fort!"

Il s'était tant de fois entendu dire ces choses qu'elles n'avaient pour lui rien d'original. Emma ressemblait à toutes les maîtresses: et le charme de la nouveauté, peu à peu tombant comme un vêtement, laissait voir 'à nu l'éternelle monotone de la passion, qui a toujours les mêmes formes et le même langage." (260)

Rodolphe himself is partly to blame for this, since his practicality prevents him from penetrating the veneer of words and exploring whatever is beneath. Nevertheless, the inability of people to express themselves with some degree of originality or even precision is an important aspect of the static world which Flaubert seeks to render in his novels. The artistic renewal of language is possible but rare, and without this there remains the eternal sameness from which Flaubert himself sought to escape by writing. The inability of a character such as Emma to transcend such a world is shown when she seeks religious salvation:

Quand elle se mettait "à genoux sur son prière-Dieu gothique, elle adressait au seigneur les mêmes paroles de suavité qu'elle murmural jadis à son amant, dans les épanchements de l'adultère. (261)

The implications of this passage are numerous and ironic. What is striking, however, is that she is so caught up in her subjective world as to be unable to vary her expression: the single frame of reference implied by the single mode of expression necessarily denies her the opportunity of

(260) ibid., p639
(261) ibid., p647
coming to terms with experience, and Flaubert shows her subjective world
to be fixed and resistant to the world outside her imagination.

The language used by Emma, then, is inorganic. Divorced from life, it
has become an object, useless as a tool for the organization of experience
and, indeed, liable to distort experience. As language dominates the
consciousness, the world is regarded as finite; experience is seen to be
composed of absolutes. 'Le bonheur', 'l'amour', 'la félicité', 'la passion',
'livresse' are no longer signs of man's attempt to describe his reaction
to the world: when simplified and stripped of their complexity, as they are
by Emma, words distort man's view of reality: the illusion and the
complacency which results from this simplification are both aspects of a
human world which is essentially static.

Flaubert shows the way in which language can betray its essential functions
of ideation, expression and communication, and bring the individual into a
state of alienation in which comprehension of the organic is impossible.
Emma's death is worked out in the novel in a naturalistic way; yet the air
of inevitability which pervades the novel derives less from Flaubert's
determinism than from his continued emphasis on Emma's inability to come
to terms with reality and reject the world of her imagination.
Salammbô, like Madame Bovary, ends with the death of the heroine, but the reason suggested in the text for her death is only partial, and the reader is led to conclude that what we are given is not Flaubert's view, but that of the Carthaginian people. The 'real' reason - if there can be said to be one in a work which presents as many points of view as there are groups of people - has been widely debated by critics. The conclusions reached often involve discussions of the symbolic level of the novel, with little regard for the psychological aspect, doubtless because of Flaubert's claims that he was unhappy with the psychological side of the novel. Nevertheless, there is enough comment on Salammbô herself to suggest that some parallels may be found with Flaubert's treatment of Emma, and these similarities are worth exploring.

Emma Bovary's endless search to free herself from the circumstances of her existence is an attempt not to adapt herself to the ever-changing world, but rather to reach a state which she believes is somewhere 'beyond' the turmoil of experience, a state of perfection in which she can lose herself completely. The same may be said of Salammbô:

Oh, je voudrais me perdre dans la brume des nuits, dans le flot des fontaines, dans la sève des arbres, sortir de mon corps, n'être qu'un souffle, qu'un rayon, et glisser, monter jusqu'à toi, Ô Mère!' (265)

(262) Salammbô, in O.C., vol I, p797
(264) 'Ce qui me turlupine, c'est le côté psychologique de mon histoire.' Correspondance, vol IV, p216; to Ernest Feydeau, viii-1857
(265) Salammbô, in O.C., vol I, p708
Her use of language reveals to the reader the extent of her alienation from the world outside her mind. The use she makes of the vocative is significant: on many occasions her speech is a form of address:

Sivil Sival Tammouz, Eloul, Tischri, Schâbarl
Ah, pitié pour moi, Déessel! (266)

'O Rabbetnal.... Baalel.... Tanill! Et sa voix se traînait d'une façon plaintive, comme pour appeler quelqu'un - Atâstil Astartël Dercevel Astoreth! Mylitta! Atharil Elissal Tirathal
... par les symboles cachés, - par les sistros résonnants, - par les sillons de la terre, - par l'éternel silence et par l'éternelle fécondité,
- dominatrice de la mer ténébreuse et des plages azurées, ô Reine des choses humides, salut! (267)

Language here is incantatory and reveals a desire for an almost magical communication with a world outside her experience. The words she uses are important for their sound rather than for their meaning. The close link between her words and the notes of music - which are of their nature non-relational - is made explicit as she sings.

Alors elle se mit à chanter les aventures de Melkarth, dieu des Sidoniens et père de sa famille.
Elle disait l'ascension des montagnes d'Ersiphônie, le voyage à Tartessus, et la guerre contre Masisabal pour venger la reine des serpents. (268)

Frequent prayers to these deities show her wish to transcend her own humanity; Salammbô inhabits a mental universe in which language is centred on the divine rather than on the actuality of her own experience.

Schahabarim's role is that of the initiator:

Des mots étranges quelquefois lui échappaient (à Schahabarim) et qui passaient devant Salammbô comme de larges éclairs, illuminant des abîmes. (269)

Language here is not a tool for the formation of concepts of reality. It
is seen by Salammô as a set of magical symbols which will bring her knowledge of something beyond reality; and the failure of language to fulfil the function she assigns to it leads her to a state of confusion and alienation from the external world.

A letter written in 1862, in reply to Sainte-Beuve's criticism of the novel, reveals that Flaubert conceived of Salammô as vastly different from Emma:

Quant à mon heroine je ne le défends pas. Elle ressemble, selon vous, à une Elvire sentimentale, à Velléda, à Madame Bovary. Mais non! Velléda est active, intelligente, européenne. Madame Bovary est agitée par des passions multiples, Salammô, au contraire, demeure clouée par l'idée fixe, c'est une maniaque, une espèce de Sainte-Thérèse. (270)

That Flaubert should pick out the 'idée fixe' as a central aspect of her character is interesting, for it is the novelist's fascination with the 'idée fixe' as a human characteristic which gives rise to some of his most important criticism of the way language is used. The 'idée fixe' represents a rejection of the organic aspect of life in favour of the static, and leaves man isolated from the world he inhabits. For Emma, the 'idées fixes', of which her use of words as absolutes is a sign, are partly a product of language which has been stylized to such a degree that it precludes any possibility of an awareness of the nature of reality. For Salammô, this is also the case. Schahabarim has taught her the mysteries of Tanit, but has said nothing to her of the sexual aspect of the cult. Her questions have been answered in symbolic terms and Salammô, with no less voracity than Emma, takes the priest's words literally. The 'zaïmph' is seen not as a symbol but merely as something real:

(270) Correspondance, vol V, pp57-8: to Sainte-Beuve, 23/24-xii-1862
Elle prenait des conceptions pour des réalités; elle acceptait comme vrai en eux-mêmes de purs symboles et jusqu'à des manières de langage. (271)

The ideal she seeks throughout the novel is a pure illusion, a product of language. Like Emma, she inhabits a mental world. When she finally comes to hold the veil her disillusionment recalls Emma's continual disappointments:

Alors elle contempla le zaïmph, et quand elle l'eut bien contemplé, elle fut surprise de ne pas avoir ce bonheur qu'elle s'imaginait autrefois. Elle restait mélancolique devant son rêve accompli. (272)

Yet as Sherrington points out, (273) disillusionment is itself ironic. The text suggests that the real nature of her desire is sexual, yet because of her 'idée fixe' the fulfilment of this desire remains unrecognized; the real is thus obscured by language.

At times her own identity is hidden in a similar way. Her adoration of Tanit, and Mâtho's identification of her with the Moon Goddess lead her to act as though she has assumed the role of the deity. In spite of her apprehension at coming face to face with Mâtho in the tent she asks for the 'zaïmph' 'en paroles abondantes et superbes'. (274) This transmutation of Salammbô into Tanit is an integral part of the overall structure of the novel and is effected by Flaubert using different points of view, notably that of Mâtho, (275) that of the Carthaginians, (276) and that of the Barbarians, (277) but in this case it is Salammbô who sees herself as the Goddess, and this represents a temporary projection of her language into

(271) Salammbô, in O.C., vol 1, p753
(272) ibid., p760
(274) Salammbô, in O.C., vol 1, p758
(275) cf, for example Salammbô, p724; 'Il lui semblait.... que le vêtement de la déesse dépendait de Salammbô....
(276) cf, for example, the narration of the death of Salammbô, p796-7
(277) cf, Salammbô, Chapter I
the real. But it is only temporary - in contrast, once again, with the situation in *Don Quixote*.

The extension of the Mātho-Salammbô relationship into a Baal-Tanit relationship by the two protagonists themselves denies them the opportunity of assessing their actual feelings for each other. For Mātho, the attraction to Salammbô is tempered by the feeling that he is doomed for having committed sacrilege against Tanit; missing the Macar battle is seen as 'une malédiction' (278) and from this point onwards, Mātho is doubtful that he will eventually succeed in the war. For Salammbô, the confusion is even greater: before her visit to Mātho's camp,

> une épouvante indéterminée la retenait: elle avait peur de Moloch, peur de Mātho. (279)

No distinction is made between the God and the man: her dominant feeling is that of the uncertainty of her emotions. In the tent,

> Salammbô... se laissait ébahir par la force de cet homme. C'était le châtiment de la Déesse, ou l'influence de Moloch circulant autour d'elle, dans les cinq armées. (280)

Any attraction is clouded by fear of both Tanit and Moloch, and subsequent passages show Salammbô's indecision about her feelings for Mātho. Her responses to Narr'Havas are ambiguous: whilst admitting that Mātho should be killed,

> Salammbô tressaillit, et elle baissa la tête. (281)

At the end of the novel, her recognition of her desire for Mātho represents the final, inevitable dominance of the real over the subjective world.

(278) ibid., p746
(279) ibid., p754
(280) ibid., p759
(281) ibid., p788, cf. also p792: 'Le souvenir de Mātho la gênait d'une façon intolérable.'
which the heroine has created for herself. The very inadequacy of the Carthaginian viewpoint of her death draws attention to the real reason for her death. Whilst, for Don Quixote, the real and the imagined worlds can exist side by side, they are incompatible for Flaubert's protagonists. In Madame Bovary, the ideal is revealed as a construct of language, and Flaubert is careful to draw the reader's attention to the danger of using words in an abstract way to generate dreams. In Salammbô the theme of impossible desire is not explored in linguistic terms as much as one might expect. Salammbô's use of language is only once put into an ironic perspective, on the occasion when Taanach criticizes her 'prières trop longues,' (282) There is less emphasis on the role played by words, partly because the heroine is regarded primarily from the outside and therefore not presented as continually judging experience according to language. Language does come into play, particularly in the sense that Salammbô's 'idée fixe' is generated by Schahabarim's words and derived from her inability to distinguish between the figurative and the literal, but the role it plays here is less important than in Flaubert's novels of contemporary life. This is quite clear if we consider the case of Mâtho. There is no evidence in the novel to suggest that his 'idée fixe' - the image he builds around Salammbô - is in any way a product of an inability to come to terms with reality through language. Whilst it is always possible that this is the case, Flaubert does not analyse the 'idée fixe' in such a way that its origins are revealed - this would, of course, tend to destroy the vagueness which the novelist was seeking. So Salammbô provides no answer to the question of whether it is man who is incapable of coming to terms with reality or whether language is intrinsically an

(282) ibid., p708
inadequate tool for understanding and expressing experience. Nevertheless, there is enough in *Salammbô* to suggest a link with *Madame Bovary*: in each case the heroine’s alienation from the world derives from an inability to grasp the real, and a tendency to substitute for experience words which, divorced from the real, lose their meaning and compound the sense of alienation. Although the individual’s desire to transcend the world in which he lives is the essence of human dignity, Flaubert through his treatment of language exposes the potential absurdity of idealism.
Chapter III: The Bourgeois

If Flaubert realises the futility of trying to fashion life according to language, he nevertheless shows pity for those of his protagonists who strive yet fail to attain what they regard as ideal. On the other hand, his attitude towards the characters whom he portrays as successful in social, economic and political spheres is one of cynicism. Flaubert's denunciation of the stupidity and moral turpitude of those figures generally referred to as 'bourgeois' depends largely on his view of the language which they employ, and his bitterness at their successful use of language to establish and further their own social positions is clear throughout his work.

It is worth attempting to define the novelist's concept of 'bourgeois'. Whereas Balzac depicts bourgeois individuals as representative of their class, and shows how the rise and fall of his characters' fortunes typifies the life of the class as a whole, Flaubert's cynicism is not directed at a particular social or economic group. According to Maupassant, his concern is with

Une particulière sorte de bêtise qu'on rencontre le plus souvent dans cette classe. (283)

Gide's interpretation is similar:

Le slogan de Flaubert 'j'appelle bourgeois quiconque pense basement' ..... si j'avais à le commenter, je dirais, au nom de Flaubert, 'peu m'importent les classes sociales'. Il peut y avoir des bourgeois tout aussi bien parmi les ouvriers et les pauvres. (284)

This puts into perspective Flaubert's attacks on the social group of which he himself was a member. His own attitudes at times closely resemble those of the characters whom he condemns. There is a striking difference, however, between the originality of the novelist's use of language and the clichés with which his bourgeois express themselves.

The object of Flaubert's criticism is less a social class than a mode of perception expressed through language, a complacent tendency to accept a world ordered in a rigid way, which denies the essentially human desire to come to terms with reality through language. Culler, in his discussion of 'la bêtise', shows the use Flaubert makes of such a mode of perception in the creation of art. (285) My own description of Flaubert's view of the bourgeois world, however, is intended to concentrate more on the absurdity implicit in the bourgeois order, and particularly on the uses and implications of language as autonomous and functional.

For language is fundamental to Flaubert's depiction of bourgeois life. This is clear from a cynical letter written to his mother in 1850, in which his comments are prompted by the marriage of his friend Ernest Chevalier:

Ce brave Ernest! le voilà donc marié, établi et toujours magistrat par-dessus le marché. Quelle balle de bourgeois et de monsieur! Comme il va bien plus que jamais défendre l'ordre, la famille et la propriété. Il a du reste suivi la marche normale. Lui aussi, il a été artiste, il portait un couteau-poignard et rêvait des plans de drame. Puis s'a été un étudiant folâtre du quartier latin: il appelait 'sa maîtresse' une grisette du lieu que je scandalisais par mes discours quand j'allais le voir dans son fétide ménage. (286)

Ernest is satirized for the conventionality of his behaviour. What is particularly interesting, however, in the context of the present discussion, is that the bourgeois, as Flaubert sees him, uses words in a stereotyped way. Chevalier adopts the commonplace 'la maîtresse' for one who, the writer implies, is no more than a common whore. In contrast, the author's own use of language in its condemnation of bourgeois jargon is biting and original: the letter continues:

Il pinçait le cancan à la Chaumière et buvait des bichops de vin blanc à l'estaminet Voltaire. Puis il a été reçu docteur.... Il est devenu grave, s'est caché pour faire de minces fredaines, s'est acheté définitivement une montre et a renoncé à l'imagination (textuel); comme la séparation a dû être pénible. C'est atroce quand j'y pense!
Maintenant je suis sûr qu'il tonne là-bas contre les doctrines socialistes; il parle de 'l'édifice', de la 'base', du 'timon', de l'hydre de l'anarchie'. Magistrat, il est réactionnaire; marié, il sera cocu; et passant ainsi sa vie entre sa femme, ses enfants, et les turpitudes de son métier, voilà un gaillard qui aura accompli en lui toutes les conditions de l'humanité.

Flaubert continues to characterize Ernest by reference to his language and particularly to the clichés of which his speech is composed. The rigid use of commonplaces reflects mental sterility and condemns the user, in Flaubert's view, to a limited experience of the world. In this letter, the picture of the bourgeois begins to take on the appearance of a caricature, and this prefigures the creation of Homais and the society which he represents. For while Emma Bovary's desire to transcend the bourgeois world of which she is a part is conveyed largely by means of insights into her psychology, Flaubert's portrayal of the bourgeois involves the caricature of a type, and depends essentially on the presentation of external characteristics within a social context. Psychology is replaced by a study of mental disposition, and 'bourgeois' language is
seen by Flaubert as a vital element of the perpetuation of the bourgeois mentality and hence of the bourgeois world which is governed by such a mentality.

The bourgeois is certain that the cliches he utters and the 'idées reçues' he repeats reflect his own knowledge and experience and are therefore full of significance. This is revealed in a complex passage from a letter to Louis Bouilhet:

J'ai lu 'Jerusalem un livre socialiste (Essai de Philosophie Positive par Auguste Comte). Une des premières études auxquelles je me livrerai à mon retour sera certainement celle de toutes ces déplorables utopies qui agitent notre société et menacent de la couvrir de ruines. Pourquoi ne pas s'arranger de l'objectif qui nous est soumis. Il en vaut un autre. A prendre les choses impartiallement, il y en a eu peu de plus fertiles. L'ineptie consiste à vouloir conclure. (287)

The acceptance of a reality which can be codified in formulae is seen as a bourgeois trait. What is interesting here is the way in which Flaubert himself defends the social order against those who would wish to change it: his acceptance closely resembles the complacency which he criticises in Chevalier. Flaubert shows, nevertheless, an awareness of the sterility of bourgeois life, whereas Chevalier is considered to be totally unconscious of following a stereotyped pattern. The letter concludes:

Où le bourgeois a-t-il été plus gigantesque que maintenant? Qu'est-ce que celui de Molière à côté? M. Jourdain ne va pas au talon du premier négociant que tu vas rencontrer dans la rue.... Oui, la bêtise consiste à vouloir conclure.

The bourgeois propensity to impose a rigid system of categorisation on reality and exploit it to his own ends denies the need for language to be

(287) ibid., vol II, p238; to Louis Bouilhet; 4-ix-1856
organic if the individual is to come to terms with experience. As I.A. Richards remarks,

Words are the occasion and the means of growth which is the mind's endless endeavour to order itself. (288)

But the establishment of a 'jargon convenu' (289) involves the use of an autonomous language in which words are divorced from the reality which they were originally intended to signify.

Flaubert's view of the stupidity inherent in an autonomous code is reflected in his fascination with the material quality of words:

Premier mot, à propos du poisson; le poisson est exorbitamment cher: on ne peut plus 'en approcher'. Approcher du poisson! Énorme! (290)

Taken out of its context, language ceases to represent: it merely exists, a form without signification, cut off from human intentionality. Elsewhere, Flaubert conceives of a collection of 'clichés' and 'idées recues',

arrangée de telle manière que le lecteur ne sache pas si on se fout de lui, oui ou non. (291)

Clearly, the creation of a dictionary would provide the appropriate form for such a collection, since an arbitrary organisation of clichés would reflect their status as a part of an autonomous code.

But at times Flaubert is forced into an awareness of the potential power of an autonomous language. In spite of the insignificance of words within a 'jargon convenu', a stereotyped language manipulated by its users leads to the normalisation of a 'bourgeois' view of reality, a process which is the source of considerable power. Homais's words have little significance, but Homais himself is able to gain supremacy by convincing people that the

(288) I.A. Richards; The Philosophy of Rhetoric, (1936), London O.U.P., 1974, p131
(289) Correspondance, vol I, p322, to Louise Colet: 18-ix-1846
(290) ibid., vol IV, p28; to Louise Colet, 25-ii-1854
(291) ibid., vol I, p322; to Louise Colet: 18-ix-1846
contrary is true. The bourgeois is an object of ridicule, but he is
evertheless 'gigantesque' by virtue of his opportunism. Flaubert's
understanding of the way in which the bourgeois can determine the
signification of language is clear from an oft-quoted letter written
from Egypt to Parain:

A Alexandrie un certain Thompson, de Sunderland,
a sur la colonne de Pompey écrit son nom en
lettres de six pieds de haut. Cela se lit à un
quart d'heure de distance. Il n'y a pas moyen
de voir la colonne sans voir le nom de Thompson,
et par conséquent de penser à Thompson. Ce
crétin s'est incorporé au monument et se perpétue
avec lui. Que dis-je? Il l'écrase par la
splendeur de ses lettres gigantesques. N'est-ce
pas très fort de forcer les voyageurs futurs à
penser à soi et à se souvenir de vous? Tous les
imbéciles sont plus ou moins des Thompson de
Sunderland. (292)

Thompson has thus succeeded in using language to signify himself. Such
an act is, for Flaubert, the essence of 'la bêtise', yet although
Thompson's act is harmless, the bourgeois ability to make language
functional is clearly a potential danger: in real life, according to the
writer,

Il finissent par vous rendre féroce.

Hence the existence of a meaningless, functional language signifies the
perpetuation of the mentality which produced it. There is no doubt that
Homais and Arnoux are intelligent, yet it will become clear that their
intelligence lies not in understanding the world but in being able to
disguise a mental void by the use of rhetoric. The world is subjected
to their language; their social success is shown to be dependent on

(292) Correspondance, vol II, p243-4; to Parain; 6-ix-1850
their ability to manipulate jargon to gain ascendancy over others. It is the portrayal of these characteristics, and the pervasive quality of bourgeois language which signifies the nature of bourgeois language which constitute Flaubert's criticism of the society he describes.

Flaubert was undoubtedly influenced in his portrayal of the bourgeois by Henri Monnier. Although only a minor literary figure in the nineteenth century, Monnier exercised a great influence over more important writers, including Balzac, who admired his work and who wished to collaborate with him to write a play for the Vaudeville theatre in August 1848. He came to know Flaubert personally at a later date: in a letter written in 1860 to Baudelaire, Flaubert shows that he is acquainted with Monnier and sees him in Paris:

Le Théo ne donne pas de ses nouvelles, la présidente est toujours charmante, et tous les dimanches, chez elle, je rivalise de stupidité avec Henri Monnier. (294)

Monnier's most important creation was that of Joseph Prudhomme, a caricature of a bourgeois. Flaubert was fascinated by this figure and there are numerous references to him, particularly in the later volumes of the Correspondance, which suggest that Flaubert had Prudhomme in mind when he was writing Bouvard et Pécuchet.

(294) Correspondance, Vol IV, p366; to Baudelaire, iii-1860
Prudhomme is characterized largely by his language. He is pompous and verbose and in *La Grandeur et Décadence de Monsieur Joseph Prudhomme* is chosen to stand for election because he has 'ce qu'on appelle la parole'.

He freely admits that 'je parle longtemps', and his language is marked by the use of clichés:

Jacquin: Les hommes sont des hommes.
Prudhomme: Grande vérité, M. Jacquin, grande vérité!
Oui, les hommes sont des hommes. De plus, je l'ai toujours dit, les hommes sont égaux.

This repetition of Jacquin's maxim fails to further their discussion: their incoherent linking of platitudes is characteristic of the bourgeois described by Flaubert. Ideas reduced to catchwords are taken from various sources and expressed by Prudhomme in such a way that one doubts not only his sincerity in expressing them, but also his ability to understand them:

Dans ce siècle corrompu, l'ambition et la cupidité ont déchaîné toutes les convoitises, toutes les places sont occupées. Soyons philosophe, élevons-nous dans la pure région des principes et n'en sortons plus..... le Cygne de Cambrai l'a dit, l'homme s'agit et Dieu le mène.

Ah, l'opposition me sera encore la plus douce et la plus sure des carrières, mais s'il faut choisir entre Louis Napoléon et la ruine totale de la France, mon choix est fait. Je suis pour l'Autorité, contre la Révolte, pour la Conservation, contre la distinction, pour la société contre le socialisme, pour la liberté possible au bien contre la liberté certaine du mal.

(296) ibid., p22
(297) ibid., p24
(298) H. Monnier, op. cit., p37. Note also that Fenelon is referred to as 'le cygne de Cambrai' in Flaubert's 'Dictionnaire des Idées Récues', O.C. Vol II, p306.
The latter part of this appears to match Flaubert's own bitter but passive attitude in the face of the growth of socialism: at the same time, his belief that Chevalier, now a typical bourgeois, will 'tonner contre les doctrines socialistes' may be derived from his reading of Monnier's work. It is 'idées reçues' of this nature which become a sign of the bourgeois mentality in Flaubert's work, and Homais and the characters of *L'Education Sentimentale* reflect Prudhomme's stereotyped reaction to life in their unquestioning adoption of trite conclusions.

Consideration of one of Flaubert's earliest works reveals that, from the outset, inertia of language is integral to his portrayal of the bourgeois. *Une Leçon d'Histoire Naturelle, Genre Commis* is representative of a literary genre of the 1830s and is in many respects derivative.

For example, Flaubert describes the type he is studying by reference to his outward appearance:

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Sa casquette de loutre faisait opiner pour la vie aquatique, ainsi que sa redingote à longs poils bruns, tandis que son gilet de laine, épais de quatre pouces, prouvait certainement que c'était un animal des pays septentrionaux. (299)
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His habits are also noted - for example, the way in which he lights a fire in his office and sits as closely to it as possible. But what is particularly striking is the language he uses - Flaubert attributes to the 'commis' fixed responses to various situations:

(299) *Une Leçon d'Histoire Naturelle, Genre Commis*, in *O.C.*, vol I, p101
Le commis est enthousiaste de la Garde Nationale; son cœur s’allume au son du tambour et il court à la place d’armes, sangle et étranglé dans son col, en fredonnant ‘Ah, quel plaisir d’être soldat’.

...... Quoique chaste, le commis a pourtant l’esprit silencieux et enjoué; car il dit ‘ma belle enfant’ aux jeunes personnes qui entrent dans le bureau....

S’il voit, à travers les épais rideaux qui lui bouchent le jour, que le temps est pluvieux, il s’écrie subitement ‘Diable, il va y avoir du bouillon!’ (300)

Certain of the ‘commis’ sayings are derived from Prudhomme: for example, there is the ill-tempered refusal to call his wife ‘mon épouse’ after he has lost at cards. But the work shows enough originality to prove that Flaubert was himself aware of the rigidity of bourgeois language and of its comic potential. The work is the first in which Flaubert satirises a bourgeois type of his own creation.

The use of platitudes is widespread in the first version of L’Education Sentimentale, and is is from this work that the first true bourgeois figure of Flaubert’s fiction emerges, Henry’s father M. Gosselin.

His outward appearance is of that of a bourgeois: for example, he sports

Un gilet de nankin à boutons de nacre, une canne de jonc ornée d’une haute virole. (301)

But emphasis is laid more on his language which indicates that Gosselin is of the same line of descent as Homais and the bourgeois figures of the later work. His words are stereotyped:

(300) ibid., p101
(301) L’Education Sentimentale (1845), in O.C., vol 1, p333
Il avait ses idées fixes sur tous les sujets possibles; pour lui, toute jeune fille était 'pure', tout jeune homme était 'farceur', tout mari un 'coco', tout pauvre un 'voleur', tout gendarme un 'brutal', et toute compagnie 'délireuse'. (302)

Like the 'commis', his reactions to reality are fixed because his language is fixed:

Quand il passait dans les champs, devant un bicoque de paysans, il disait 'Ah, j'aime ça, moi! C'est bien, ça, vive la campagne! Toutes ces habitations respirent un air de propreté, d'aisance; et rentré dans la ville: 'voilà de belles maisons au moins! C'est vraiment là qu'on trouve le bien-être, le confortable!' (303)

The inertia of his language signifies mental sterility: this is pointed out by reference to the books which he possesses but has not read. His ideas lack originality:

Il voulait la liberté des cultes, mais il disait que celle de la presse était poussé jusqu'à la licence et qu'on ferait bien d'envoyer quelques journalistes aux galères de temps à autre, pour l'exemple. Il criait toujours contre le gouvernement, et à la moindre émeute il se déclarait pour les mesures les plus violentes. (304)

The contradictions in his views reveal a lack of awareness about the implications of such terms as 'la liberté'; yet he is complacent enough to believe that his opinions are absolute truths. Clichés indicate the bourgeois mentality: the novelist points out their absurdity:

(302) ibid., p335
(303) ibid., p335
(304) ibid., p335
C'était un de ces hommes du grand troupeau, 
ni bons ni méchants, ni grands ni trop petits, 
avec une figure comme tout le monde et un esprit
comme les autres, se croyant raisonnables et
cousus d'absurdités, parlant sans cesse de leurs
jugements. (305)

The irony of the bourgeois is that, in spite of having nothing significant
to say, he is loquacious. This, as much as the use of a fixed language,
helps the reader to recognize the bourgeois in Flaubert's work. Humour
is created by the reader's awareness of the distance between the
bourgeois's high opinion of himself and the emptiness of his speech.
The apparent importance of M. Gosselin is suggested by his verbosity:

Encore irrésolu sur le parti à prendre,
M. Gosselin engagea de suite avec Morel une
longue correspondance dans laquelle il ne
cessait de lui demander des conseils et lui
poser des questions. Morel lui répondait
toujours de la manière la plus concise et
M. Gosselin lui récrivait de la façon la
plus longue. Le résultat de tout cela fut
qu'on laisserait les circonstances se
dérouler. (306)

The first part of the quotation implies that, as a result of M. Gosselin's
letters, something will be done, but Flaubert, with his developing
technique of deflation reveals in the final sentence that language
brings about no progress: the high-flown terms 'laisser les circonstances
se dérouler' signify only that events continue in spite of language,
which is remote from reality.

(305) ibid., p335
(306) ibid., p341
M. Gosselin is important not only on his own account, but also for the way in which he prefigures the evolution of his son's character. Henry is compared with his father:

Il n'a pas précisément, comme son père, des idées faites sur tous les sujets possibles, mais jugeant les hommes d'après une expérience purement personnelle, et ne cherchant dans cette investigation qu'un résultat clair d'où il puisse tirer son profit, il ne tient pas compte de ce qu'il ne voit pas. (307)

Typically bourgeois conclusions about reality take the form of 'idées reçues' :

Il possède même des principes sur l'humeur, sur la fantaisie, il en veut bien quelquefois dans quelque cas où il l'aurait sentie lui-même; il ne voit pas d'autre fantastique que celui d'Hoffmann, ni un romantisme au-delà de Byron. (308)

Flaubert criticises the superficial nature of his reaction to life:

Il croit bien connaître le théâtre parce qu'il saisit à première vue toutes les ficelles d'un mélodrame et les intentions d'une exposition mais il ne voit pas les effets intimes, étant trop frappé pas les effets intérieurs. (309)

Flaubert's comments on Henry at the end of L'Education Sentimentale (1845) shed light on Homais, Bournisien and the other bourgeois figures of his work.

All this affords an insight into Flaubert's attitudes in 1848, the year in which the revolutions of February and June left the bourgeoisie as the class responsible for social, political and cultural advancement. M. Gosselin is not a particularly important figure - his actions do not play a part in the development of the plot - and Henry is replaced by

(307) ibid., p365
(308) ibid., p365
(309) ibid., p365
Jules as the main protagonist long before the end of the novel. The young Flaubert thus expresses faith in the ability of man to understand and interpret the world: Jules 'sait faire naître en lui la sensibilité qui doit créer quelque chose' (310) The bourgeois, whose fixed language signifies the very opposite of true understanding and creative artistic communication, plays no major part. But Flaubert's growing pessimism leads to the writing of novels in which the bourgeois plays a dominant role and in which 'clichés' and 'idées reçues' became the sole response to reality and form the very texture of the narrative.

The first of these novels is Madame Bovary. Although there are several bourgeois figures in the novel, the most important, and the most typical of Flaubert's view of the bourgeois, is Homais. Even before we are introduced to him, we know something of his character, and, significantly, something of his language. The region in which Yonville - L'Abbaye is situated is described as a 'contrée bâtarde où le langage est sans accentuation'. (311)

Homais is characterized first by his residence:

Sa maison, du haut en bas, est placardée d'inscriptions écrites en anglaise, en ronde, en moulée: Eaux de Vichy, de Seltz et de Barèges, médecine Raspail, racahout des Arabes, pastilles Darcet, pâte Regnault, bandages, bains, chocolats de santé etc. (312)

The proprietor's verbosity is suggested by the variety of scripts used, apparently to no particular effect, and irony is created by the list of items for sale: the exotic and the French, the traditional and the

(310) ibid., p370
(311) Madame Bovary, in O.C., vol 1, p598
(312) ibid., p598
commercially produced are juxtaposed incongruously. The description gives significant information about Homais himself:

Et l'enseigne, qui tient toute la largeur de la boutique porte en lettres d'or Homais, Pharmacien. Puis, au fond de la boutique, derrière les grandes balances scellées sur le comptoir, le mot 'laboratoire' se déroule au-dessus d'une porte vitrée, qui, à moitié de sa hauteur répète encore une fois 'Homais' en lettres d'or, sur un fond noir. (314)

The idea of Homais's self-importance is enhanced by his pretensions to the status of man of science, suggested by the word 'laboratoire': ironically, the 'grandes balances' show him more in the light of a small shopkeeper. Language here signifies Homais as it signified Thompson at Alexandria: bourgeois loquacity and self-importance are both suggested.

Towards the end of the novel, the reappearance of the sign gives an impression of the irreducible quality of the bourgeois:

Ensuite, elle (Emma) marchait de long en large: elle se mettait devant les fenêtres et regardait la place. Le petit jour circulait entre les piliers des halles, et la maison du pharmacien, dont les volets étaient fermées, laissait apercevoir dans la couleur pâle de l'aurore les majuscules de son enseigne. (316)

Emma here is faced with the sign and with its signification: the eternal mediocrity of life from which she is unable to escape. Immobility is already suggested in the early part of the novel:

Depuis les événements que l'on va raconter, rien, en effet, n'a changé à Yonville. (317)

This novel differs, then, from the first version of l'Education Sentimentale.
in that the stasis of bourgeois language is no longer a peripheral element; it is a sign of the inertia of life which constitutes one of Flaubert's major concerns in his mature work.

The novelist's representation of Homais depends largely on the generalisations and the stereotypes of which his speech is constituted. Commenting on Bournisien, he tells Mme Lefrançois that

Les prêtres godaillaient tous sans qu'on les vît et cherchaient à ramener le temps de la dîme. (318)

The pharmacist's anti-clericalism is expressed not in any authentic way but by means of received ideas about the clergy which he takes to be established facts. It is interesting to note that this generalisation typical of Homais's speech does not appear in earlier manuscripts of the work, and it is clear that Flaubert's use of the cliché is an aspect of the delineation of Homais as a caricature rather than a character. Indeed, at times, Homais is almost the incarnation of the received idea. His theistic beliefs are no more than a collection of slogans:

Je crois à l'Etre Suprême, à un createur quel qu'il soit, peu m'importe, qui nous a placés ici bas pour y remplir nos devoirs de citoyen et de père de famille. (319)

If we discount the meaningless 'quel qu'il soit, peu m'importe', the words are still incongruous: the Revolutionary theism is expressed in a cliched form reminiscent of the stereotyped catechism repeated by Bournisien: (320) the notion of change is thus undermined by Flaubert. Furthermore, the social order prescribed by Homais gives the impression of conservative

(318) ibid., p600
(319) ibid., p600
(320) ibid., p613
rather than revolutionary values. Homais's speech continues in an illogical vein:

... 'Mon Dieu, à moi, c'est le Dieu de Socrate, de Franklin, de Voltaire et de Béranger! Je suis pour la Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard et les immortels principes de '89!' (321)

The progression from Socrates to Béranger is from the sublime to the ridiculous, and Homais's assumption that the God of Voltaire, Rousseau and the Revolutionary Philosophers is one and the same implies a total lack of insight into what these diverse figures actually thought. His beliefs are merely adaptations of what he has read or heard without understanding. His values are stereotyped: his aim is to be 'citoyen' and 'père de famille', and he accepts such commonplaces unquestioningly because they appear to justify his actual position in society. Unlike Emma Bovary, he never tests his own experience against language; he confidently assumes that the two are identical and that through language he is fully capable of expressing what is external to him. A later passage shows that, like M. Gosselin, he is particularly fond of what he thinks of as the ideas of the Eighteenth Century, the Age of Enlightenment. He is quick to praise Emma Bovary's decision to learn to play the piano: he tells Charles to encourage his wife:

'Songez, mon bon ami, qu'en engageant Madame à étudier, vous économisez pour plus tard sur l'éducation musicale de votre enfant! Moi, je trouve que les mères doivent instruire elles-mêmes leurs enfants. C'est une idée de Rousseau, peut-être un peu neuve encore, mais qui finira par triompher, j'en suis sûr, comme l'allaitement maternel et la vaccination.' (322)

(321) ibid., p500
(322) ibid., p662
There is humour in the belief that theories of Rousseau, expressed in ‘Emile’ (1762), and the development of vaccination at the end of the Eighteenth Century are new. Moreover, although he cites Rousseau, the discrepancy between his own concerns and those of the ‘philosophe’ is heavily ironic: ‘Emile’ was not written with the intention of suggesting to the bourgeois a means of saving money, nor of giving instruction to mothers. Through this reference to such ‘modern’ ideas, Homais seeks, to gain the admiration of others, and also to sustain it by displaying awareness of other ‘recent’ theories which, however, appear both incongruous and absurd because of their juxtaposition. When Homais speaks, it is without knowledge or judgement: he mouths empty words.

Flaubert completes the caricature by drawing the reader’s attention to the insignificance of what Homais says within the context of the narrative. In the novel, one of the particular functions of a character’s language is to comment on events in such a way as to determine the future course of the action, often by influencing other characters. Analysis of Homais’s language, however, reveals that more than half his speeches fulfil no particular narrative function. Much of what he says is either interrupted or ignored by other characters, and the reader is left with an impression of the pointlessness of his utterances. In a typical passage he attempts to engage Mme Lefrançois in conversation:

‘...Il faut se tenir au courant de la science par les brochures et papiers publics, être toujours en haleine afin d’indiquer les améliorations...’
L’aubergiste ne quittait point des yeux la porte du Café Français et le pharmacien poursuivit:
- Plût à Dieu que nos agriculteurs fussent des chimistes ou que du moins ils écoutassent d’avantage
les conseils de la science! Ainsi, moi, j'ai dernièrement écrit un fort opuscule, un mémoire de plus de soixante et douze pages, intitulé 'Du Cidre, de sa fabrication et de ses effets, suivis de quelques réflexions nouvelles à ce sujet,' que j'ai envoyé à la Société Agronomique de Rouen: ce qui m'a même valu l'honneur d'être reçu parmi ses membres, section d'agriculture, classe de pomologie. Eh bien! Si mon ouvrage avait été livré à la publicité... (323)

The length of this 'opus magnum' suggests Homais's loquacity: the fact that much of his work is insignificant becomes evident when we learn that in the space of more than seventy two pages, only 'quelques nouvelles réflexions' have been treated. Moreover Mme Lefrançois is not diverted by the latest research into pomology:

.... L'apothicaire s'arrêta, tant Mme Lefrançois paraissait préoccupée.
- Voyez-les donc, disait-elle, on n'y comprend rien!
Et avec des haussesments d'épaules.... elle montrait des deux mains le cabaret de son rival, d'où sortaient des chansons.

Homais's language is isolated from the narration of events and stands on its own as an object serving only to indicate the presence of a bourgeois figure, lovingly fashioned by the author.

In order to impress Charles on their first meeting, Homais tells him about the climate of the region beginning, typically, with an observation based on false logic.

Le climat, pourtant, n'est point, à vrai dire, mauvais, et même nous comptons dans la commune quelques nonagénaires. Le thermomètre (j'en ai fait des observations) descends en hiver jusqu'à quatre degrés, et dans la forte saison y touche vingt-cinq, trente centigrades tout au plus, ce qui donne vingt-quatre Réaumur au maximum, ou autrement cinquante-quatre Fahrenheit (mesure anglaise), pas davantage. (324)

(323) ibid., p619
(324) ibid., p601
The grouping of three different measurements is typical of the rhetoric which Flaubert attributes to Homais, yet the sense of order is undermined by the fact that whilst the Réaumur calculation is correct, the Fahrenheit one is wildly inaccurate. The discourse is reminiscent of Beckett's Watt in which language is composed largely of inconsequential detail, list of alternatives which never appear to illuminate one another and which on occasions cancel each other out thus negating the whole concept of knowledge. Words here form a system which is both autonomous and inert, for instead of furthering knowledge, they prevent any awareness of the world beyond words. The climax of Homais's speech is totally absurd:

'... cette chaleur, dis-je, se trouve justement tempérée du côté d'où elle vient, ou plutôt d'où elle viendrait, c'est-à-dire du côté sud, par les vents du sud-est lesquels, s'étant rafraîchis d'eux-mêmes en passant sur la Seine nous arrivent quelquefois tout d'un coup comme les brises de Russie.'

A sense of the ridiculous is created by the order in which this information is conveyed by Homais: science is reduced by Flaubert to absurdity in a process which prefigures the technique of Bouvard et Pécuchet. Homais's phrases confuse the process he is attempting to describe. His language produces a misrendering of the real. Moreover, the import of his words is completely undermined by the way in which he is ignored.

Yet he is seemingly unconscious that he is constantly ignored. His verbosity is such that the reader gains the impression that he is unable to control his speech. This is evident as he admonishes his son:

(325) S. Beckett; Watt, Paris, Minuit, 1968
"Qui te fournit la nourriture, l'éducation, l'habillement et tous les moyens de figurer un jour, avec honneur, dans les rangs de la société? Mais il faut pour cela suer ferme sur l'aviron, et acquérir, comme on dit, du cal aux mains. Fabricando fit faber, age quod agis."

Il citait du Latin, tant il était exaspéré.
Il eût cité du chinois et du groenlandais s'il eût connu ces deux langues. (326)

The use of clichés is absurd and the Latin phrase does nothing to enhance the meaning: indeed, the very substance of the classical commonplace, sign of collective wisdom, is subverted here: the words quoted are irrelevant to the rest of the utterance. That exasperation should inspire Homais to use Latin at all is marvellously illogical. In Flaubert's view, to speak is one of the natural urges of the bourgeois, even if this involves a misuse of language. Through Homais's verbosity the novelist stresses the autonomy of language. Words generate words, language ceases to signify but merely proliferates.

And in many cases, this provides humour:

M. Homais arrivait pendant le dîner. Bonnet grec à la main, il entrait à pas muets pour ne déranger personne, et toujours en répétant la même phrase 'Bonsoir la compagnie! (327)

Language is used almost mechanically here: one is reminded of Flaubert's constant fascination with the image of the parrot.

Yet the humour with which Homais is treated is, nevertheless, bitter, for he represents the chief success story within the novel.

(326) Madame Bovary, in O.F. vol I, p658
(327) ibid., p607
The pervasive quality of bourgeois language is conveyed in *Madame Bovary* by the presentation of several characters whose language reflects that of Homais. In their ability to manipulate language, both Lheureux and Rodolphe reflect Homais's opportunism, and we shall return to them. It is Sartre's view that by embodying the faults of the clergy, Bournisien's role is to justify the anticlericalism of Homais; but what is more striking is that they depend to the same degree on a language devoid of meaning; and by demonstrating this, Flaubert denies the assumption that man has 'progressed' from a religious to a secular society.

Bournisien is loquacious to the degree that he prevents others from speaking: Emma, for instance, is totally unable to state her position to him; yet in spite of his verbosity, what he says is, for the most part, banal. Like Homais, he speaks in clichés and 'non sequiturs' (329):

'We sommes nés pour souffrir, comme dit Saint-Paul' (329)

His conversations with the pharmacist, whose views he deplores, constitute the exchange not of ideas, but of 'idées reçues'.

Bournisien's attempts to teach the catechism allow Flaubert to satirise the mechanical language of dogmatic religion, and this satire recalls a passage in the *Correspondance* which describes the baptism of the novelist's niece:

(328) J.-P. Sartre, op. cit., vol I, p643
(329) *Madame Bovary*, in O.C., vol I, p612
Flaubert regarde the language of dogma as inert and devoid of meaning, and this is transposed into fiction through the figure of Bournisien.

Unlike Homais, however, Bournisien is well-meaning and does not seek power: his only aim, expressed, characteristically, in a cliché, is "to save men's souls"; talking to Charles, he tells Emma:

'Lui, il est le médecin des corps.... et moi, je le suis des âmes.' (331)

Yet in spite of his intentions, his reliance on clichés signifies the presence of a bourgeois mentality, and it is through the use of such characters that Flaubert conveys the impression that man is, with few exceptions, incapable of using language critically and authentically.

Madame Bovary presents a detailed exploration of the bourgeois mentality, but the second version of L'Éducation Sentimentale may be seen as a novel in which every character can be regarded as 'bourgeois'. On the surface, Flaubert appears to assemble the widest possible range of characters; beside the two protagonists, Frédéric and Deslauriers, stand figures from all the social classes. The aristocratic de Cisy, the upper bourgeois

(331) Madame Bovary, in O.C. vol 1, p612
industrialist Dambreuse, the petit-bourgeois Arnoux, and the group of bohemians, composed of artists and socialists. Yet the pattern of the novel is set at the beginning, as the 'hero's' plan to gain access to the higher reaches of society is considered. Deslauriers tells Frédéric to make use of Dambreuse:

'Tu devrais prier ce vieux de t'introduire chez les Dambreuse; rien n'est utile comme de fréquenter une maison riche! Puisque tu as un habit noir et des gants blancs, profites-en! Il faut que tuailles dans ce monde-là. Tu m'y mèneras plus tard. Un homme 'a millions, pense donc! Arrange-toi pour lui plaire, et à sa femme aussi. Deviens son amant.'

Frédéric se récriait.
- Mais je te dis là des choses classiques, il me semble? Rappelle-toi Rastignac dans la Comédie Humaine! Tu réussiras, j'en suis sûr!' (332)

The ideal proposed is derived from the Balzacian novel and implies not only a lack of originality but an unrealistic attitude to life. Ideas are so consistently replaced by 'idées reçues' that the novel becomes, in one respect, a parody of the traditional novel, with every character using stereotyped language to express and communicate ideas he has heard or read but never fully grasped.

The typical bourgeois is Arnoux, a direct descendant of Homais. He too is identified throughout the novel by language, the shop signs which bear his name. But unlike the chemist he makes no progress: indeed the signs represent the inertia of his position. Frédéric is first confronted with a plaque bearing Arnoux's name at the offices of his newspaper:

Un peu plus haut que la rue Montmartre, un embarras de voitures lui fit tourner la tête;

(332) L'Éducation Sentimentale, in O.C., vol II, p14
et, de l'autre côté, en face, il lut sur une plaque de marbre

JACQUES ARNOUX

... Les hautes glaces transparentes offraient aux regards, dans une disposition habile, des statuettes, des dessins, des catalogues, des numéros de l'Art Industriel, et les prix de l'abonnement étaient répétés sur la porte que décoraient à son milieu les initiales de l'éditeur. (333)

One is reminded of Homais's shopfront, and the emphasis on the commercial aspect of the enterprise emphasises the similarity between the two figures. The name of Arnoux's paper, l'Art Industriel, is significant for it implies the debasement of art through contact with industry, a phenomenon deplored by Flaubert and one for which, in his view, the bourgeois mentality was responsible. The significance of the sign is emphasised:

Les grandes lettres composant le nom d'Arnoux sur la plaque de marbre, au haut de la boutique, lui semblaient toutes particulières et grosses de significations, comme une écriture sacrée. (334)

There is irony in the way Frédéric is impressed by the sign. His intention to inhabit the fictional realm of Rastignac is coherent with this idealisation of language: at the same time, his awe allows Flaubert to place Arnoux in the same category as Thompson of Sunderland. That Frédéric should idealise what he believes the sign should stand for reveals not only his own lack of judgement, but also the bourgeois ability to convince and thus gain ascendency over others.

The second of Arnoux's signs, at Creil, reveals the extent of bourgeois opportunism:

(333) ibid., p15
(334) ibid., p22
Frédéric suivit le milieu du pavé; puis il rencontra sur sa gauche, à l’entrée d’un chemin, un grand arc de bois qui portait écrit en lettres d’or "FAIENCES".

Ce n’était pas sans but que Jacques Arnoux avait choisi le voisinage de Creil; en plaçant sa manufacture le plus près possible de l’autre (accréditée depuis longtemps) il provoquait dans le public une confusion favorable à ses intérêts. (335)

Towards the end of the novel, a similar trait is evident:

Frédéric n’eut pas mal à découvrir son établissement, dont l’enseigne portait ‘Aux arts Gothiques. Restauration du culte - sculpture polychrome - Encens des rois mages etc, etc. (336)

Religion, like art, is debased and objectified by the bourgeois to the extent that the gifts of the Three Wise Men become commercial products. The bourgeois is concerned with religion only in so far as it can be exploited for personal gain. Authenticity - whether it be genuine Creil pottery or a symbol of the individual’s religious belief - is replaced by the stereotype, which is cultivated by the bourgeois.

The absence of authenticity in the bourgeois response to experience is revealed through Flaubert’s portrayal of the bourgeois in L’Education Sentimentale as caricature rather than character. The figures are delineated according to the idées reçues they adopt: this is true not only of the guests and the Dambreuse’s soirée but also of the bohemian types. The ‘progress’ of Delmar provides a typical example:

Delmar se trouvait là.

Un drame, où il avait représenté un manant qui fait la leçon à Louis XIV et prophétise ‘89,

(335) ibid., p78
(336) ibid., p151
l'avait mis en telle évidence qu'on lui fabriquait sans cesse le même rôle: et sa fonction, maintenant, consistait à bafouer les monarques de tous les pays. Brasseur anglais, il invectivait Charles 1er; étudiant de Salamanque, maudissait Philippe II; ou, père sensible, s'indignait contre la Pompadour, c'était le plus beau. Les gamins, pour le voir, l'attendaient à la porte des coulisses; et sa biographie, vendue dans les entr'actes, le dépeignait comme soignant sa vieille mère, lisant l'Evangile, assistant les pauvres, enfin sous les couleurs d'un Saint Vincent de Paul mélangé de Brutus et de Mirabeau. On disait 'notre Delmar'. Il avait une mission, il devenait Christ. (337)

His life is constituted by one single 'idée reçue', a formula which can be repeated endlessly and which appeals to what Flaubert implies is a 'clichégenie' society. His greatness is explained by Mlle Vatnaz:

Mlle Vatnaz, sans s'expliquer davantage, ajouta qu'elle l'adorait plus que jamais. Le comédien, à l'en croire, se classait définitivement parmi 'les sommités de l'époque'. Et ce n'était pas tel ou tel personnage qu'il représentait, mais le génie même de la France, le Peuple! Il avait l'âme humanitaire, il comprenait le sacerdoce de l'Art. Frédéric, pour se délivrer de ces éloges, lui donna l'argent de trois places. (338)

The clichés in which Delmar's success is expressed suggest its emptiness and Flaubert's final sentence is the most damning: success is a commodity created by the bourgeois for consumption by the bourgeois.

The traditional notion of character as profound and unified is here called into question by Flaubert. Delmar is identified solely by the 'idées reçues' which have created him and which he propagates. The same may be said of the other bohemians. Pellerin's artistic theory is striking in its lack of originality and can clearly never result in the creation of great art.

(337) ibid., p71
(338) ibid., p101
Pellerin lisait tous les ouvrages d'esthétique pour découvrir la véritable théorie du Beau, convaincu, quand il l’aurait trouvée, de faire des chefs d'œuvres. (339)

Flaubert satirizes Pellerin's faith in a language which is prescriptive.

Language dominates the 'artist' to the extent that, 'il n'avait, à cinquante ans, encore produit que des ébauches.' Moreover, progress is seen in terms not of a development in artistic activity, but as the substitution of one set of 'idées reçues' for another:

.... l'artiste se mit à parler de lui-même.
Il y avait fait beaucoup de progrès, ayant reconnu définitivement la bêtise de la ligne. On ne devait pas tant s'enquérir de la Beauté et de l'Unité, dans une œuvre, que du caractère et de la diversité des choses. (340)

He bases the new theory on the idea that 'tout existe dans la nature' but Flaubert's irony is clear: for Pellerin, to whom the mental world of words is so important, any understanding of what is in nature is impossible. His art will never express knowledge, but will remain the mechanical extension of abstract theory into reality.

Sénécal is equally limited:

Sénécal posa sur la chambranle sa chope de bière et déclara dogmatiquement que, la prostitution étant une tyrannie et le ménage une immoralité, il valait mieux s'abstenir. (341)

His conclusions, condemned as facile by Flaubert, are expressed in a dogmatic way which admits of no discussion. The artists and socialists are shown to be as rigid as the conservatives in the novel; both groups...
exhibit the same mentality.

But what is particularly interesting about *L'Éducation Sentimentale* is the way in which whole scenes imply the pervasive quality of 'idées reçues'. In *Madame Bovary*, the only scene in which this occurs is that of the 'Comices Agricoles' where the clichés of the various speakers are juxtaposed with the Romantic clichés employed by Rodolphe in his seduction of Emma. In *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, this technique is developed. There are many scenes in which decor, people and actions, as well as speech, are reduced to stereotypes, and the total effect is one of incongruity and inertia.

This is apparent on the occasion of Frédéric's initial visit to the home of Arnoux:

> L'antichambre, décorée à la chinoise, avait une lanterne peinte, au plafond, et des bambous dans les coins. En traversant le salon, Frédéric trébucha contre une peau de tigre. (342)

This fashionable decoration reflects bourgeois 'idées reçues' about China, and this places not only Arnoux but also his wife in an ironic focus. The narrator's description of the decor allows the reader a wider view of Mme Arnoux than Frédéric has. The idea 'Chine' is seen solely in terms of outward appearances, and Flaubert satirizes this by drawing the reader's attention to the incongruities which can result from such categorization: the dining room represents another 'idée reçue':

(342) ibid., p24
La salle, telle qu'un parloir moyen âge, était tendu de cuir battu; une étagère hollandaise se dressait devant un ratelier de chibouques; et, autour de la table, les verres de Bohême, diversément colorés, faisaient au milieu des fleurs et des fruits comme une illumination dans un jardin. (343)

There is no attempt to decorate the house according to a single 'idée reçue': bourgeois language is composed of many different clichés, often unrelated in the same speech, and this is reflected in bourgeois decor, just as Emma's concept of Walter Scott is influenced by a keep sake, so the bourgeois concept of the middle ages gives rise to a room in which there is an 'étagère hollandaise'.

The meal is composed of a variety of food: and by showing Frédéric's admiration Flaubert mocks his hero's naivety:

Il eut à choisir entre deux espèces de moutarde. Il mangea du daspachio, du cari, du gingembre, des merles de Corse, des lasagnes romaines; il but des vins extraordinaires, du lip-fraoli et du tokay. (344)

Although food is Flaubert's work is often a symbol of desire, the author is making a different point here. (345)

Arnoux se piquait effectivement de bien recevoir. Il courtisait en vue des comestibles tous les conducteurs de malle-poste et il était lié avec les cuisiniers de grandes maisons qui lui communiquaient des sauces. (346)

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(343) *ibid.*, p25
(344) *ibid.*, p25
Arnoux's mode of speech, suggested in the last phrase, is treated with irony. Indeed, the whole scene is the object of satire. Food, according to Arnoux must be exotic, and yet he is incapable of originality in the realisation of this concept, and has to copy recipes: the meal stands almost as a parody of the feast in *Salammbô*.

The guests speak almost exclusively in clichés, and Frédéric's belief that these people are original and witty is treated ironically:

> Son goût pour les voyages fut caressé par Dittmer, qui parla de l'Orient: il assouvit la curiosité des choses du théâtre en écoutant Rosenwald causer de l'Opéra....

The conversation is extended by the narrator into the realm of the absurd:

> .... et l'existence atroce de la Bohème lui parut drôle, à travers la gaieté d'Hussonnet, lequel narra, d'une manière pittoresque, comment il avait passé tout un hiver n'ayant pour nourriture que du fromage de Hollande. (347)

The guests' lack of originality is clear from Mme Arnoux's autograph book:

> Rentré au salon il prit, par contenance, un des albums traînant sur la table. Les grands artistes de l'époque l'avaient illustré de dessins, y avaient mis de la prose, des vers ou simplement leurs signatures; parmi les noms fameux, il s'en trouvait beaucoup d'inconnus, et les pensées curieuses n'apparaissaient que sous un débordement de sottises. (348)

'Les sottises' provides an adequate summary of the whole scene. The distance between Frédéric's view of the unique quality of his love for Marie Arnoux and the fact that she is portrayed within a bourgeois milieu provides an irony which is developed in all the major scenes of the novel;

(347) ibid., p25
(348) ibid., p25
desire, ambition and passion are inevitably reduced to stereotypes.

The use of decor as a sign of imaginative and intellectual sterility is most evident in the dance-hall visited by Frédéric and Arnoux:

Deux galeries moresques s'étendaient à droite et à gauche, parallèlement. Le mur d'une maison, en face, occupait tout le fond, et le quatrième côté (celui du restaurant) figurait un cloître gothique à vitraux de couleurs. Une sorte de toiture chinoise abritait à l'estrade où jouaient les musiciens: le sol autour était couvert d'asphalte et des lanternes vénitiennes accrochées à des poteaux formaient de loin, sur les quadrilles, une couronne de feux multicolores. (349)

There are obvious parallels between Arnoux’s house and the Alhambra, but the latter is even more incongruous. The ‘idées reçues’ of decor are combined in a tasteless, vulgar way which shows a concern for the detail of outward trappings and none at all for total effect.

At Rosanette’s party, the way in which the hostess and her guests are dressed provides a projection of received ideas into fancy dress:

Un vieux beau, vêtu, comme un doge vénitien, d'une longue simarre de soie pourpre, dansait avec Mme Rosanette, qui portait un habit vert, une culotte de tricot et des bottes molles à épérons d'or. Le couple en face se composait d'un Arnaute chargé de yatagans et d'une Suissesse aux yeux bleus, blanche comme du lait, potelée comme une caille, en manches de chemise et corset rouge. Pour faire valoir sa chevelure qui lui descendait jusqu'aux jarrets, une grande blonde, marcheuse à l'Opéra, s'était mise en femme sauvage. (350)

Flaubert's orchestration here is such that there is an apparently ironic reversal of male and female roles which enhances the reader's impression

(349) ibid., p33
(350) ibid., p5D
of the effeminacy of male society and the aggressive sexuality of the woman. (351)

The incongruity of the different modes of dress is plainly indicated by the novelist:

Ils entrèrent dans l'antichambre... Une jeune femme, en costume de dragon Louis XV la traversait en ce moment-là. C'était Mlle Rose Annette Bron, la maîtresse du lieu....

Il y avait aussi un Ange, un glaive d'or à la main, deux ailes de cygne dans le dos, et qui, allant, venant, perdant à toute minute son cavalier, un Louis XIV, ne comprenait rien aux figures et embarrassait la contredanse. (352)

The 'dragon Louis XV' and the Louis XIV knight objectify clichés of different periods of history: the decor, with its 'torchères de cristal en style Louis XIV' (353) also adds to the incongruity. Flaubert is again satirizing the extension of clichés into reality.

The way in which the characters are seen in terms of their costumes is particularly interesting. 'Docteur de Rogis' is never seen as a bourgeois, but the character he has created for himself, that of a Molièreresque doctor, and the group subsequently takes on a strange aspect:

En effet, le docteur les aborda; et bientôt ils formèrent tous les trois, à l'entrée du salon, un groupe de causeurs, où vint s'adjoindre Hussonnet, puis l'amant de la femme sauvage, un jeune poète exhibit, sous un court mantel à la François ler la plus piètre des anatomies, et enfin un garçon d'esprit, déguisé en Turk de barrière. (354)

(351) This is also evident in Frédéric's dream of Rosanette's sadism at the end of the same chapter (Palt II, ch. 1)
(352) ibid., p49
(353) ibid., p49
(354) ibid., p51
The characters are all products of their own 'idées reçues': the François 1er figure represents a reduction to absurdity of the past glories of France and, like the Sphinx, implies the emptiness of cultural signs. Flaubert creates humour from the incongruity of their interaction:

Mais deux voix furieuses s'élevèrent
- 'Imbécile!'
- 'Polisson!'
- 'A vos ordres!'
- 'Aux vôtres!'

C'était le Chevalier moyen âge et le postillon russe qui se disputaient; celui-ci ayant soutenu que des armures dispensaient d'être brave, l'autre avait pris cela pour une injure. (355)

'Idées reçues' projected into reality are absurd. The humour is sustained until the end of the passage:

'La Sphinx, dont les dents claquaient de fièvre eut besoin d'un châle.' (356)

What is clear from Flaubert's presentation of such scenes is that bourgeois reality is the product of stereotypes. Authenticity is not regarded as a value; it is replaced by the ability to manipulate 'idées reçues' with the aim of perpetuating bourgeois norms.

It is only with an understanding of Flaubert's emphasis on the authenticity of bourgeois life that the character of Frédéric can be fully appreciated, for the protagonist of L'Education Sentimentale provides the most detailed study of the bourgeois mind and at the same time mirrors the society in which he lives.

(355) ibid., p53
(356) ibid., p54
It has already been seen that his ambitions are derived from his reading of Balzac. The references to each form of activity in which he engages himself testify to his lack of originality: for example,

\[ \text{Il ambitionnait d'être un jour le Walter Scott de la France. (357)} \]

His literary activity allows Flaubert to satirize the Romantic novel:

\[ \text{Il se mit à écrire un roman intitulé: Sylvia, le fils du pécheur. La chose se passait à Venise. Le héros, c'était lui-même; l'héroïne, Mme Arnoux - et, pour l'avoir, il assassinait plusieurs gentilshommes, brûlait une partie de la ville et chantait sous son balcon, où palpitaient à la brise les rideaux en damas rouge du boulevard Montmartre. (358)} \]

Frédéric is clearly of a sentimental rather than artistic temperament: in this he resembles Emma Bovary. It is soon evident that his primary ambition is not artistic: it is a desire to experience feeling which leads him to attempt to make Mme Arnoux his mistress: yet sentiment itself is expressed as a cliché:

\[ \text{L'amour est la pâture et comme l'atmosphère du génie. (359)} \]

His conception of her as 'sa maîtresse future' (360) reveals his inability to reach beyond stereotypes; in spite of the intensity of his feeling, the 'hero' is equated with Ernest Chevalier, whose keeping of a 'mistress' was satirized by Flaubert.

Like Emma, Frédéric seeks 'le bonheur':

\[ \text{Il trouvait que le bonheur mérité par l'excellence de son âme tardait à venir. (361)} \]

(357) ibid., p13
(358) ibid., p16
(359) ibid., p14
(360) ibid., p54
(361) ibid., p9
Yet through Frédéric's experience, Flaubert reveals the emptiness of the term.

Frédéric se rappela les jours déjà loin où il enviait l'inexprimable bonheur de se trouver dans une de ces voitures, à côté d'une de ces femmes. Il le possédait, ce bonheur-là, et n'en était pas plus joyeux. (362)

However, this experience does not make him any more critical of language: like all of Flaubert's characters, Frédéric remains complacent in the belief that words signify something which is real and which can be experienced: on no occasion does Flaubert allow them an intuition that language and the world are separate, each operating according to its own laws. Hence desire continues to be expressed in clichés: failing to seduce Mme Arnoux, Frédéric embarks on a relationship with Louise Roque:

L'idée de se marier ne lui semblait plus exorbitante. Ils voyageraient, ils iraient en Italie, en Orient! (363)

Flaubert's use of the exclamation mark exposes this as the Romantic dream 'par excellence'; but on the textual level, it is no more than a repetition of an earlier, cliched reaction to boredom:

Il voulait se faire trappeur en Amérique, servir un pacha en Orient, s'embarquer comme matelot. (364)

The last term also has an ironic precedent in Flaubert's work, in Emma's revelation to Léon that she had an affair with Rodolphe — il était capitaine de vaisseau, mon ami — il était capitaine de vaisseau, mon ami. Through the repetition of clichés, more pronounced in L'Education Sentimentale than in Madame Bovary.

(362) ibid., p.84
(363) ibid., p.100
(364) ibid., p.42
(365) Madame Bovary, in O.C., vol I, p.865
Flaubert creates an impression of inertia. Man is capable of desire but can never make progress in the fulfilment of desire.

Frédéric's failure to gain any satisfaction from the relationships he has with women is also expressed in clichés. At the beginning of the novel, he expresses the conviction

Je suis de la race des déshérités. (366)

and as the work progresses it becomes clear that he remains incapable of assessing his experience in an authentic way: unable to win over Mme Arnoux,

Frédéric affirmait que son existence, de même, se trouvait manquée. (367)

Constant recourse to a fixed code implies the impossibility of knowledge for the bourgeois: Frédéric lacks the originality of perception to reunite language with experience: his realm is that of 'la bêtise'.

Yet what is most significant is not that Frédéric uses 'idées reçues', but that, as the central character, his function is to reflect a world in which bourgeois stupidity is prevalent. James's criticism of Frédéric, already quoted above, is that he is an inadequate register of experience; moreover, Bern has shown that this is at times accentuated by the reticence of Frédéric, who exhibits a refusal to deal with experience. (368)

But what is important in *L'Éducation Sentimentale* is the ubiquity of the bourgeois mentality, and Frédéric's function in the novel is clearly not

(366) *L'Éducation Sentimentale* in O.C., vol II, p14
(367) ibid., p70
to reflect experience but to register the stereotypes which constitute
the bourgeois mode of perception. In Madame Bovary, it is an omniscient
narrator who informs the reader that Yonville-L'Abbaye lies in a region
'où le langage est sans accentuation'. In L'Education Sentimentale,
it is Frédéric who is employed to provide a commentary on the society
Flaubert describes. Through the manipulation of Frédéric's point of
view Flaubert stresses the autonomous quality of bourgeois language,
and directs the reader's attention to the mental and spiritual void
which this implies.

Flaubert uses Frédéric to point out the material quality of language.
When speaking with Mme Arnoux, Frédéric ignores the significance of
what is said but focuses his mind on the materiality of the word;
lifted out of context, the linguistic sign becomes an object:

Elle l'introduisait dans une salle que
remplissaient des cuves, où virait sur
lui-même un axe vertical armé de bras
horizontaux....
- 'Ce sont les patouillards' dit-elle.
Il trouva le mot grotesque et comme
inconvenant dans sa bouche. (369)

It has already been shown that Arnoux's sign is presented to the reader
through Frédéric's eyes; Arnoux himself is also seen from the protagonist's
point of view; this technique allow Flaubert to cast an ironic light
on them both. Arnoux uses language as Homais does:

Il était républicain; il avait voyagé, il
connaissait l'intérieur des théâtres, des
restaurants, des journaux et tous les
artistes célèbres....... (369)

(369) L'Education Sentimentale, in O.C., vol II, p79
Mais il s'interrompit pour observer le tuyau de la cheminée, puis il marmotta vite un long calcul, afin de savoir "Combien chaque coup de piston, à tant de fois par minute, devait etc! Et, la somme trouvée, il admira beaucoup le paysage. Il se disait heureux d'être échappé aux affaires.

Frédéric éprouvait un certain respect pour lui... (370)

The absurdity of Arnoux's words is represented by the fragmentation of his discourse into meaningless parts. That Frédéric should be impressed by insignificance reveals both the power of empty rhetoric and the protagonist's faulty judgement. Similarly, Pellerin's work is seen from Frédéric's point of view:

Un reseau de lignes à la craie s'étendait par-dessus, comme les mailles vingt fois reprises d'un filet; il était même impossible d'y rien comprendre..... Frédéric les admira. (371)

Again Flaubert suggests the prevalence of a mode of perception. Frédéric's approbation is treated with irony.

When confronted with the stereotypes of bourgeois society at the Arnoux's, Frédéric's reaction is favourable:

La compagnie, les mets, tout lui plaisait.... mais la causerie surtout amusait Frédéric. Son goût pour les voyages fut caressé par Dittmer qui parla de l'Orient. (372)

The recurrence of the same clichés - 'l'Orient' being a particularly good example - produce the impression of a world organized according to a rigid linguistic code: it is this world which Frédéric is employed to register. In such a world, the individual's experience, and, hence, what

(370) ibid., p9
(371) ibid., p21
(372) ibid., p25
he can contribute to those around him, is severely limited. The result is that Frédéric's response to an argument about politics is to offer 'idées reçues' which he has heard from his friend:

Frédéric invoqua le droit de résistance; et se rappelant quelques phrases que lui avait dites Deslauriers, il cita Desolmes, Blackstone, le bill des droits en Angleterre et l'article 2 de la Constitution de '91. (373)

Later in the novel the successive repetition of the same words reaches an ironic climax:

Sénécal se déclara pour l'Autorité; et Frédéric aperçut dans ses discours l'exagération de ses propres paroles à Deslauriers. (374)

Divorced from human experience, language follows a circular pattern; Frédéric becomes the receiver of his own utterances.

Thus the principal character of the novel both reflects and perpetuates the limitations of the bourgeois mind. If he is 'l'homme de toutes les faiblesses', it is not simply on account of his inability to act in order to achieve a particular goal, but because of his failure to see beyond an autonomous and meaningless code, and hence to come to terms with experience. Frédéric embodies both the bourgeois mind and Flaubert's condemnation of it. Through the manipulation of his protagonist, the novelist is successful in indicting the stupidity of the bourgeois order.

(373) ibid., p95
(374) ibid., p144
In Flaubert's novels, characters and decor are not the only vehicles of criticism of the bourgeois mentality. As Duchet has shown in an article on *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert's use of italics in the text allows for the representation and satire of the bourgeois order within the act of narration itself. The use of italics is ironic, for they generally confer a special significance on what is italicised, yet it is also a procedure enabling Flaubert to draw the reader's attention to the insignificance and emptiness of the bourgeois world, since, ultimately, the words italicised come to resemble the words of Homais or Arnoux's signs: they fail to signify, and, by virtue of this, point to the presence of the bourgeois mind.

In *Madame Bovary*, italics are used frequently to present a point of view. At the beginning of the novel, 'le nouveau' is seen through the eyes of an anonymous figure who forms part of the established and therefore dominant order represented by the word 'nous'. Whether or not Sartre is correct in assuming this use of 'nous' to be a mistake on Flaubert's part, the implication of a 'normal' viewpoint is typical of the novelist's technique. The ironical focus is most apparent when italics are used as a substitute for direct speech. Charles's mental inertia is underlined in this way:

Enfin, pour se tenir au courant, il prit un abonnement à la Ruche Médicale. (377)

(375) Claude Duchet, op. cit.
(377) *Madame Bovary* in *O.C.*, vol 1, p595
The presentation of Charles's father depends largely on the use of italics. For a man who has 'l'entrain facile d'un commis voyageur', it is not surprising to find that his speech is constituted of clichés:

M. Bovary, peu soucieux des lettres, disait que ce n'était pas la peine! Auraient-ils jamais de quoi l'entretenir dans les écoles du gouvernement, lui acheter une charge ou un fonds de commerce? D'ailleurs, avec du toupet, un homme réussit toujours dans le monde. (379)

By using italics the novelist draws attention to the mode of discourse in order to satirize the speaker.

Thus italics, as they are employed in the above cases, help to characterize a particular figure. But their use is extended by Flaubert to create a general bourgeois viewpoint. At one point in the text this is made explicit:

Malgré ses airs évaporés (c'était le mot des bourgeois d'Yonville), Emma, pourtant, ne paraissait pas joyeux. (380)

Emma's sentiments here are tested against a norm which Flaubert states to be bourgeois. This same point of view constantly recurs in the narrative without necessarily being attributed to anyone in particular.

Rodolphe's arrival is of great interest to the Yonvillais:

Il vivait en garçon, et passait pour avoir au moins quinze mille livres de rentes! (381)

Flaubert is skilful at presenting this public interest. The statement in italics represents, with its use of 'au moins', a widely held hypothesis which the author neither confirms nor denies. Fact is replaced by rumour.

(378) ibid., p576
(379) ibid., p576
(380) ibid., p616
(381) ibid., p617
When Emma is involved with Rodolphe, the bourgeois point of view is again invoked:

Par l'effet seul de ses habitudes amoureuses, Mme Bovary changea d'allures. Ses regards devinrent plus hardis, ses discours plus libres; elle eut même l'inconvenance de se promener avec M. Rodolphe, une cigarette à la bouche, comme pour narguer le monde. (382)

The affair is this seen in the context of bourgeois respectability. Again, the bourgeois provides the norm. Hence, when Léon's mother receives a letter pour la prévenir qu'il se perdait avec une femme mariée. (383)

it is significant that the letter should be anonymous. The judgement is not that of an individual; it is social and reflects the universality of the bourgeois moral code.

The extent of Flaubert's reaction against this norm is shown by his treatment of Charles after Emma's death:

On s'étonna de son découragement. Il ne sortait plus, ne recevait personne, refusait même d'aller voir ses malades. Alors on prétendait qu'il s'enfermait pour boire. (384)

The conclusion drawn by the bourgeois is however already indicated by 'on prétendait que' to be erroneous.

(382) ibid., p639
(383) ibid., p672. It may be argued, in this case that since 'se perdait' is not italicised, there is the suggestion that 'avec une femme mariée' is simply a quotation from the letter.
(384) ibid., p691
Quelquefois, pourtant, un curieux se haussait par-dessus la haie du jardin et apercevait avec ébahissement cet homme à barbe longue, couvert d'habits sordides, farouche, et qui pleurait tout haut en marchant. (385)

'L'ébahissement' here comes from the recognition of the gap between bourgeois language and the reality which language is supposed to represent. By using italics, Flaubert distances bourgeois judgements from the authentic viewpoint of the narrator, and draws the reader's attention to the pettiness and emptiness of the conclusions which they represent.

Yet the bourgeois viewpoint recurs throughout the text and helps to confirm the impression that the bourgeois mentality dominates the world which Flaubert describes.

A similar pattern is followed in L'Education Sentimentale. Italicised words form, on occasions, part of the 'style indirect libre' and are attributed to particular speakers: Dussardier is praised by Mlle Vatnaz

Mlle Vatnaz commença l'éloge de son caractère.
Elle ajouta même qu'il avait le génie du coeur. (386)

By italicising the stereotype Flaubert distances it from the narrative and points to its absurdity. Language is thus removed from the discourse and objectified so that the reader is made aware of its materiality.

This is also clear when the style of one of Arnoux's utterances changes from 'style indirect libre' to a type of direct speech enclosed within quotation marks:

Il s'interrompit pour observer le tuyau de la cheminée, puis il marmotta vite un long calcul afin de savoir "combien chaque piston, à tant de fois par minute, devait, etc." (387)

(385) ibid., p692
(386) L'Education Sentimentale, in O.C., vol II, p35
(387) ibid., p59
Language here is fragmented and so devoid of meaning. Stereotypes in particular become the object of irony: Flaubert's treatment of de Cisy is typical:

Depuis que le deuil de sa grand'mère était fini, il réalisait son idéal, parvenait à avoir du cachet. (388)

The originality which he believes he has gained is belied by the very cliché which is employed to put originality forward as a value.

Yet what is particularly interesting about italicisation in L'Education Sentimentale is not the way in which individuals are thereby satirized, but the creation of a more general viewpoint. Flaubert's success in this can best be assessed by considering the various references to what the bourgeois values in an individual's progress. At the beginning of the novel, Frédéric is returning to Nogent 'avant d'aller faire son droit.' (389) Italicsiation here suggests that this is the normal course of events; acting according to a well-worn bourgeois tradition, Frédéric is to follow in the footsteps of Ernest Chevalier. The norm is suggested even at the moment of his failure:

Ils rencontrèrent Martinon, rouge, ému avec un sourire dans les yeux et l'auréole de triomphe sur le front. Il venait de subir sans encombre son dernier examen. Restait seulement la thèse. Avant quinze jours il serait licencié. Sa famille connaissait un ministre, "Une belle carrière" s'ouvrait devant lui. (390)

"Une belle carrière" expresses a general viewpoint, not simply that of Martinon or of his family. Martinon's success is gauged by his ability

(388) ibid., p82
(389) ibid., p8
(390) ibid., p30
to conform to the bourgeois norm. When Frédéric visits the Dambreuses,

   il reconnut Martinon, "attaché maintenant
   au parquet de la capitale." (391)

Once again the phrase is not attributed to an individual, but represents
a collective viewpoint. It is clear that in L'Education Sentimentale
Flaubert evolves the technique of representing such a viewpoint by
drawing the reader's attention to the way in which bourgeois values are
represented by clichés and stereotypes. By employing italics and, to a
lesser extent, quotation marks, in the narrative Flaubert reveals the
artificiality of a language which has ceased to record experience but
which has become a social code, recognizable by its function of denoting
the bourgeois mind which has created it. In this way, the bourgeois
order is integrated into the very texture of literature, yet is recreated
as both absurd and inert by the narrator.
Chapter IV : The Functions of speech : Communication and Non-Communication

In the last two chapters, I have attempted to focus attention on the ways in which Flaubert's characters use language to come to terms with what is external to them — both their ideals and the world around them — and have shown that the problems caused by lack of reflection and true understanding on the part of the individuals are compounded by the inorganic, cliched nature of the language which they use.

In this chapter, I wish to treat the complex problem of Flaubert's use of speech, a subject which the novelist's critics have generally ignored. The difficulty facing the critic who wishes to study a novelist's use of speech is, inevitably, one of criteria. In The Aims of Interpretation, Hirsch writes:

No literary theorist from Coleridge to the present time has succeeded in formulating a viable distinction between the nature of ordinary written speech and the nature of literary written speech. (392)

Whilst the traditional aim of the novelist was, unquestionably, to transcribe human speech as closely as was thought possible, conventions in the way this is done have developed to such an extent that Smith, commenting on Hirsch, claims that the conventions of literary speech actually preclude the conventions of real speech. The two are of an entirely different order. (393)

Nevertheless, it is usual for critics to regard the novelist's primary aim in speech as mimetic: the problems such an aim poses for the artist are well clarified by Ullmann:

The discrepancy between the author's own style and that of his characters may produce a jarring effect and destroy the harmony of the work. On the other hand, if the characters are made to speak in a language out of tune with their personality and their background, it will be difficult to produce that illusion of reality which is the prime purpose of dialogue in literature. (394)

Professor Ullmann's statement provides a basis for his discussion of dialogue in George Sand's novels, a study in which he pays special attention to the transcription of rustic speech. Graham Hough, writing on the English novel, also recognizes the artist's problem, and shows how different novelists respond:

We cannot help observing that, in Henry James's later work, the dialogue is highly stylised and pretty uniformly stylised so that all the characters, even the children, talk in much the same way. It is a commonplace that in Scott's novels the heroes and heroines tend to use a conventional literary language while the other characters use the same sort of class or local dialects, usually much more idiosyncratic and vigorous in idiom and vocabulary.

He concludes

In both these observations the idea of a standard conversational language is tacitly involved, and divergences from it are registered. (395)

Most literary critics have used a passive understanding of the conventions of dialogue as a basis for their work on individual authors. An exception to this is N. Page, who, in his 'Speech in the English Novel' has attempted to define standard literary conversational language as carefully as possible.

His fundamental tenet is that dialogue is one of the most important aspects of mimesis employed by the novelist, but going beyond a simple statement about presentation, he examines the function of dialogue in the narrative:

> Although dialogue will often serve to advance plot and in certain writers will carry a large share of this function, its more customary role is to contribute to the presentation and development of character, and here its strength lies in its being more direct and dramatic than authorised exposition. Dialogue gives a work linguistic vitality. (396)

Page does qualify this with the point, made by Ullmann, that the novelist must find a balance between the desire to represent speech accurately and the requirement of his overall fictional and aesthetic purpose. This is exactly the problem Flaubert encountered when writing Madame Bovary.

> Ce à quoi je me heurte, c'est à des situations communes et un dialogue trivial. Bien écrire le médiocre, et faire qu'il garde en même temps son aspect, sa coupe, ses mots même, cela est vraiment diabolique. (397)

(397) Correspondance, vol III, p338; to Louise Colet; 12-ix-1853
This desire is to write well without departing too far from the convention underlying the transcription of speech, a problem Flaubert encountered whenever he wrote.

In order to study speech, then, it is necessary to understand these conventions and assess to what extent the presentation of speech contributes to the writer's total vision. First, it is evident from the emphasis laid on the mimetic aspect of speech that much depends on its phonological component. In everyday life, the ability to communicate depends not only on what is said, but also on the way it is said: pause, stress, volume, tempo and intonation must all be taken into account. Page's analysis of Dickens's work assesses speech by reference to these features and to the visual presentation which accompanies speech:

Few novelists have gone as far as Dickens in reinforcing the expressiveness of dialogue with description of movement and gesture and thus providing a visual counterpart to the oral element in his fiction. (398)

Secondly, speech in a novel is far more logically ordered than speech in everyday life. Irrelevant exclamations and comments, repetitions, hesitations and unfinished sentences are usually omitted in favour of an ordered discourse which, if heard in everyday life would sound far from natural.

Thirdly, fictional dialogue must fit into the texture of the narrative, and, unlike non-literary speech, it usually has a specific function.

(398) ibid., p146
Whereas everyday speech is often banal and conventional, speech in the novel tends normally to have particular significance. I propose to consider Flaubert's presentation of speech in the light of these considerations.

The particular importance of the phonological component of dialogue grew during the course of the Nineteenth Century, initially as part of the Romantic concept of local colour, then as part of the Realist notion of the naturalistic presentation of everyday speech. In her discussion of Henri Monnier's *Scènes Populaires* which appeared in 1830, Melcher writes:

> It is the realism of the dialogue which is Monnier's most distinguishing trait. He was able to indicate in the written speech the habits of diction peculiar to each character so accurately that at times the sentences are almost incomprehensible until they are read aloud. (399)

George Sand's use of rustic speech in her novels has already been mentioned; other examples of this tendency are found in Balzac's fascination with the language used by convicts; and in his concern with the accurate transcription of the Alsatian dialect of the banker Nucingen and the German accent of Schmucke. There are obvious parallels in the English novel of the period, one of the most striking being Emily Bronte's portrayal of the servant Joseph in *Wuthering Heights*.

Many of Flaubert's early works have a heavy Romantic flavour. Exotic

settings in Corsica and Spain(400), the novelist's interest in Medieval France(401) and the creation of low-life circus characters(402) all provide scope for the use of different phonological features, but with the exception of the occasional oath or exclamation the phonological devices of Romantic speech are largely ignored.

In his mature work, he seeks to represent dialogue realistically, but phonological consideration are always subordinated to aesthetic aims. His remarks on dialogue in his play Le Sexe Faible, which he was writing in 1873 would appear to provide an adequate summary of his treatment of speech:

Je vise comme style à l'idéal de la conversation naturelle, ce qui n'est pas très commode quand on veut donner au langage de la fermeté et du rythme. (403)

Artistic writing necessarily precludes the faithful reproduction of everyday speech.

Although the diction and the rhythms of speech are not incorporated into Flaubert's novel, certain conventions are observed, albeit intermittently. The way in which a character speaks, for example, is sometimes described, particularly in the early narrative works. A conversation between the children at the beginning of Un Parfum à Sentir illustrates this technique:

(400) cf Matteo Falcone, in O.C., vol I, pp45-46, and Bibliomanie, in O.C., vol I, pp76-83
(401) cf Deux mains sur une couronne, in O.C., vol I, pp51-55
(402) cf Un Parfum à sentir, in O.C., vol I, pp55-67
(403) Correspondance, vol VII, p18; to Caroline Commanville; 20/21-v-1873
- Dis donc, Auguste, disait le plus grand à un autre qui s'élevait, avec la seule force du poignet, de terre sur la corde - dis donc, répétait-il à voix basse et comme craignant d'être entendu d'un homme à figure sinistre qui se promenait autour d'eux - il ne semble qu'il y a bien longtemps que maman est partie.
- Oh ! Oui, bien longtemps, répondit-il avec un gros soupir. (404)

Such passages provide the visual counterpart to the oral element which Page detects as a feature of Dickens' work. But there is no great emphasis on intonation, and it is noticeable that such features tend to be less evident in Flaubert's later work.

The conventions of dialogue operate in such a way that speech is incorporated into the texture of the narrative and contributes to the illusion of reality. What is interesting in Flaubert's work, however, is the way in which certain features of diction are deliberately made to stand out from the narrative and are held up to ridicule by the novelist.

This technique is used less in direct speech than in passages of 'style indirect libre'. In Madame Bovary, Lheureux's speech is satirized in this way:

Dès qu'ils furent seuls, M. Lheureux se mit, en termes assez nets, à féliciter Emma sur la succession, puis à causer de choses indifférentes, des espaliers, de la récolte, et de sa santé à lui qui allait toujours 'couci couci, entre le zist et le zest! (405)

By pointing the reader's attention to Lheureux's linguistic habits, Flaubert mocks his use of slang. Another, more complex criticism is

(404) Un Parfum à Sentir, O.C., vol 1, p56
(405) Madame Bovary, in O.C., vol I, p660
implicit in *L'Education Sentimentale* when, at the time of the disturbances of 1841, Frédéric encounters another young onlooker:

'Cela manque de galbe et de couleur' continua le voisin de Frédéric. 'Je croyais, messire, que nous avons dégénéré! À la bonne époque de Loys onzième, voire de Benjamin Constant, il y avait plus de mutinerie parmi les escholiers. Je les trouve pacifiques comme moutons, bêtes comme cornichons, et idoines à être épiciers, Pasque-Dieu! Et voilà qu'on appelle la Jeunesse des Ecoles!

Il écarta le bras, largement, comme Frédéric Lemaître dans *Robert Macaire*.

'Jeunesse des Ecoles, je te bénis!' (406)

Here, Flaubert appears not only to be mocking Hussonnet, but also to be satirizing Hugo's use of archaic language in *Notre Dame de Paris*. The speech is dislocated from the narrative and what is said is irrelevant to the events Flaubert is describing. By parodying archaic and rhetorical diction, Flaubert is implying that it is used gratuitously and, as the reference to the actor Frédéric Lemaître suggests, in an overtly melodramatic manner.

It could be argued that in all these cases Flaubert is subverting one of the conventions underlying the use of speech in the novel. The same conclusion may be reached if we consider a second convention of dialogue: its ordered logicality. A transcription of actual speech is very different as we have seen from a piece of dialogue in a novel, which is generally stylized in a more or less ordered discourse. But at times Flaubert deliberately undermines the logicality of the discourse. In *Madame Bovary*,

(406) *L'Education Sentimentale*, in *O.C.*, vol 2, p18
Homais provides us with several examples, and his conversation with Charles on the subject of Emma's health is typical:

'Pour ce qui est de Madame, elle m'a toujours paru, je l'avoue, une vraie sensitive. Aussi ne vous conseillerai-je point, mon bon ami, aucun de ces prétendus remèdes qui, sous prétexte d'attaquer les symptômes, attaquent le tempérament. Non, pas de médication oisive! du régime, voilà tout! des sédatifs, des émollients, des dulcifiants. Puis, ne pensez-vous pas qu'il faudrait peut-être frapper l'imagination?
- Ah c'est là la question! Telle est effectivement la question. That is the question! Comme je lisais dernièrement dans le journal. (407)

Whilst the first part of the dialogue seems to follow a rational pattern, the repetition at the end is irrelevant, and the use of a quotation from Shakespeare's Hamlet which is then attributed not to the dramatist but to a newspaper is completely ridiculous. Similarly, Lheureux's greeting to Emma and Rodolphe is composed as a series of banalities:

Voici une journée superbe! Tout le monde est dehors! Les vents sont à l'est. (406)

and Binet's contribution to a discussion of literature bears little relevance to the theories which Homais is putting forward.

- 'Castigat ridendo mores', Monsieur Bournisien! Ainsi, regardez la plupart des tragédies de Voltaire; elles sont semées habilement de réflexions philosophiques qui en font pour le peuple une véritable école de morale et de diplomatie.
- Moi, dit Binet, j'ai vu autrefois une pièce intitulée Le Gamio de Paris où l'on remarque le caractère d'un vieux général qui est vraiment tape. Il rembarre un fils de famille qui avait séduit une ouvrière, qui à la fin..... (409)

(407) Madame Bovary, in O.C., vol 1, p645
(408) ibid., p620
(409) ibid., p648
Whilst the conventions of speech in the novel demand logicality, it is interesting to note how much of what Flaubert's characters say is both illogical in itself and irrelevant to the context in which it is said.

The bearing that this has on the informational function of speech in Flaubert's novels is considerable. Speech in the novel differs from actual conversation in that it generally has a specific function. Its primary aims in the novel are to give information about - and sometimes to enhance - the action, and to reveal character. Whilst these aims are often fulfilled in Flaubert's work, it is interesting to note the extent to which conversation is banal and trivial. For instance, when background conversation is mentioned, it is inevitably devoid of meaning.

The conversation Emma hears at La Vaubyessard is typical:

A trois pas d'Emma, un cavalier en habit bleu causait Italie avec une jeune femme pâle portant une parure de perles. Ils vantaient le grosseur des piliers de Saint-Pierre, Tivoli, le Vésuve, Castellamare et les Cassines, les roses de Gênes, le Colisée au clair de lune. Emma écoutait de son autre oreille une conversation pleine de mots qu'elle ne comprenait pas. (410)

The scene is significant in that it conveys something of Emma's character to the reader; but the conversation itself is nothing more than a collection of clichés. In L'Education Sentimentale, Frédéric, on his second visit to the Dambreuses, witnesses conversation of equally devastating banality:

(410) ibid., p591
- Avez-vous été à la dernière fête de charité
de l'Hôtel Lambert, Mademoiselle?
- Non Monsieur!
- Il va faire, tout à l'heure, une chaleur!
- Oh c'est vrai, étouffant!
- De qui donc cette Polka?
- Mon Dieu, je ne sais pas, Madame (411)

The trivality is emphasised by the exclamation marks which Flaubert
ironically employs.

The significance of such passages is not that they serve to highlight by
contrast the meaningful conversations which take place between the main
characters. Indeed, such speech, by virtue of its very trivality fits
into the social life Flaubert seeks to depict, a life which is characterized
by the emptiness of its language.

Moreover, the conventional function of conveying information is at times
undermined: for example, in Madame Bovary, Homais tells Charles that
Lagarde will give only one performance of Lucie de Lammermoor at Rouen;
whilst Léon is sure that there will be more than one. In L'Education
Sentimentale, Frédéric challenges de Cisy to a duel because of the latter's
scathing remarks about a Sophie Arnoux when, in fact, the Madame Arnoux
whom Frédéric seeks to defend is Marie-Angèle. So, instead of conveying
information, Flaubert uses the speech of his characters on occasions to
distort facts for no apparent fictional purpose, and in this respect his
use of dialogue differs greatly from that of his contemporaries.

(411) L'Education Sentimentale, in O.C. vol II, p65
The point must also be made that the use Flaubert makes of speech varies considerably from one work to another. Two trends emerge: an increasing degree of stylisation, which culminates in the conversations of Bouvard and Pécuchet where speech is often far from naturalistic; and a withdrawal from the use of direct speech in the *Trois Contes*, a withdrawal which is most noticeable in *Un Coeur Simple* and in *Saint Julian l'Hospitalier* where the presentation is narrative rather than dramatic. In the former, Félicité's words are few and far between and contribute little to the realism of the story; and in the latter the almost total absence of direct speech and its wholesale replacement by 'style indirect libre' contributes to the economy and unity of style which Flaubert particularly sought, and also to the ambiguity of the work. The realistic presentation of speech is therefore largely sacrificed to aesthetic concerns.

Since Flaubert's presentation of speech is often remote from the conventions of the 'realist' novel, one is led to question the extent to which it is useful to judge this aspect of Flaubert's work by conventional standards. What is more valuable is to consider speech as the product of a particular attitude towards language, and to analyse it in relation to what has already been said about the way in which Flaubert's characters use words.
It has been argued that a primary function of language is that of a tool by which the individual may order what is external to him, and thereby come to terms with it. To accept this notion involves dismissing the idea that the most important function of speech is that of communication.

In 'On the Margins of Discourse', Smith writes:

'We perform verbal acts... in order to extend our control over a world which is not naturally disposed to serve our interests. We must regard with some suspicion the common view that the basic function or purpose of speech for the speaker is to communicate information to the listener.' (412)

Communication of information and revelation of character are both important aspects of speech in the novel, but for Flaubert, the function of giving information is subordinated to the treatment of character. Speech in his novels is often an extension and illustration of the way in which his characters seek, often unsuccessfully, to understand and express what is external to them using clichés and 'idées reçues'. Such stereotypes have sapped the vitality of language and prevent the uncritical speakers from forming a concept of experience as organic, thus imprisoning them in a world of words from which they struggle blindly to escape, or which they seek to manipulate to their own ends.

The effect of such a view of language on the presentation of communication between individuals is what now concerns us. For Van de Ghinste, writing on Proust's characters,

Le grand art de communiquer, c'est, d'une part, d'émeter un message essentiel, tout en essayant

(412) B. Smith: op. cit; p85
d'éviter la banalité, se garder de l'hermétesme, et d'autre part, d'essayer de pénétrer ce que cachent les paroles. (413)

But Flaubert's characters are incapable of relating words to experience, and therefore of penetrating the true meaning of words. Salammô is typical in that 'elle prenait des conceptions pour des réalités'; (414) and as a result she is unable to see beyond her own frame of reference. The ensuing isolation provides a basis for the theme of non-communication in Flaubert's works.

On occasions, communication between characters is possible. Just before the arrival of Charles and Emma at Yonville, Mme Lefrançois's discussion of Binet and Léon is clearly comprehensible to Homais! (415) but this is the exception rather than the rule. Many dialogues present the reader with apparent rather than authentic communication, because of the nature of the language adopted by Flaubert's characters.

In an interesting work on cliché, A.C.Zijderveld analyses not only their origin and nature, but also the way in which they work in communication. His definition of the term stresses the cliché's emptiness of meaning but shows how it nevertheless has a distinctive function in conversation:

A cliché is a traditional form of human expression.... which due to repetitive use in social life has lost its original, often

(414) Salammô in *U.C.* vol 1, p753
(415) Madame Bovary in *U.C.* vol 1, p581
ingenious, heuristic power, although it thus fails positively to contribute meaning to social interactions and communication, it does function socially, since it manages to stimulate behaviour (cognition, emotion, volition, action) while it avoids reflection on meanings. (416)

The meaningless of the clichés of Romanticism, or the jargon of science, or the slogans of politics is fundamental to Flaubert's work. What is interesting in the novelist's creation of speech is his intuitive awareness of the pattern of stimulus and response which clichés create. Elaborating on his initial definition, Zijderveld draws our attention to the essentially behaviouristic mechanism of clichés.

Most clichés are able to trigger speech and behaviour in a kind of behaviouristic stimulus-response mechanism. In speech, for example, a cliché is easily and without the interference of any thought taken over. . . . . clichés are as contagious as laughter. In all these cases, cognitive reflections remain as it were in the background of the interaction: they are so to say ready-to-be-used. It only needs specific words to trigger them off. . . . Because of their repetitive use in social life, people will not think much about the precise meaning of a cliché, yet they will hear it and incorporate it into their ongoing interactions. (417)

Flaubert's use of clichés as part of speech develops as his work progresses. In L'Education Sentimentale (1845) Henry and Mme Renaud exchange clichés:

- Est-ce que vous seriez poète, par hasard?
- Qui vous l'a dit?
- Je devine.
- Mais, j'aime à lire les poètes, continua Henry, sans avoir l'air d'y prendre garde.
Et vous, n'aimez-vous pas aussi à vous bercer mollement dans leur rythme, à vous laisser

(417) ibid., p15
emporter par le rêve d'un génie sur quelque nuage d'or, au-delà des mondes connus?
Mme Renaud le regardait parler.
- Ce sont de grands bonheurs, n'est-ce pas, dit-elle, avec une expression d'ignorance avide. (418)

The passage has significance on several levels. The way Henry responds to poetry illustrates how lack of reflection gives rise to clichés of Romanticism - the emotional impact is far more important than any intellectual response or analysis. Mme Renaud's reaction to Henry's cliché further illustrates the point; the fact that she hears him speak without seeking to understand what he is saying is suggested by the use of the phrase 'Mme Renaud le regardait parler.' And the final response is emitted even though Flaubert ironically points out that she is totally ignorant.

Their conversation continues in the same vein:

Et, tout en causant ainsi, ils parlaient ensemble des histoires d'amour fameuses au théâtre, des élégies les plus tendres; ils aspirèrent en pensée la douceur des nuits étoilées, le parfum des fleurs d'été; ils se dirent des livres qui les avaient fait pleurer, ceux qui les avaient fait rêver, que sais-je encore? Ils devisèrent sur le malheur de la vie et sur les soleils couchants. Leur entretien dura longtemps mais il fut plein, le regard accompagnait chaque mot, le battement de cœur précédait chaque parole.

Their speech moves from one cliché to another and the ensuing emotional response is noted by the narrator. Yet although the basis of their relationship early in the novel would appear to be the hollow exchange

(418) L'Éducation Sentimentale (1845) in O.C., vol 1, p287
of received ideas, there is a certain degree of ambiguity, created partly through the suggestion of non-verbal communication, as to whether or not the relationship can become more meaningful. A passage later in the work provides the reader with a somewhat nostalgic reflection on the profundity of their love, but it is interesting to note that the basis of such a love has never formed part of the description of the relationship:

Jadis, dans les premier temps de leur union ils s'étaient fait la confidence de toute leur vie: Ils l'avaient voulu, tous deux, par se connaître plus intiment jusque dans les profondeurs de leur passé, et que leur coeur leur fût ouvert jusque dans ses fondations et dans ses ruines. (419)

Although this is offset by Henry's later realisation that he and his mistress cannot communicate (420), Flaubert's suggestion of a profound relationship belies the earlier dependence of Henry and Mme Renaud on clichés.

There is a more elaborate exploration of the same theme in Madame Bovary. Here Flaubert points up the shallowness of the exchange of clichés particularly in the relationship between Emma and Léon, and their first conversation reveals a similarity with the early dialogues between the lovers in the first version of L'Education Sentimentale. Léon takes his cue initially from Emma's reply to Homais:

'..... J'aime à changer de place'
- C'est une chose si maussade, soupira le clerc, que de vivre cloué aux mêmes endroits! ..... ..... Avez-vous du moins quelques promenades dans les environs? continuait Madame Bovary, parlant au jeune homme.

(419) ibid., p324
(420) ibid., p345
Oh, fort peu, répondit-il, il y a un endroit que l'on nomme la Pâture sur le haut de la côte, à la lisière de la forêt. Quelquefois, le dimanche, je vais là, et j'y reste avec un livre, à regarder le soleil couchant.

- Je ne trouve rien d'admirable comme les soleils couchants, reprit-elle, mais au bord de la mer surtout.
- Oh, j'adore la mer. (421)

The pattern is exactly that which Zijderveld describes. Each cliché stimulates a response which includes another cliché: this is the only means by which the conversation is furthered. There is no suggestion of depth in the movement from one cliché to another, and Flaubert's satire is heightened in this instance by the way in which he interposes in the scene between Emma and Léon some of Homais' longest and most ridiculous utterances. The chemist's discourse on the local climate serves to emphasise the banality of the future lovers' conversation.

As the scene continues the dialogue is increasingly satirized.

- Et puis, ne vous semble-t-il pas, répliqua Madame Bovary, que l'esprit vogue plus librement sur cette étendue sans limites, dont le contemplation vous élève l'âme et donne des idées d'infini, d'idéal?
- Il en est de même des paysages de montagnes, reprit Léon. J'ai un cousin qui a voyagé en Suisse cette année dernière, et qui me disait qu'on ne peut se figurer la poésie des lacs, le charme des cascades, l'effet gigantesque des glaciers..... Ces spectacles doivent s'enthousiasmer, déposer à la prière, à l'extase. Ainsi je ne m'étonne plus de ce musicien célèbre qui, pour exciter mieux son imagination avait coutume d'aller jouer du piano devant quelque site imposant.
- Vous faites de la musique? demanda-t-elle.
- Non, mais je l'aime beaucoup, répondit-il.

Once again, a characteristic of the dialogue is its lack of depth. There
is no discussion. Clichés such as 'l'infini', 'l'idéal' and 'l'extrême' are used uncritically, and the landscapes owe more to the Romantic poets than to nature itself. Moreover, Flaubert stresses the absence of authentic experience on Léon's part; the clerk refers to a friend who has been to Switzerland and to a famous musician whose imagination is excited by natural beauty. These are borrowings from other people's experiences; and to them is added the ironic reference to Léon's lack of artistic ability. Although he professes a liking for music, he is not a musician. He may be described, like Emma, as 'de tempérament plus sentimentale qu'artiste'.

That this relationship is based on nothing more than an exchange of empty clichés is emphasised by the novelist as the narrative progresses. In the first scene their apparent compatibility is a result of their willingness to accept the same clichés. On occasions when one of them chooses not to be stimulated by the clichés of the other, the relationship founders. A typical example is Emma's decision to adopt the 'pose' of mother to her daughter Berthe. She refuses Léon's advances, and this encourages him to leave her and go to Paris. The void behind the relationship is shown by Léon's apparent inability to comprehend Emma's pose:

Elle entendit des pas sur l'escalier; c'était Léon. Elle se leva et prit sur le commode, parmi des torchons à ourler, le premier de la pile. Elle semblait fort occupée quand il parut. La conversation fut languissante, Madame Bovary s'abandonnant à chaque minute, tandis qu'il

(422) ibid., p586
demeurait lui-même comme tout embarrassé.... Elle ne parlait pas. Il se taisait, captivé par son silence, comme il l’eût été par ses paroles.
- Pauvre garçon! pensait-elle.
- En quoi lui déplais-je, se demandait-il. (423)

Emma's studied assumption of a particular role here, emphasised by Flaubert's use of the words 'semblait occupée' is an example of the way in which individuals seek to establish control over external reality - a situation, or, as in this case, another person - with total disregard for anything other than the establishment of that control. Emma here uses Léon in order to orientate herself; and the non-communication which is the result of their fundamental selfishness is signified by the silence and by the fact that there is no question of their conveying their thoughts to each other. The way in which an individual - in this case Emma - may control a relationship by manipulating language is revealed in the same scene.

Et il se mit à parler de Madame Homais, dont la tenue fort négligée leur portait à rire ordinairement.
- Qu'est-ce que cela fait? interrompit Emma. Une bonne mère de famille ne s'inquiète pas de sa toilette.

Puis elle retomba dans son silence. (424)

Léon deliberately uses language to elicit a particular response from Emma and to re-establish the bond between them. But the trivial common ground on which their relationship is based is swept away by her and there can be no communication.

(423) ibid., p609
(424) ibid., p610
Their subsequent relationship is shown to be largely dependent on the nature of their responses to the other's linguistic stimuli. As soon as Léon reappears, at the performance of *Lucie de Lammermoor* in Rouen, there is a suggestion that although he is more 'experienced' - he has, after all, been to Paris to continue his studies - this experience consists simply of the acquisition of a new set of clichés. The whole passage is very revealing in the matter of character development.

With his use of the word 'dilettante', and the phonologically comic list of singers, Flaubert places Léon on the same level as the people Emma heard conversing at La Vaubyessard.

The conversation with Emma underlines this; indeed, Emma's rejection of his clichés provides an initial suggestion that, after her experience with Rodolphe, it is she who has made progress while Léon has been in Paris.

(425) ibid., p652
(426) ibid., p653
This is not his only 'faux pas' 

- 'Oh! j'ai bien souffert! Souvent, je sortais, je m'en allais, je me traînais le long des quais, m'étourdissant au bruit de la foule sans pouvoir bannir l'obsession qui me poursuivait. Il y a sur le boulevard, chez un marchand d'estampes, une gravure italienne qui représente une Muse. Elle est drapée d'une tunique et elle regarde la lune, avec des myosotis, sur sa chevelure dénouée. Quelque chose incessamment me poussait là. J'y suis resté des heures entières.' 
Puis, d'une voix tremblante: 
- Elle vous ressemblait un peu. 
Madame Bovary détourna la tête, pour qu'il ne vît pas sur ses lèvres l'irrésistible sourire qu'elle y sentait monter.

The smile suggests that Emma recognises the emptiness of what is said, yet her attitude implies that she does not wish to inhibit him and that, indeed, she wishes to be seduced by his words. In allowing him to continue, she helps to forge a pact between them even though she is apparently aware of the void behind his words.

Elle semblait déterminée à le laisser parler sans l'interrompre. Croisant les bras et baissant la figure, elle considérait la rosette de ses pantoufles......
Cependant elle soupira: 
- Ce qu'il y a de plus lamentable, n'est-ce pas? c'est de traîner, comme moi, une existence inutile. Si nos douleurs pouvaient servir à quelqu'un, on se consolerait dans la pensée du sacrifice.

Emma seems to offer herself in two ways here. On one level she is proposing that she should devote herself to Léon: on a linguistic level, she offers a cliché to which Léon may respond, and this is equivalent to offering a relationship, like the previous one, based on clichés. By reacting to her cliché, Léon accepts the pact:
'Il se mit à vanter la vertu, le devoir et les immolations silencieuses, ayant lui-même un incroyable besoin de dévouement qu'il ne pouvait assouvir.'

From this point onwards the relationship is reconstructed and follows the pattern, already analysed, of an exchange of clichés. Emma's later refusal of the relationship is little more than a rhetorical gesture.

The part played by clichés in their relationship is made very clear by Flaubert. As they are leaving Rouen Cathedral, the point at which she finally submits to Léon's advances is highly significant. Léon sends for a carriage:

- Ah Léon! ... Vraiment, ... je ne sais ... si je dois! Elle minaudait. Puis, d'un air sérieux:
- C'est très inconvenant, savez-vous?
- En quoi? répliqua le clerc. Cela se fait à Paris. Et cette parole, comme un irrésistible argument, la détermina. (427)

Communication does not take the form of 'argument'. She is persuaded by a single word, a cliché which produces an immediate response in her.

What is important is that the relationship is never more profound than an exchange of clichés. The desire for mental and spiritual growth in a relationship is shown by Flaubert to have been replaced by the need for stimuli which perpetuate but do not feed an arid relationship.

Elle demanda des vers, des vers pour elle, 'une pièce d'amour' en son honneur; jamais il ne put parvenir à trouver la rime du second vers, et finit par copier un sonnet dans un keepsake.

(427) ibid., p557
Ce fut moins par vanité que dans le seul but de lui complaire. Il ne discutait pas de ses idées; il acceptait tous ses goûts. (428)

The absence of any discussion compounds the breakdown of communication caused by the uncritical acceptance of clichés. It will become clear that this was seen by Flaubert not simply as a problem in individual relationships, but as something fundamental to the stagnation of social and political life viewed so ironically in his later work.

In L’Education Sentimentale the relationship between Frédéric and Madame Arnoux provides a different focus on the questions of communication treated in Emma’s affair with Léon. It is made interesting by the fact that the pattern of stimulus and response in the exchange of clichés is, at the outset of the relationship, resisted by Madame Arnoux. The visit of Frédéric to Arnoux’s pottery is of great importance.

Frédéric conta qu’il avait eu, l’autre nuit, un songe affreux.
- J’ai rêvé que vous étiez gravement malade, près de mourir.
- Oh! ni moi ni mon mari ne sommes jamais malades!
- Je n’ai rêvé que de vous.
Elle le regarda d’un air calme.
- Les rêves ne se réalisent pas toujours. (429)

Madame Arnoux’s response to the commonplaces of Romantic discourse employed by Frédéric is to take the words at their face value and thus to expose the falseness of what he is saying. Frédéric has great difficulty in continuing the conversation. Unlike Léon’s early conversations with Emma, there is no opportunity for a smooth movement from one ‘idée reçue’

(428) ibid., p668
(429) L’Education Sentimentale, in D.C., vol II, p79
to another. Yet it is noticeable that Frédéric is incapable of abandoning Romantic commonplaces:

Frédéric balbutia, chercha ses mots, et se lança enfin dans une longe période sur l'affinité des âmes. Une force existait qui peut, à travers les espaces, mettre en rapport deux personnes, les avertir de ce qu'elles éprouvent et les faire se rejoindre.

Elle l'écoutait, la tête basse, tout en souriant de son beau sourire. Il l'observait du coin de l'œil, avec joie, et épanchait son amour plus librement sous la facilité d'un lieu commun. Elle proposa de lui montrer la fabrique.

Frédéric's inability to communicate other than through clichés, and Madame Arnoux's refusal to respond to his commonplaces serve to underline that it is doubtful whether one can even use the word 'relationship' in this case. This is also evident from the way in which Frédéric continues to idealise her, which results in his being surprised by anything that does not conform with his own version.

Elle l'introduisait dans une salle que remplissaient des cuves, où virait sur lui-même un axe vertical armé de bras horizontaux......
- Ce sont des patouillards' dit-elle
Il trouva le mot grotesque, et comme inconvenant dans sa bouche. (430)

Indeed, what characterises the 'relationship' is the very distance between them. This aspect is emphasised far more than in Emma's relationship with Léon. In that relationship, a focal point was provided by the pact of a limited communication through commonplaces adopted by each of them. In L'Education Sentimentale, however, even this pact is avoided, and the void between them is continually exposed. Words themselves are obscured:

(430) ibid., p79
 Ils .... passèrent près d'une cabane en ruine qui avait autrefois servi à mettre des instruments de jardinage.
- 'Elle n'est plus utile' dit Madame Arnoux.
Il repliqua d'une voix tremblante
- Le bonheur peut y tenir!
Le tintamarre de la pompe à feu couvrit ses paroles.

Throughout the scene, Frédéric persists in his attempt to seduce Madame Arnoux without actually daring to declare his love openly. It is ironic that he should be critical of the nature of her refusal, yet his criticism

'Ah! quelles maximes bourgeoises vous avez!' (431)
is revealing in that it shows an inability to accept her for what she is. The point of Frédéric's realisation that she will not respond to him and that she will not fulfil the role which he has conceived for her is signified by silence:

Elle se tenait debout, sur le seuil de sa chambre, avec ses deux enfants à ses côtés.
Il s'inclina sans dire un mot. Elle répondit silencieusement à son salut. (432)

The intimacy which they later share is always pervaded by this silence, and there is never any sense of completeness. At times, there is apparent communication:

Elle lui dit son existence d'autrefois, à Chartres, chez sa mère; sa dévotion vers douze ans; puis sa fureur de musique lorsqu'elle chantait jusqu'à la nuit, dans sa petite chambre, d'où l'on découvrait les remparts.

(431) ibid., p81
(432) ibid., p81
Il lui conta ses mélancolies au collège et comment dans son ciel poétique resplendissait un visage de femme, si bien qu’en la voyant pour la première fois, il l’avait reconnue. (433)

The similarity between Frédéric’s discourse and Léon’s conversation with Emma on their meeting at the opera at Rouen is striking. Once again, communication is composed of clichés. The development of the relationship between Madame Arnoux and Frédéric is not based on any deeper knowledge of each other or any change in circumstances other than that Madame Arnoux reveals herself to be, like many of Flaubert’s characters, susceptible to the persuasive force of commonplaces. They have reached the stage where they share the same clichés:

Et ils s’imaginaient une vie exclusivement amoureuse, assez féconde pour remplir les plus vastes solitudes, excédant toutes joies, défiant toutes les misères, où les heures auraient disparu dans un continu épanchement d’eux-mêmes, et qui aurait fait quelque chose de resplendissant et d’élevé comme la palpitation des étoiles. (434)

Yet behind this shared language there is silence:

Bientôt il y eut dans leurs dialogues de grandes intervalles de silence. (435)

Frédéric is never aware of her reservations about the relationship, reservations which lead, ultimately to its failure.

At the very end of the novel, it is the distance between them which is emphasised. On seeing each other, Tous deux restèrent sans pouvoir parler, se souriant l’un à l’autre. (436)

(433) ibid., p107
(434) ibid., p107
(435) ibid., p107
(436) ibid., p160
Their oft-quoted reflection on happiness is presented, significantly, as an ideal which can never be fulfilled.

Elle soupira: et après un long silence:
- N'importe, nous nous serons bien aimés
- Sans nous appartenir, pourtant,
- Cela vaut peut-être mieux, reprit-elle.
- Non! Non! quel bonheur nous aurions eu!
- Oh! je le crois, avec un amour comme le vôtre.

The failure of the relationship is such that even the sharing of clichés - 'l'amour' and 'le bonheur' - is seen only as something which might have happened. The struggle on Frédéric's part to form a relationship has been lost. Flaubert's comment is ambiguous:

Tous les deux ne trouvaient plus rien à se dire. Il y a un moment, dans les séparations, où la personne aimée n'est déjà plus avec nous. (437)

The scene is poignant yet the sense of togetherness which Flaubert suggests is ironic, since 'la personne aimée' in this case is a figment of Frédéric's imagination which he identifies with Madame Arnoux. The silence that separates them puts the relationship in its true perspective.

The study of communication in human relationships in Flaubert's work thus serves to illustrate the way in which the individual is unable to transcend his own limited frame of reference and is incapable of experiencing life fully. The isolation of the individual is compounded by the fact that the nature of his language prevents his development and fulfilment in an organic relationship with another person. For Flaubert's characters,

(437) ibid., p161
understanding is replaced by the adoption of clichés, and communication consists solely of mutual stimulation in order to produce a required response. Each relationship issues into a void, because no character is able to reach a level of communication which will bring true insight into another person. If the function of language as the means by which the individual comes to terms with reality fails, then its communicative function must also fail, since communication depends on understanding. This, ultimately, is what is revealed in Flaubert's delineation of relationships. Yet the novelist's pessimism runs even deeper. Success can only be gained by those characters who, far from being defeated by the failure of language to contain meaning, are aware enough and skilful enough to manipulate clichés to their own ends.

The tyranny exercised by those who are clever enough to manipulate language may be shown initially by considering Emma Bovary's relationship with Rodolphe. Rodolphe's first reaction on seeing Emma is that she will be easy to seduce 'avec trois mots de galanterie' and his method of seducing her will be precisely by exploiting language. At the 'Comices Agricoles', he shrewdly employs the clichés and style of Romantic literature:

> Je sais mettre sur mon visage un masque railleur; et, cependant, que de fois, à la vue d'un cimetière, au clair de lune,

(438) Madame Bovary, in O. C., vol I, p618
je me suis demandé si je ne ferais pas mieux d'aller rejoindre ceux qui sont à dormir. (439)

Here the 'vue de cimetière', the 'clair de lune' and the notion of despair, together with the highly literary style of 'ceux qui sont à dormir' reveal an ability both to recognise emotive language and to manipulate it in order to gain Emma's confidence. Manipulation is even more apparent in the letter he writes to Emma to terminate the relationship:

'Du courage, Emma! du courage! Je ne veux pas faire le malheur de votre existence...... Avez-vous mûrement pesé votre détermination? Savez-vous l'abîme où je vous entraînais, pauvre ange? Non, n'est-ce pas? Vous alliez confiante et folle, croyant au bonheur, à l'avenir...... Ah! malheureux que nous sommes! insensés! (440)

Poetic diction underlines the absurdity of what is written, which bears little relation to the situation which has arisen. The letter continues with a similar lack of coherence:

'Pourquoi faut-il que je vous aie connue? Pourquoi étiez-vous si belle? Est-ce ma faute? O mon Dieu! non, non, n'en accusez que la fatalité!'

The second question posed by Rodolpe has nothing to do with the first and both are unanswerable, rhetorical; in answer to the third question, it is indeed Rodolphe's fault that he has seduced Emma. Language divorced from reality is used here as a form of self defence, deflecting responsibility for the situation away from the writer himself. Ironically,

(439) ibid., p621  
(440) ibid., p643
Rodolphe's comment on 'la fatalité' reveals the hollowness and, at the same time, the power of the word. When Charles uses the same term at the end of the novel, Rodolphe is amused, for he is aware that it is he, partly through his manipulation of language, 'qui avait conduit cette fatalité'. When used in this way, the word is devoid of meaning. Fate does play a part in the novel, but the characters are oblivious to its actual workings.

When he has finished writing the letter, Rodolphe is anxious that it should have the effect he seeks.

Et il y avait un dernier adieu, séparé en deux mots: A Dieul ce qu'il jugeait d'un excellent goût.
- Comment vais-je signer maintenant? se dit-il. Votre tout dévoué.... Non. Votre ami? Oui, c'est cela. 'Votre ami'.

The letter, then, is as carefully written as Homais' articles in Le fiscal de Rouen, and displays the same ability to wield language. Ironically, clever as he is at the manipulation of emotive language, Rodolphe is too insensitive to realise what effect his letter actually has, and remains ignorant of the fact that Emma's subsequent illness brings her close to death. Rodolphe matches Homais both in his irresponsible use of language and in the level of feeling for others which this implies.

The final meeting between Emma and Rodolphe, at the end of the novel, shows Rodolphe using language of a different kind. In order to protect himself, he is non-committal: instead of finding 'idées reçues' which

(441) ibid., p692
will appeal to Emma, he uses language as a barrier which she finds
insurmountable.

- _N'importel fit-elle en le regardant tristement, j'ai bien souffert_
- Il répondit d'un ton philosophique_
- _L'existence est ainsil_
- _A-t-elle du moins, reprit Emma, été bonne pour vous depuis notre séparation?
- Oh! ni bonne..... ni mauvaise.
- _Il aurait peut-être mieux valu ne jamais nous quitter.
- Oui..... peut-être_ (442)

Rodolphe's language here is deliberately emptied of meaning: his first
reply is an 'idée reçue' and his other words cancel each other out.

Discovering the purpose of her visit, he defends himself from attack by
repeating that he cannot give her money:

- _Je ne les ai pas!_

Here Rodolphe demonstrates the power of his language, and Emma her
slowness to interpret his utterances. What he uses here belongs to a
different register from his previous exploitation of literary language.

The words are still mendacious but are free of rhetoric: in common with
both Lheureux and Homais, Rodolphe is quite capable of substituting
bluntness for loquacity, and of employing each register to devastating
effect. Emma here is unable to communicate with him, and therefore
leaves. Rodolphe is the dominant figure throughout the relationship,
and this is systematically evinced in his use of language and his
manipulation of her through language. This is a primary source of Emma's
suicide.

(442) _ibid., p679_
The potential tyranny of language is further underlined in Flaubert's treatment of Lheureux, whose relationship with Emma is totally different from that of Rodolphe, but who is equally skilful in manipulating language. Lheureux is characterized in the early part of the novel by his loquacity and by the banality of his language. As a salesman, he uses words to mesmerize his listener, and his reaction to Emma having lost her dog is typical of the way in which he develops his 'sales patter':

Monsieur Lheureux, marchand d'étoffes, qui se trouvait avec elle dans la voiture, avait essayé de la consoler par quantité d'exemples de chiens perdus, reconnaissant leur maître au bout de longues années. On en citait un, disait-il, qui était revenu de Constantinople à Paris. (443)

Lheureux may be seen as a storyteller. His fabrications and exaggerations are an end in themselves: language is self-generating: the circumstantial details he gives provide us with a parody of the realist writer:

Un autre avait fait cinquante lieues en ligne droite, et passé quatre rivières à la nage; et son père à lui-même avait possédé un caniche qui, après douze ans d'absence lui avait tout à coup sauté sur le dos, dans la rue, comme il allait dîner en ville.

Language, as in the novels of Beckett, is composed of irrelevant fabrications which lead nowhere, and the fact that Flaubert finishes the chapter on this note serves to draw particular attention to the emptiness of Lheureux's language. Many of Flaubert's chapters end with a profound observation, (444) but this is deliberately repetitive. The utterance reaches no climax, neither does it point to any useful generalization which might conclude what Lheureux has to say. That a chapter which

(443) ibid., p601
(444) cf, for example, the ends of chapters V, VI, IX of the first part of the novel.
relates what should be a momentous new beginning for Emma should end in this way points to the meaningless and banality of bourgeois life which she will find at Yonville L'Abbaye.

Lheureux's first attempt to sell Emma some of his merchandise shows that he recognises her values: he deliberately plays on the word 'élégante' (445) which corresponds with her view of herself. Moreover, his presentation of what he has for sale reveals an awareness of all the means of temptation worthy of advertisers in present-day fashion magazines. As the novel progresses, he gains a tighter hold over Emma, to the extent that he is able to expose the fatuity of her illusions in a speech which reveals a certain perceptiveness and an unexpected directness. He tells her that the money she owes him is 'pour vos fantaisies, les boîtes de voyage' (446). His cruelty is evident from the way in which, like Rodolphe, he suddenly begins to use words in a stark, unpoetical manner which is foreign to Emma:

Elle n'avait rien su...... c'était une surprise.....
- A qui la faute? dit Lheureux en saluant ironiquement. Tandis que je suis, moi, à bûcher comme un nègre, vous vous repassez du bon temps.
- Ah! pas de morale
- Ça ne nuit jamais, répliqua-t-il.
Elle fut lâche, elle le supplia; et même elle appuya sa jolie main blanche et longue sur les genoux du marchand.
- Laissez-moi donc! On dirait que vous voulez me séduire! (447)

She is dominated by Lheureux's language here as throughout the novel, and it is, on one level, a cause of her suicide.

(445) Madame Bovary, p609
(446) ibid., p660
(447) ibid., p673
For this reason, the smooth banality of Lheureux's words at her funeral take on a sinister aspect:

Une si bonne personne! Dire pourtant que je l'ai encore vue samedi dernier dans ma boutique. (448)

The reader, unlike Homais who is standing nearby, recognises the cruelty and intentional irony of this non-sequitur. The success of Lheureux's business enterprises, founded on guile and menace, underlies the pessimism of the novel, which derives in part from the ultimate triumph of bourgeois language, sterile and immobile, cliché-ridden and yet, at times, powerfully destructive.

It is, of course, Homais who embodies the tyrannical potentialities of language, and his influence operates in a wider sphere than that of either Rodolphe or Lheureux. Homais' clichés stand as objects which signify to the reader the presence of a bourgeois figure in much the same way as the word 'Thompson' inscribed on Pompey's column in Alexandria represented for Flaubert a particular kind of character. Through Homais is expressed the potential danger of a person such as Thompson who seeks to use language as an object of self-perpetuation and hence of power.

This is evident from the way in which he persuades Hippolyte to have the club-foot operation.

Je voudrais te voir, mon ami, débarrassé de la hideuse claudication, avec ce balancement de la région lombaire, qui, bien que tu prétendes, doit te nuire considérablement dans l'exercice de ton métier. (449)

(448) ibid., p689
(449) ibid., p633
Homais uses both a heightened style - 'l'exercice de ton métier' - and obscure medical terminology to dazzle Hippolyte. What is far more convincing to the coachman is Homais' persuasive and calculated appeal to his sexual instincts:

Alors Homais lui représentait combien il se sentirait ensuite plus gaillard et plus ingambe, et même lui donnait à entendre qu'il s'en trouverait mieux pour plaire aux femmes, et le valet d'écurie se prenait à sourire lourdement.

Homais' sales-talk is as effective as that of Lheureux.

Homais, of course, seeks to turn language to his own advantage. He uses what he believes is fashionable slang in order to impress those around him:

Il donnait maintenant dans un genre folâtre et parisien qu'il trouvait du meilleur goût, et comme Madame Bovary, sa voisine, il interrogait le clerc curieusement sur les mœurs de la capitale, même il parlait argot afin d'éblouir..... les bourgeois. (450)

Humour is created by the incongruity of his attempts to draw attention to himself in this way. Yet his use of jargon and a precious style is often aimed at establishing his superiority over another character:

Binet lui demanda une demi-once d'acide de sucre.
- Acide de sucre, fit le pharmacien dédaigneusement, je ne connais pas, j'ignore. Voulez-vous peut-être de l'acide oxalique; c'est oxalique, n'est-il pas vrai? (451)

Homais asserts himself by dissociating his own frame of reference from that of Binet, by ridiculing him and finally by addressing him in scientific terminology and the precious 'n'est-il pas vrai'. Language here provides a means of self-aggrandisement at the expense of his interlocutor.

(450) ibid., p668
(451) ibid., p631
His manipulation of language is, like that of Rodolphe, at its most
telling when he is writing, for he is able to let his imagination and
his rhetorical powers run riot. Writing for 'Le Fanal de Rouen', he
uses language as an instrument of self-glorification:

Il se citait des premiers parmi les membres
du jury et même il rappelait, dans une note,
que M. Homais, pharmacien, avait envoyé un
mémoire sur le cidre à la société d'Agriculture. (452)

In the same article he also disseminates his own beliefs and prejudices:

Il ajoutait:
'On y a seulement remarqué l'absence du clergé,
sans doute les sacristies entendent le progrès
d'une autre manière. Libre à vous, messieurs
de Loyola.

Homais' articles are the object of ridicule, and provide humour. Yet
as the novel progresses, Homais is seen less as a comic caricature and
more as a domineering and menacing character. The use of language for
his own ends is increasingly evident, and is particularly clear in his
treatment of the blind beggar. His first reaction to the beggar is
typical: he wishes to impress:

Voilà, dit le pharmacien, une affection
scrofuleuse! Et bien qu'il connût le pauvre
diable, il feignait de le voir pour la
première fois, murmura les mots de 'cornée',
'cornée opaque', 'sclérotique', 'facies'.... (453)

His language communicates nothing; it is intended rather to dazzle his
fellow passengers, and the passage serves once more to reveal Homais'
insensitivity. Towards the end of the novel his language becomes an
instrument of tyranny, a weapon with which to destroy the beggar.

(452) ibid., p626
(453) ibid., p675
L'aveugle, qu'il n'avait pu guérir avec sa pommade, était retourné dans la côte du Bois-Guillaume, où il narrait aux voyageurs la vaine tentative du pharmacien.... Durant six mois consécutifs, on put donc lire dans le 'Fanal de Rouen' des entrefiletis ainsi conçus:

'Toutes les personnes qui se dirigent vers les fertiles contrées de la Picardie auront remarqué, sans doute, dans la côte du Bois-Guillaume, un misérable atteint d'une horrible plaie faciale. Il vous importune, vous persécute et préleve un véritable impôt sur les voyageurs. Sommes-nous encore à ces temps monstrueux du moyen-âge où il était permis aux vagabonds d'étaler par nos places publiques la lèpre et les scrofules qu'ils avaient rapportées de la croisade?' (454)

Recognising that he himself is threatened by language - that of the beggar who narrates his own story - the attack is pressed to such an extent that Homais - employing 'la profondeur de son intelligence' - even invents stories about his adversary. Language is manipulated in order to persuade the public of the validity of Homais' case against the beggar. The extension of reality into the realm of fiction is cleverly and ruthlessly exploited by the chemist, whose very style is that of the storyteller:

'Hier, dans la côte du Bois-Guillaume, un cheval ombrageux....! Et suivait le récit d'un accident occasionné par la présence de l'aveugle.

Il fit si bien que l'on l'incarcéra. Mais on le relâcha. Il recommença et Homais aussi recommença. C'était une lutte. Il eut la victoire; car son ennemi fut condamné à une réclusion perpétuelle dans un hospice. (455)

Homais thus gains and exerts influence, and his success leads him to seek further power:

(454) ibid., p690
(455) ibid., p690
Alors Homais inclinait vers le Pouvoir. Il rendit secrètement à M. le Préfet de grandes services dans les élections. Il se vendit enfin, il se prostituait. Il adressa même au souverain une pétition où il le suppliait de 'lui faire justice'. Il l'appelait 'notre bon roi', et le comparait à Henri IV. (456)

Flaubert is openly scathing. What is particularly interesting is that Homais is shown to be successful as a result of the way in which he manipulates certain linguistic structures. The novel ends on a note of realism, as it records the success which this sort of intelligence is likely to bring:

Depuis la mort de Bovary, trois médecins se sont succédé à Yonville sans pouvoir y réussir, tant M. Homais les a tout de suite battus en brèche. Il fait une clientèle d'enfer; l'autorité le ménage et l'opinion publique le protège.

Il vient de recevoir la croix d'honneur. (457)

He is the most successful of the novel's protagonists, in direct contrast with Emma, who dies because she is unable to equate language and experience, and is always dominated by words. The novel ends on a hollow and bitter note, for the growing importance of Homais implies a triumph of cynicism and sterility over idealism: in spite of his verbosity and his ability to wield language, Homais has nothing to say: his words lead nowhere, and his success is a sign of the immutability which is a major theme of all Flaubert's major works.

The opportunism of Homais is mirrored on a much wider scale in L'Education Sentimentale, a novel in which Flaubert develops as a major theme the social and political implications of the individual's exploitation of a

(456) ibid., p691
(457) ibid., p692
stereotyped language. As in Madame Bovary, the importance of the press is recognised: Deslaurier's quest for power is embodied in the desire to control a journal, and Hussonnet takes revenge on Frédéric by writing a scathing article which describes the latter's duel with Cisy in terms favourable to the aristocrat: but what is far more evident is the struggle for power between those individuals capable of handling the clichés and slogans of the period with most skill.

The reactionary bourgeoisie of the July Monarchy is exemplified by Dambreuse, who, having relinquished his nobility, has become powerful in the world of finance. His attempts to sell Frédéric shares in a mining company reveal an ability to manipulate the stereotyped language of the society in which he operates. The company will be advised by representatives of the aristocracy, the 'institut' and the army:

De pareils éléments rassurent les capitaux craintifs et appellent les capitaux intelligents.... Ainsi, nous chauffons, nous éclairons, nous pénétrons jusqu'au foyer des plus humbles ménages. (460)

The style is worthy of Homais. Moreover, the financial basis of the enterprise is itself justified by a cliché:

Moi, du reste, je suis franchement prohibitionniste! le pays avant tout.

If Frédéric is to act as secretary, he is advised to contribute funds:

Car votre capital garantit votre position comme votre position votre capital.

Such an organisation, according to Dambreuse, represents du véritable progrès: c'est répondre victorieusement à certaines criailleries républicaines.

(458) L'Education Sentimentale, in O.C., vol II, p73
(459) ibid., p93
(460) ibid., p77
But after the Revolution, Dambreuse protects himself by adopting a different set of slogans:

Il se réjouissait des événements et il adoptait de grand coeur 'notre sublime devise: Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité, ayant toujours été républicain, au fond! S'il votait, sous l'autre régime, avec le ministère, c'était simplement pour accélérer une chute inévitable. Il s'emporta même contre M. Guizot 'qui nous a mis dans un joli pétrin, convenons-en!' En revanche, il admirait beaucoup Lamartine, lequel' s'était montré 'magnifique, ma parole d'honneur, quand à propos du drapeau rouge...... 'Oui je sais, dit Frédéric. (461)

It is interesting that Flaubert should, at times, use Frédéric as a reliable register of the language employed. This is also the case at Dambreuse's burial, where his attitude provides an adequate comment on the funeral oration:

Frédéric put admirer le paysage pendant qu'on prononçait les discours..... Tous profitèrent de l'occasion pour tonner contre le Socialisme, dont M. Dambreuse était mort victime. C'était le spectacle de l'anarchie et son dévouement à l'ordre qui avait abrégé ses jours. On exalta ses lumières, sa probité, sa générosité et même son mutisme comme représentant du peuple car, s'il n'était pas orateur, il possédait en revanche ces qualités solides, mille fois préférables, etc. ..... avec tous les mots qu'il faut dire: 'Fin prématurée, - regrets éternels, - l'autre patrie, - Adieu, ou plutôt non, au revoir!' (462)

It is ironic not only that, having lived by clichés, Dambreuse should be buried to the sound of them, but also that the eulogist should be unaware of Dambreuse's facility with language. Of particular interest here is the way in which Flaubert condenses the discourse into stereotyped formulae: the implication of 'etc' and 'les mots qu'il faut dire' is that the narrator's best means of conveying the emptiness of language is

(461) ibid., p116
(462) ibid., p147
through a type of shorthand which makes further comment unnecessary.

Flaubert's scathing attitude towards the values of the Right is not balanced by sympathy for the Left. Deslaurier's belief that

\[\text{Il fallait attaquer les idées reçues. (463)}\]

implies the questioning role of the Left in a perpetual reassessment of the values and principles underlying Authority. Yet the tendency of the language of politics to disintegrate into meaningless slogans is emphasised throughout the novel. The way in which individuals internalise political slogans without seeking to reflect on their meanings makes it impossible for them to attach received ideas other than by adopting an alternative set of clichés. Flaubert thus satirises the Left-wing views of Sénécal, whose ideas are those of Mably, Fourier, Saint-Simon, Comte, Cabet, Louis Blanc\(^{(464)}\) and ridicules Deslauriers whose ideas are those of Sénécal.\(^{(465)}\)

The sterility of political conversation in the Dambreuse salon\(^{(466)}\) is mirrored by the inertia of the Radical's discussion of the degradation of the July Monarchy. Conversation is simply the individual's reaffirmation of his favourite slogans:

\[
\text{'Les étrangers, ma parole, se fichent de nous!}
\]

\[\text{Oui, nous sommes la risée de l'Europe', dit}
\]

\[\text{Sénécal.}
\]

\[\text{C'est parce que l'Art est inféodé à la couronne'}
\]

\[\text{Tant que vous n'auriez pas le suffrage universel... (467)}\]

There is no evidence that Pellerin is in the least concerned about universal suffrage, or that Sénécal cares about art. The clichés adopted, moreover,
are revealed as the products of self-interest: Pellerin, 'refuse' depuis vingt ans à tous les salons était furieux contre le Pouvoir'; (468) the principal concerns of Hussonnet and Deslauriers are for the press, control of which will give them personal power.

The Radicals' critical attitude towards Martinon is conveyed, typically, by the use of clichés:

D'abord leur haine du gouvernement avait la hauteur d'un dogme indiscutable. Martinon seul tachait de défendre Louis-Philippe. On l'accablait sous les lieux communs traînant dans les journaux: l'embaistillement de Paris, les lois de septembre, Pritchard, Lord Guizot,— si bien que Martinon se taisait, craignant d'offenser quelqu'un. (469)

The influence Sénécal wields can be seen in the way his clichés are adopted by other characters, notably Deslauriers; and his tyrannical nature is revealed in his treatment of la Bordelaise at Arnoux's pottery:

- Article 13, insubordination, dix francs. La Bordelaise se remit à la besogne.... Frédéric murmura:
- Ah! pour un démocrate, vous êtes bien durl L'autre répondit magistralement:
- La Démocratie n'est pas la dévergondage de l'individualisme. C'est le niveau commun sous la loi, la répartition du travail, l'ordre.
- Vous oubliez l'humanité, dit Frédéric. (470)

Sénécal's speech here is remarkably like the impersonal officialese adopted by modern totalitarian regimes.

Flaubert was critical of Auguste Comte because of what he saw as his

(468) ibid., p58
(469) ibid., p28-9
(470) ibid., p80
facile conclusions, and it is in this respect that the two sides in the 1848 revolution are equated. In the desire for change during the period following the Révolution, Frédéric notices that

Les conservateurs parlaient maintenant comme Sénécal. (471)

Yet their language has always been the same. The full extent of the novelist's pessimism is revealed in the early pages of the novel, in his description of the disturbances of December 1841, witnessed by Frédéric. Flaubert stresses the repetitive use of clichés:

Cependant, au fond de la place, quelques-uns crièrent
- A bas Guizot!
- A bas Pritchard!
- A bas les vendus!
- A bas Louis-Philippe!
La foule oscilla, et se pressant contre la porte de la cour qui était fermée elle empêchait le professeur d'aller plus loin. Il s'arrêta devant l'escalier. On l'aperçut bientôt, sur la dernière des trois marches. Il parla: un bourdonnement couvrît sa voix. (472)

The noise here which prevents communication is significant. Political slogans and the emotion they generate preclude real communication. The mob's dogmatic stance will admit of no questioning.

Bien qu'on l'aimât tout à l'heure, on le haïssait maintenant, car il représentait l'Autorité.

The attitude of the crowd is seen in an ironic light because the mob does not present an alternative to Authority, but simply an alternative Authority.

Chaque fois qu'il essaya de se faire entendre, les cris recommençaient.
The emotion generated is fundamental to the tyranny of the mob. It is not surprising that violence ensues.

Many of the clichés of the Left express a desire for a violent revolution:

Ill faut se reporter toujours à une révolution, à un acte de violence. (473)
... Mais qu'on y prenne garde! Le peuple, à la fin, se lassera et pourrait faire payer ses souffrances aux détenteurs du capital, soit par de sanglantes proscriptions, ou par le pillage de leurs hôtels. (474)

Flaubert’s description of the Revolution shows such ‘idées reçues’ becoming horrific reality. Although much of the narration is from Frédéric’s viewpoint, which is often distant, we are made aware of the killing of the bourgeois and of the invasion of the Palais-Royal by the mob.

Alors une joie frénétique éclata, comme si, à la place du trône, un avenir de bonheur illimité avait paru.... (475)

The use of ‘le bonheur illimité’ here reveals the emptiness of the people’s language. The word is a slogan for them, as well as for Emma Bovary. The absurdity of the scene is derived in part from the absence of idealism. The Revolution has no firm foundation: the impossibility of change is conveyed by Flaubert not through verbal exchange but rather by means of the incongruity of one class attempting to assimilate objects which represent the ‘idées reçues’ of another class.

Puisqu’on était victorieux, ne fallait-il pas s’amuser? La canaille s’affubla ironiquement de dentelles et de cachemires. Des crépines d’or s’enroulèrent aux manches des blouses, des chapeaux à plumes d’autruche ornai ent la tête des forgerons, des rubans de la légion d’honneur firent les ceintures aux prostituées.

(473) ibid., p73
(474) ibid., p58
(475) ibid., p113
For the proletariat, the Revolution simply produces new clichés. In spite of the unique sincerity of his language in the earlier part of the novel, Dussardier's praise of the Republic is stereotyped and reveals the naivety of the revolutionaries:

- La République est proclamée! On sera heureux maintenant.... plus de rois, comprenez-vous? toute la terre libre! (476)

So, the language of politics is clichéd and functional. An individual's success is dependent on his ability to manipulate words to his own ends, but the impossibility of authentic idealism and of the communication of ideas implies, in L'Education Sentimentale, the impossibility of progress, and the state of atrophy reached is aptly described by the novelist as 'la démence universelle'. Perhaps the most original and significant mode of expression of this state occurs earlier in the novel, at the Dambreuses' salon. Here, discussion among characters who have social and political responsibility gives way to the total fragmentation of language:

M. Thiers y est venu en pantalon. Vous connaissez son mot?
- Oui, charmant; mais il tourne au démogogue, et son discours dans la question des incompatibilités n'a pas été sans influence sur l'attentat du 12 mai
- Ah! Behl
- Ehl. Ehl. (477)

Language loses all signification. The expression and exchange of ideas degenerates into mere sound: thus Flaubert expresses his view of the absurdity of social and political idealism.

(476) ibid., p114
(477) ibid., p66
The void behind speech is further emphasised in Flaubert's work by the exceptional number of instances of non-communication between characters. The comedy of character and satire of society derived from such instances is evident in the first version of *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, but the later novels display a refinement of the technique.

In the 1845 version of *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, Henry hears Mlle Aglaé sing at Madame Arnoud's:

Mlle Aglaé fut priée de chanter, elle se mit au piano, enfila des gammes, hennit, piaffa, pompa et brossa le clavier. Personne ne comprit pas un mot de l'air italien qu'elle fit sortir de son larynx; comme il était long, tout le monde applaudit à la fin. (478)

In this case, non-communication is a part of Flaubert's social satire. The importance he attached to such passages may be gauged by comparing the above quotation with a similar passage in the 1869 version of the novel. Frédéric is at the Arnoux's:

Rosenwald les interrompit en priant Madame Arnoux de chanter quelque chose. Il préluda; elle attendait; ses lèvres s'entrouvrirent et un son pur, long, filé, monta dans l'air.

Frédéric ne comprit rien aux paroles italiennes. Cela commençait sur un rythme grave, tel qu'un chant d'église, puis s'animaient crescendo, multipliant les éclats sonores, s'apaisait tout à coup; et la mélodie revenait amoureusement, avec une oscillation large et paresseuse. (479)

In the second version, the significance is deeper. The recital is experienced by Frédéric, and its impact upon his senses is revelatory of

(478) *L'Éducation Sentimentale* (1845), in *O.C.*, vol I, p287
(479) *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, in *O.C.*, vol II, p26
his feelings for Madame Apnoux. The words 'église' and 'amoureusement' indicate the religious and sensual nature of this experience. Yet the fact that he does not understand the words signifies the distance between them, and is typical of Flaubert's ironic portrayal of the young man.

Flaubert constantly satirises individual characters by making the reader aware of their inability to transcend their own limited points of view and their failure to appreciate the thoughts or sentiments of anyone else. One of the first instances of comic dialogue found in Flaubert's work is in the first version of *L'Education Sentimentale*, at a point where Henry visits Morel to pour out his feelings for Madame Renaud. The passage is humorous from the very beginning:

> Dès qu'il fut entré, il se laissa tomber sur un fauteuil en se prenant la tête dans les mains comme un homme désespéré.
> - Prenez garde, lui dit Morel, vous chiffonnez la dentelle de ma veste.
> - Ah! Mon pauvre Morel
> - Levez-vous un peu, vous êtes assis sur mon pantalon.
> - Je suis un homme bien malheureux, continua Henry.
> - Où Diable ai-je mis mes bottes de maroquin rouge? répondit Morel. (48U)

Here there is no particular desire not to communicate on the part of Morel; there is no question of his avoiding communication as Rodolphe does in his final meeting with Emma. Communication does not take place simply because neither man can see beyond his own concerns; and the single-mindedness with which each pursues his own concerns produces the 'raideur' of personality which for Bergson makes a man like object and therefore exposes him to laughter. (481) The dialogue follows two separate trains of thought: Morel's description of an orgy of entertainment he has recently enjoyed, and Henry's Romantic outpourings; the misunderstanding which ensues is

(48U) *L'Education Sentimentale* (1845), in O.C., vol I, p303
(481) H. Bergson; *Le Rire in Œuvres*, Paris, P.U.F., 1963, p428: "Le comique est le côté de la personne par lequel elle ressemble à une chose, cet aspect des événements humains qui imite, par sa raideur d'un genre tout particulier, le mécanisme pur et simple, l'automatism, enfin le mouvement sans la vie."
humorous in its incongruity, for Henry's feelings for Madame Renaud bear no relation to the type of liaison experienced by Morel's friends:

... Il poussa un bâillement homérique, écartant les bras en se faisant craquer les coudes et les poignets.
- Si vous saviez ce qui m'est arrivé, voyez-vous!
- Aïe! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!
- Aïe! nous avons joliment ri. Il y avait à souper une espèce de Baron allemand qui était venu avec la petite Irma. Il n'entendait pas un mot de français, il voulait embrasser toutes les femmes, il était gris comme un Polonais et buvait dans son chapeau ......

Est-ce que vous auriez cru ça d'elle, vous qui la connaissiez?
- D'elle? de qui parlez-vous? De Louisa? Ma foi, non! ce pauvre Bucherot ne méritait pas ça. (482)

The whole passage serves to put Henry's relationship into an ironic focus, but it also functions in a different way. Each man continues to talk about what concerns him most and there is no attempt on either side to establish communication. That Morel should ridicule the German Baron's inability to understand a word of what was said makes the scene doubly ironic: in the above passage, the language spoken is the same but the words are nevertheless meaningless; and Flaubert comments upon this:

A l'homme dans la souffrance tous ceux qui ne lui parlent pas de sa souffrance parlent une langue étrangère. Les yeux attachés sur un pavé, Henry entendait des mots se suivre, sans en chercher le sens, rêvant à sa douleur. (483)

Finally, when Morel has exhausted his own subject of conversation,

- Quoi de neuf? lui demanda-t-il
- Il y a une heure que je vous parle.
- De quoi?
- D'elle.
- De qui?
- Mais d'elle, de Madame Renaud
- Ah, c'est vrai! vous donnez dans la femme honnête!
En bien, qu'est-ce que nous en disons? Savez-vous que son petit bal était assez gentil? Les vins étaient bons, les domestiques servaient bien.

(482) L'Education Sentimentale (1845) in O.C. vol 1, p303
(483) ibid., p304
Even when the topic of conversation has been determined, there is still absence of communication, for the subject of Madame Renaud, so important to Henry, conjures up nothing more than banalities for Morel: she is seen on the same level as his other friends, and he makes no attempt to understand Henry's feelings.

The presentation of dialogue here is highly stylised: 'the meeting between the two is conceived of as a dramatic scene and the comic elements are exploited to the full by means of careful presentation which emphasises both the limited viewpoint of the characters and their 'raideur'. A similar situation is L'Education Sentimentale (1869) is treated in a different way. Frédéric wishes to find Madame Arnoux: his sole concern is his love for her:

Au coin de la rue Monmartre, il se retourna, il regarda les fenêtres du premier étage: et il rit intérieurement de pitié sur lui-même, en se rappelant avec quel amour il les avait si souvent contemplées! Où donc vivait-elle? Comment la rencontrer maintenant? La solitude se rouvrait autour de son désir plus immense que jamais!
- Venez-vous la prendre? dit Regimbart
- Prendre qui?
- L'absinthe!

Et, cédant à ses obsessions, Frédéric se laissa conduire à l'estaminet Bordelais. (484)

The key word here is 'obsession'. That each should attach a different meaning to the pronoun 'la' provides a simple but telling revelation of the individual's inability to think of anything other than that which most concerns him. Unlike the passage from the 1845 version of the novel,

(484) L'Education Sentimentale in U.C., vol II, p23
there is no authorised comment; yet the number of instances of non-
communication form a leit-motif in the novel.

The humour created from the inflexibility of Flaubert's characters is
increased as a result of the rigidity of the language they use. In

**Le Rire**, Bergson writes particularly of the humour of linguistic forms:

> Ce genre de raideur s'observe-t-il aussi dans le langage? Oui, sans doute, puisqu'il y a des formules toutes faites, et des phrases stéréotypées. Un personnage qui s'exprimerait toujours dans ce style serait invariablement comique. (485)

It is interesting to note that Bergson refers in this context to Monsieur Prudhomme, and, as we have already seen, certain of Flaubert's characters bear a resemblance to Monnier's creation. One of the most striking and comical uses of clichés in a conversation between the two characters is found in *Madame Bovary*, when Homais and Bournisien are keeping vigil over Emma's body. Here their respective positions with regard to the subject of death are established. The passage opens with a marvellous non-sequitur:

> Bien que philosophe, M. Homais respectait les morts. Aussi, sans garder rancune au pauvre Charles, il revint le soir pour faire la veillée du cadavre, apportant avec lui trois volumes et un portefeuille afin de prendre des notes. M. Bournisien s'y trouvait, et deux grands cierges brûlaient au chevet du lit, que l'on avait tiré hors de l'alcôve. (486)

The trappings of science are here opposed to the trappings of religion, and the subject of prayer is debated without either making concession to the other. Although they are interrupted briefly by Charles, their

(485) H. Bergson, op. cit., p440
(486) *Madame Bovary*, in D.C., vol I, p685
opposition to each other continues:

Charles une fois parti, le pharmacien et le curé recommencèrent leurs discussions.
- Lisez Voltaire! disait l'un; lisez d'Holbach, lisez l'Encyclopédie!
- Lisez les 'Lettres de Quelques Juifs Portugais'! disait l'autre; lisez 'La Raison du Christianisme' par Nicolas, ancien magistrat.

Ils s'échauffaient, ils étaient rouges, ils parlaient à la fois, sans s'écouter; Bournisien se scandalisait d'une telle audace, Homais s'émerveillait d'une telle bêtise, et ils n'étaient pas loin de s'adresser des injures quand Charles, tout à coup, reparut. (487)

The opposition between the two is rendered by means of the finely balanced language. The word 'discussion' is heavily ironic, and Flaubert satirises both figures by presenting them as caricatures, which results in a more comic exploitation of non-communication.

A similar technique is used in L'Education Sentimentale with the same satirical effect, and it is in this novel that Flaubert produces a real 'tour de force' of speech which is devoid of all communication. The passage in which the ironically-named 'Club de l'Intelligence' is described brings together characters whose speeches reveal their inability to adapt their 'ideas' to the new political situation which they are supposed to discuss. From the beginning Frédéric is aware that the speech he has carefully prepared will have little impact on his audience:

Il avait son discours dans sa poche, mais une improvisation eût mieux valu. (488)

The first speaker to put himself forward as an electoral candidate addresses the meeting with the expected clichés:

Le moment était venu d'inaugurer le règne de Dieu! L'Evangile conduisait tout droit à 1891.

(487) ibid., p686
(488) L'Education Sentimentale in O.C., vol II, p119
Après l'abolition de l'esclavage, l'abolition du prolétariat. On avait eu l'âge de haine, allait commencer l'âge d'amour.
- Le Christianisme est la clef de voûte et le fondement de l'édifice nouveau.

The clichés themselves are composed of well-used metaphors and the ensuing dialogue reveals an inability to distinguish between metaphor and reality:

Quelqu'un lui objecta qu'il allait loin.
- Oui je vais loin! Mais, quand un vaisseau est surpris par la tempête....

Sans attendre la fin de la comparaison, un autre lui répondit,
- D'accord! Mais c'est démolir d'un seul coup comme un maçon sans discernement.
- Vous insultez les maçons! hurla un citoyen couvert de plâtre.

Language here is self-generating. The candidates' inability to listen and even to try to understand results in an absence of discussion, and whatever meaning the words once held is lost. In the midst of the confusion, a further candidate appears initially to manipulate language to produce a desired effect, yet what he has to say is equally devoid of signification for the audience:

- Citoyens, dit alors Compain, citoyens!
 Et, à force de répéter 'Citoyens', ayant obtenu un peu de silence, il appuya sur la tribune ses deux mains rouges, pareille à des moignons, se porta le corps en avant et, clignant des yeux
- Je crois qu'il faudrait donner une plus large extension à la tête de veau!
Tous se taisaient, croyant avoir mal entendu.
- Oui, la tête de veau!
Trois cents rires éclatèrent d'un seul coup. (489)

'La tête de veau' means nothing to them, and Compain's annoyance in the middle of their hilarity also adds humour to the scene.

Pellerin's contribution is, predictably, to begin to talk about art, but he is soon succeeded by Delmar, whose leaning is towards the theatre. (490)
Neither Pellerin nor Delmar is capable of anything other than repeating the clichés they have already adopted. Sénécal's speech is equally predictable and his demands for universal suffrage are followed by a highly clichéd presentation of the struggle between rich and poor. The style of his speech is dogmatic and thus reinforces the parallel drawn in the novel between Left and Right.

The climax of the scene occurs after Frédéric's candidature has been rejected. His place on the stage is taken by a patriot from Barcelona, who is introduced by Regimbart:

Le patriote fit un grand salut, roula comme un automate ses yeux d'argent, et, la main sur le coeur,
- Ciudadanos, mucho aprecio el honor que me dispensais, y si grande es vuestra bondad mayor es vuestro atencion. (491)

Humour is here generated not only because he cannot be understood by the audience, but also because he has nothing to say about the matter in hand, and, in speaking of his own concerns, is identical to the other speakers:

Desde que se proclamo la constitucion de Cadiz, ese pacto fundamental de la libertades espanoles, hasta la ultima revolucion, nuestra patria cuenta numerosas y heroicos martires.... El martes proximo tendra lugar en la iglesia de la Magdalena un servicio funebre.

Frédéric's observation is accurate but unpopular:

- C'est absurde, à la fin, personne ne comprend!
Cette observation exaspeera la foule.
- À la porte, à la porte!

As Frédéric is thrown out, the Spaniard is allowed to continue his speech.

(491) ibid., p120
In this scene Flaubert exploits much of the comic potential of non-communication. On one level, the Spaniard is not understood because his linguistic code is different from that of his audience. But even when the code is the same, as in the case of the other speakers, communication does not necessarily take place: the audience is incapable of understanding Compain's hermetic message. The only level at which communication does take place is when clichés are used, and these signify an absence of thought, so that Frédéric's despairing exclamation about the absurdity of the meeting is the only valid response. The scene is highly comic, but the humour is typical of Flaubert: the 'Club de l'Intelligence' passage is a satire of the idea of progress through revolution, and it reinforces the impression that the individual's mode of expression implies an absence of reflexion and is therefore insufficient for any change or progress.

Such passages show the extent to which Flaubert subverts not only the conventions of literary speech, but also the acceptance of the possibility of communication between individuals on which such conventions are based. In his work, the conventions of speech are replaced by an awareness of its failure, and his characters' empty linguistic gestures reveal much about the nature of Flaubert's cynicism. Man is imprisoned in his own frame of reference: he can be inflexible to the degree that his intellectual capacity does not extend beyond the unquestioning adoption of clichés. For Flaubert, one definition of bourgeois intelligence is the ability to manipulate clichés with the purpose of bringing about one's own advancement, usually at the expense of others. Hence, although
man's inflexibility is a source of comedy in Flaubert's work, this
comediy is of a cynical kind, since the emptiness of language implies a
state of mental inertia. For many writers, speech in the novel is a
means by which human vitality is conveyed, but for Flaubert this is
not the case. One aspect of his originality is that speech betrays
human stupidity and often precludes the transfer of meaning from one
character to another.

If we understand the "false consciousness", and that of the knowledge which they
aspire to assimilate and employ, have only recently been considered
in the light of the treatment of language in the novel. It is
intention to explore the extent to which Flaubert's elision of the
significance of words underlies the meaning of the work. In considering
for instance, the presentation of the protagonists, it becomes clear
that their constant failures are less a reflection of their own lack
of ability to translate inner life into practice than a critique of the
values by which men seek to define their own situation through language, as approximations
of the world around him.

Joseph's discussion of critical attitudes towards the two protagonists
summarizes many of the implications of critical of Howard's theory: all
characters have been seen in turn as lacking in variability, as
assumptions of bourgeois stupidity; as following Humean's view, as

(493) Recent work on Bouvard et Pécuchet includes an article by
C. Berthelot, cited above, and a collection of essays by various
artists under the title "La Nouvelle lecture de Flaubert et de
New York 1943.
Chapter V: 'Bouvard et Pécuchet'

To throw new light on Bouvard et Pécuchet may seem, initially, to be a hazardous undertaking in view of the research already carried out into both the genesis and import of the novel. Surprisingly, however, the fundamental areas of discussion, that of the author's attitude towards the 'deux bonshommes', and that of the knowledge which they attempt to assimilate and employ, have only recently been considered in the light of the treatment of language in the novel. It is my intention to explore the extent to which Flaubert's mistrust of the significance of words underlies the meaning of the work. In considering, for instance, the presentation of the protagonists, it becomes clear that their constant failures are less a reflection of their own lack of ability to translate theory into practice than a critique of the means by which man seeks to systematize, through language, his apprehension of the world around him.

Digeon's discussion of critical attitudes towards the two protagonists summarises many of the commonplaces of criticism of Bouvard et Pécuchet. The characters have been seen in turn as lacking in verisimilitude: as incarnations of bourgeois stupidity; or following Maupassant's view, as


lucid but lacking in method. For Dumesnil, Ils personnifient aussi l'homme moderne, arrivant dans la vie avec des facultés à peu près semblables à celles de ses premiers ancêtres et se trouvant en présence de l'infinité des idées philosophiques, morales, littéraires et scientifiques élaborée par dix-huit siècles de notre civilisation. (495)

Bernheimer's view is that the protagonists are not to be regarded as typical of characters in a realist novel: focusing attention on the way in which Flaubert presents them in the early stages of the work, he shows that they essentially reflect the structures of language:

From the moment of their introduction the clerks are deliberately presented as the product of specifically linguistic activity. The carefully devised grammatical parallelism of the sentences describing their appearance and actions make us aware that the verbal medium is actively creating a reality which has more to do with its own ability to balance phrases and syntactic structures than it does with the way things occur in the real world. (496)

Their activity, like that of Flaubert's other idealists, is inspired primarily by words:

D'après de certains noms ils imaginaient des pays d'autant plus beaux qu'ils n'en pouvaient rien préciser. Les ouvrages dont les titres étaient pour eux inintelligibles leur semblaient contenir un mystère. (497)

(494) Guy de Maupassant: op. cit., p104: 'Le livre est donc une revue de toutes les sciences, telles qu'elles apparaissent à deux esprits assez lucides, médiocres et simples'.
(496) C. Bernheimer: op. cit., p147-8
(497) Bouvard et Pécuchet, in O.C., Vol II, p204
Language itself stimulates their reflection: their fascination with words for their own sake is fundamental not only to Flaubert's conception of the second part of the novel, but also to his presentation of the first. The decision to retreat into the countryside depends not on any knowledge of life in a different environment, but simply on the word 'la campagne'. In this respect they resemble those of Flaubert's characters who are inclined to 'prendre des conceptions pour des réalités':

Enfin, ils veulent une campagne qui soit bien la campagne, pas d'eau, pas de vue, pas de bois, - rien que des champs (498)

They inhabit a mental world and may be clearly distinguished from Flaubert's 'bourgeois' characters by the fact that they do not seek primarily to employ language to further their own interests. (499) Fundamental to their thirst for knowledge is a quixotic desire to be part of the world of words:

Quelquefois Pécuchet tirait de sa poche son manuel; et il en étudiait un paragraphe, debout, avec sa bêche auprès de lui, dans la pose du jardinier qui décorait le frontispice du livre. Cette ressemblance le flatte même beaucoup. (500)

Experience is thus related back to the literature which for Bouvard and Pécuchet regulates it, and knowledge, for them, is seen in terms of words


(499) It is true that they wish to perpetuate themselves by means of language: in an early sketch:

leur rêve est de faire parti de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie, - de lire un mémoire dans un congrès (Cento, p189)

but this is not treated by Flaubert with the same degree of irony as Thompson's inscription on Pompey's column or Homais' writing of scientific literature.

(500) Bouvard et Pécuchet, in O.C., Vol II, p214
themselves, rather than what the words represent:

Pécuchet se serait cru déshonoré s'il avait dit, Charlemagne, et non Karl le Grand, Clovis au lieu de Clodowig. (501)

Moreover, notes for the section on medicine reveal that

pendant la phase médicale, ils appliquent à tout propos des mots scientifiques. Amènent les conversations sur les sujets. (502)

The attempt to assimilate ideas does not take the form of a deepening of awareness, but rather the adoption of an appropriate code. It becomes clear that

chaque étude différente donne un chic différent. (503)

The same may be said of Homais: one is led to wonder if Flaubert omitted these details as a result of his growing sympathy for characters whom he did not wish to portray as bourgeois.

For Bouvard and Pécuchet, language is less a tool for the expression of reality than a framework into which reality must be fitted. A passage from the 'Scénarios' deals with their approach to the study of history:

'idée d'ouvrages qu'ils veulent écrire.
'Si nous faisions une histoire de tous les hommes célèbres qui se sont appelés Lefèvre - écrire aux maires des différentes communes pour avoir des détails sur les Lefèvre - ou Lefebure qui peuvent se trouver dans leur pays.' (504)

Knowledge here is structured totally by language. The unity of such a work derives solely from the name Lefèvre.

(501) ibid., p238
(502) Bouvard et Pécuchet, ed. Cento, p50
(503) Quoted by D. Demorest, in A travers les plans, manuscrits et dossiers de Bouvard et Pécuchet, Paris, Conard, 1931, p59
(504) Bouvard et Pécuchet, ed. Cento, p155
As Bernheimer has indicated, the attempt on the part of the two clerks to make sense of reality is doomed to failure partly because they are not creative enough to employ language to impose order on reality; they cannot dominate experience; instead their reverential attitude towards language means that for them, as for Emma Bovary and Salammbô, the world which words are supposed to represent is unknowable. For Emma, the clichés of Romantic literature provide the attraction; Salammbô continually tests her experience against the symbols offered by the eunuch Schahabarim; Bouvard and Pécuchet are tempted by the language of science because this too is a carefully structured system of clear definitions and formulae which seems to bring a certain satisfaction to those who are willing to accept it unquestioningly.

The extent of the failures of Bouvard and Pécuchet has already been the subject of much critical discussion. It could be said that their misinterpretation and, at best, uncritical acceptance of what they read, compounds a complete lack of understanding of the world about them and of the phenomena they seek to comprehend: but to draw such a conclusion would be to imply that with two different characters, more willing to adopt an analytical approach, scientific terminology would provide a perfectly adequate way of coming to terms with reality. To suggest this would be not only to ignore much of the treatment of science in the novel, but also to dismiss what has already been argued about the novelist's view of the deceptive nature of language.

(505) C. Bernheimer, op. cit. p146
If, in earlier works, the language of Romanticism and that of political dogmatism have been exposed as hollow and absurd, it may be erroneous to assume that Flaubert's attitude towards the language of science should be any different. It is my view that, in Bouvard et Pécuchet, Flaubert deliberately uses the two main characters, with their lack of discernment, their defective judgement and their naive fascination with words for their own sake, to underline his belief in the absurdity of epistemological conceptualisation.

It has been suggested, by J. Lyons, that the ideal language would be a perfectly constructed logical system in which the phenomena of external reality were in a one-to-one relationship with the signs used to express them. Whilst such an ideal can never be fulfilled by a language which has developed naturally, it might appear initially that the languages of the sciences, often specially created, with their rigid systems of definitions and classifications, would be closer to the ideal. This was widely accepted in the eighteenth century. In his theoretical writings, Lavoisier accords a special place to the question of nomenclature. Recognising the debt he owes to Condillac in his assertion that ideas and words are inseparable, he writes in the Discours Préliminaire to

the *Traité Elémentaire de Chimie* (1789) that

*L'absurdité d'isoler la nomenclature de la science et la science de la nomenclature tient à ce que toute science physique est nécessairement formée de trois choses: la série des faits qui constituent la science; les idées qui les rappellent; les mots qui les expriment.* (507)

More important, however, is his belief that language plays a vital part in the development of knowledge:

*Les langues n'ont pas seulement pour objet, comme on le croit communément, d'exprimer par des signes, des idées et des images. Ce sont, de plus, de véritables méthodes analytiques, à l'aide desquelles nous procédons du connu à l'inconnu.* (508)

If scientific progress is to be achieved, 'une langue bien faite' is necessary. The role of nomenclature has been well summarised by Descharmes:

*Si la nomenclature semble, à première vue, n'être pas toujours la partie la plus séduisante de la science..... en tout cas elle est partout dans toutes les branches, indispensable, étant donné la complexité des phénomènes et le nombre infini des individus à étudier, il n'y aurait pas de sciences naturelles possibles sans une nomenclature nettement et dûment établie.* (509)

Yet for Flaubert, the absurdity behind the apparent clarity of terminology is always evident. The futility of trying to define and express one's own perceptions and experiences by means of a set of linguistic signs pervades Flaubert's work and is seen as an aspect of the desire to form


(508) Lavoisier: *Mémoire sur la nécessité de réformer et de perfectionner la nomenclature de la Chimie*, (1787); in *Oeuvres*, ed. cit., vol V, p356

conclusions. This is nowhere better expressed by the novelist than in

Bouvard et Pécuchet, where the protagonists attempt to study the weather:

Pour se connaître aux signes du temps ils étudièrent les nuages d'après la classification de Luke-Howard. Ils contemplaient ceux qui s'allongent comme des crinières, ceux qui ressemblent à des îles, ceux qu'on prendrait pour des montagnes de neige, tâchant de distinguer les nimbus des cirrus, les stratus des cumulus; les formes changeaient avant qu'ils eussent trouvé les noms. (510)

Reality is, above all, transient, and cannot be fixed by language; the words used are simply abstractions, and it is their essentially abstract nature which Flaubert seeks to emphasise.

The gap between language and the external world is further explored by Flaubert's exposure of the constant inadequacy of definitions, which provides one of the leit-motifs of the novel. Any definition has two functions which are interdependent: to explain the essential nature of a phenomenon and thereby to determine its limits and fix it. Definitions are to specialized knowledge what words are to everyday experience; they differ from words in that their signification is a construct; it has not developed naturally. A definition should, therefore, be particularly precise in that it is created with a specific function of signification and its proper place is in the type of ideal language which would be one in which each form had only one meaning and each meaning was associated with only one form. In Bouvard et Pécuchet it becomes clear that Flaubert's aim is to demonstrate that the artificially created

(510) Bouvard et Pécuchet, in O.C. vol II, p212
languages of knowledge fail to attain that ideal, and that they are fundamentally no different from any other language in their failure to represent the phenomena of the external world.

It could, of course, be argued that the languages of science are only effective if they are intelligently used, and that Bouvard and Pécuchet's appreciation of certain terms shows a singular lack of judgement. In the study of geology, for example, they are unable to penetrate beyond terminology:

Et puis la nomenclature les irritait. Pourquoi devonien, cambrien, jurassique, comme si les terres désignées par ces mots n'étaient pas ailleurs qu'en Devonshire, près de Cambridge et dans le Jura. Impossible de s'y reconnaître. (510)

Language is both self-reflexive and enclosed and one area of study does nothing to illuminate another. The use of etymology to investigate problems of geology is clearly absurd. Subsequently in the passage Flaubert points characteristically to one geologist's view of the emptiness of terminology: definitions not universally accepted, are not exhaustive, and are therefore inadequate:

Ce qui est système pour l'un est pour l'autre un étage, pour un troisième une simple assise. Les feuillets des couches s'entremêlent, s'embrasent; mais Omalius d'Halloy vous prévient qu'il ne faut pas croire aux divisions géologiques.

Yet if, on this occasion, it is Bouvard and Pécuchet themselves who are incapable of acquiring knowledge, it is also the case that definitions are inadequate. The study of Chemistry brings them face to face with

(510) ibid., p229. Note also the inaccurate etymology: 'Cambrien' does not, of course, derive from Cambridge.
incongruities within the symbolic system employed to describe the phenomena studied by chemists:

Pour savoir la chimie ils se procurèrent le cours de Regnault et apprirent d’abord que les corps simples sont peut-être composés.

On les distingue en métalloïdes et en métaux - différence qui n’a rien d’absolu, dit l’auteur. De même pour les acides et les bases, un corps pouvant se comporter à la manière des acides ou des bases, selon les circonstances". (511)

Distinctions in the language of medicine are no clearer:

Ils lisaient les ordonnances de leurs médecins, et étaient fort surpris que les calmants soient parfois des excitants, les vomitifs des purgatifs, qu’un même remède convienne à des affections diverses, et qu’une maladie s’en aille sous des traitements opposés. (512)

Words simply generate words; and even those whom one might expect to be initiated into the various linguistic systems fail to throw any light on the problems passed:

Ils rêvaient sur l’archée de Van Helmont, le vitalisme, le Brownisme, l’organicisme; demandaient au docteur d’où vient le germe de la scrofula, vers quel endroit se porte le miasme contagieux, et le moyen, dans tous les cas morbides, de distinguer la cause de ses effets. "La cause et l’effet s’embrouillent" répondait Vaucorbeil. (513)

Knowledge does not grow. The doctor provides no way of relating language to reality: his reply simply obscures the matter further and suggests that reality defies description.

They evince a more critical attitude to language later in the novel, when aesthetics is the object of study. But it is no more productive

(511) ibid., p219
(512) ibid., p223
(513) ibid., p223
of meaning:

Ils abordèrent la question du sublime....
'Je comprends, dit Bouvard, le Beau est le Beau, et le sublime le très Beau. Comment les distinguer?
'Au moyen du tact! répondit Pécuchet.
- Et le tact, d'où vient-il?
- Du goût
- Qu'est-ce que le goût?

On le définit, un discernement spécial, un jugement rapide, l'avantage de distinguer certains rapports.
'Enfin, le goût, c'est le goût, et tout cela ne dit pas la manière d'en avoir. (514)

The protagonists expect language to generate reality, whereas, although they seek to define what they are discussing, they are unable to relate words to experience; the two are of a separate order entirely.

In moments of lucidity the clerks, unlike the characters of Flaubert's earlier work, appear to become aware that language is problematic, an obstacle to knowledge, and that reality cannot be defined. Whilst studying medicine, they lament:

Les ressorts de la vie nous sont cachés, les affections trop nombreuses, les remèdes problématiques, et on ne découvre dans les auteurs aucune définition raisonnable de la santé, de la maladie, de la diathèse, ni même du pus. (515)

The point is emphasised when they come to study logic:

Elle (la logique) leur apprit ce qu'est l'analyse, la synthèse, l'induction, la déduction et les causes principales de nos erreurs.
Presque toutes viennent du mauvais emploi des mots. (516)

(514) ibid., p248
(515) ibid., p224
(516) ibid., p271
They realise that language lacks signification:

On explique ce qu'on entend fort peu au moyen de mots qu'on n'entend pas du tout! Substance, étendue, force, matière et âme. Autant d'abstractions, d'impressions. (517)

Yet even when they appear to be aware of this, it is language itself, rather than what language is employed to express, which continues to attract them. Language used logically is self-generating to the point of absurdity, for Logic ignores the conventionality of language in its search for precision; hence Bouvard and Pécuchet's speech is devoid of meaning:

Comme le terme qui désigne un accident ne l'embrasse pas dans tous ses modes, ils tâchent de n'employer que des mots abstraits, si bien qu'au lieu de dire 'faisons un tour', - 'il est temps de dîner', - 'j'ai la colique', ils émettaient ces phrases: 'une promenade serait salutaire' - 'voici l'heure d'absorber les aliments', - 'j'éprouve un besoin d'exonération.' (518)

The sacrifice of meaning to language for its own sake is fundamental to Flaubert's conception of the clerk's experience of language in the novel, and closely prefigures the stance of the two protagonists in the second part of the work.

Knowledge, then, is impossible for Bouvard and Pécuchet for two reasons: their own lack of judgement and discrimination, often resulting from a total inability to comprehend what they have read; and language itself, abstract, obscure and self-generating, which prevents the individual's comprehension of the world around him and which encloses him in a world

(517) ibid., p274
(518) ibid., p271-2
of words. From the emphasis Flaubert lays on the fallibility of language in the novel, it becomes clear that Bouvard et Pécuchet is not simply a satire of two inept figures in search of knowledge, nor is it a critique of different aspects of pseudoscientific activity in the nineteenth century. It could in fact be argued that the character's ineptitude only serves to highlight 'le défaut de méthode dans les sciences' and that the subtitle employed by Flaubert refers not to the protagonists' naive approach to acquiring knowledge, but to epistemology itself which, lacking all significance and coherence, is demonstrated by the novelist to be nothing other than words, with all the deceptions and limitations this implies.

In an early sketch, Flaubert wrote of the two clerks that

Ils opèrent par principes. (519)

and the presentation of scientific theory as a series of principles gives the novelist the opportunity of suggesting that science is divorced from the reality which it is intended to analyse and describe. By various techniques which constitute what Duchet calls the 'désécriture' of scientific literature (520) Flaubert undermines the authority of theorists and reduces science to 'des notions sans suite ni profondeur', (521) an

(519) Bouvard et Pécuchet; ed. Cento, p226
(521) Bouvard et Pécuchet, ed. Cento, p415
autonomous system of linguistic signs which may be repeated as clichés but which fail to further man's understanding of the world in which he lives.

The clarity which characterizes scientific discourse is parodied. A passage on dieting is typical of the way in which the language of science is treated in the novel:

Toutes les viandes ont des inconvénients.
Le boudin et la charcuterie, le hareng saur,
le homard et le gibier sont 'réfractaires'.
Plus un poisson est gros plus il contient du gélatine, et, par conséquent, est lourd. Les légumes causent des aigreurs, le macaroni donne des rêves, les fromages 'considérés généralement, sont d'une digestion difficile,' Un verre d'eau le matin est dangereux. (522)

The various ideas are listed to give an impression of the utmost clarity, and the use of quotation implies the authority of such ideas. Yet the links between them are suppressed; each idea is isolated so that the passage lacks logical coherence; ideas are not structured, ordered or analysed: They simply exist.

Moreover, the total effect is heightened by the presentation of ideas in isolation from the reasoning which produced them:

Il existe plusieurs sortes de Beau: un beau dans les sciences, la géométrie est belle;
un beau dans les mœurs, on ne peut nier que la mort de Socrate ne soit belle. Un beau dans le règne animal. La beauté du chien consiste dans son odorat. Un cochon ne saurait être beau, vu ses habitudes immondes.

Enfin, la condition première du Beau, c'est l'unité dans la variété, voilà le principe. (523)

(522) Bouvard et Pécuchet, in O.C., vol II, p225
(523) ibid., p248
The diversity of views, deriving from the absence of a single point of view, puts the final generalisation in an ironic focus. The origin of individual ideas is often indeterminate. Even apparent quotations cannot be attributed to a source. When studying archeology, the clerks' attention is directed to Normandy. Their interest is stimulated by the discovery of a vessel, which, however, they must prevent Larsonneur from seeing:

Quand il passerait par Chavignolles, il aurait envie de la cuve, et ses bavardages iraient jusqu'aux oreilles du gouvernement. Par prudence, ils la cachèrent dans le fournil....

La possession d'un tel morceau les attachait au celticisme de la Normandie.

Ses origines sont égyptiennes. Séez, dans le département de l'Orne, s'écrivit parfois Sais, comme la ville du Delta. Les Gaulois juraient par le taureau, importation du bœuf Apis. Le nom latin de Bellocastis, qui était celui des gens de Bayeux, vient de Belli Casa, demeure, sanctuaire de Bélus. Bélus et Osiris, même divinité. "Rien ne s'oppose, dit Margou de la Londe, à ce qu'il y ait eu, près de Bayeux, des monuments druidiques." - "Ce pays, ajoute M. Roussel, ressemble au pays où les Égyptiens bâtirent le temple de Jupiter Ammon". Donc il y avait un temple, et qui enfermait des richesses. Tous les monuments celtiques en renferment. (524)

Through the use of 'style indirect libre', the ideas assimilated by Bouvard and Pécuchet are invested with the status of fact; their status is therefore different from that of the opinions of Mangou de la Londe and M. Roussel, which are separated from the rest of the paragraphs by the use of quotation marks. It is difficult to know to whom the final conclusion, drawn from Roussel's statement, should be attributed - clearly not to Roussel, as this is no longer quotation. The generalisation is presented as a fact, yet the illogicality of such an assumption, based

(524) ibid., p237
on two totally unrelated hypotheses, shows that Flaubert is clearly parodying the literature of archaeology.

Elsewhere, Flaubert assimilates into the novel the impersonal tone of scientific discourse, notably the use of 'on' which invests theory with authority. (525) According to the chemist Regnault's theory

'Les corps simples sont peut-être composés!
On les distingue en métalloïdes et en métaux, -
différence qui n'a 'rien d'absolu' dit l'auteur. (526)

Here the authority of 'on' is juxtaposed with the authority of Regnault, and the pointlessness of the terminology employed is revealed. The hypotheses of medicine are presented in the same way:

Les symptômes notés par les auteurs n'étaient pas ceux qu'ils venaient de voir. Quant aux noms des maladies, du latin, du grec, du français, une bigarrure de toutes les langues.
On les compte par milliers, et la classification linéenne est bien commode, avec ses genres et ses espèces......

Yet the notion of classification is undermined:

..... Comment établir les espèces? (527)

The impersonal style adopted by scientific literature is satirized through Bouvard and Pécuchet's use of the type of discourse employed in the books they read. Discussing history

Pécuchet reprit "on classe, dans les martyrs, beaucoup d'évêques gaulois, tués en résistant aux Barbares." (528)

(526) Bouvard et Pécuchet in O.C., vol II, p219
(527) ibid., p223
(528) ibid., p283
In the same way Bouvard émit des idées drôles sur l'instruction primaire. On devrait, en sortant de l'école, pouvoir soigner les malades, comprendre les découvertes scientifiques, s'intéresser aux arts. (529)

The passage is notable for its juxtaposition of disparate theories reiterated as facts. Indeed, as Herschberg-Pierrot has indicated, such an assimilation of 'knowledge' perfectly reflects not the development of ideas but rather the origin of clichés: (530) Bouvard et Pécuchet shows the way in which notions are taken from books without reflection or judgement on the part of the reader, accepted as truths, and used as models for reality. It is precisely because of the gap between experience and the 'idées reçues' of scientific methodology that their investigation into psychology fails:

Ils achetaient le Cours de Philosophie, à l'usage des classes, de M. Guesnier....

Le but de la psychologie est d'étudier les faits qui se passent 'au sein du moi'; on les découvre en observant.

"Observons!" Et pendant quinze jours, après le déjeuner habituellement, ils cherchaient dans leur conscience, au hasard, espérant y faire de grandes découvertes, et n'en firent aucune, ce qui les étonna beaucoup. (531)

Flaubert's use of his protagonists' viewpoint also means that no evaluation of scientific theories can be made. A viewpoint lacking both judgement and analytic reasoning results in the equivalence of hypotheses. Hence, as Bernheimer has shown, no distinction is made between the works of Cuvier and Bertrand: (532) two sets of theories differing in both approach and value are reduced to the same level; accepted uncritically.

(529) ibid., p298
(530) A. Herschberg-Pierrot; op. cit.
(531) Bouvard et Pécuchet, in O.C. vol II, p271
(532) C. Bernheimer, op. cit., p154
neither is tested against the realities they were intended to describe.

Scientific literature is thus presented as an autonomous discourse, and integrated as such into the narrative. Science does not illuminate reality in the novel; instead, it becomes part of fiction. It is employed, for example in the portrayal of the 'deux bonshommes':

Ils s'élèverent à des considérations sur l'origine du monde. Bouvard penchait vers le neptunisme; Péchuchet, au contraire, était Plutonien. (533)

The novelist does not explore the ideas put forward; indeed he deliberately suggests that there is no logic behind the choice of theories by each character; what is important is the juxtaposition of 'idées reçues', which Flaubert employs in his presentation of the protagonists.

Elsewhere, theories are reduced to banality as Flaubert incorporates them into meaningless dialogues between the characters. In the passage which treats economics, for example, the various ideas are presented in an unsystematic way and are followed not by analysis or discussion which might uncover the arguments underlying them, but by a childish quarrel:

Louis Blanc, dans l'intérêt des ouvriers, veut qu'on aboîisse le commerce extérieur; Lafarelle, qu'on impose les machines; un autre qu'on dégrève les boissons, ou qu'on refasse les jurandes, ou qu'on distribue les soupes. Proudhon imagine un tarif uniforme, et réclame pour l'État le monopole du sucre. (534)

Whole systems are represented in insignificant details; and the process of reduction follows its course through Bouvard and Péchuchet's reactions

(533) Bouvard et Péchuchet, in O.C., vol II, p229
(534) ibid., p257
to each other's ideas:

Tes socialistes, disait Bouvard, demandent toujours la tyrannie.
- Mais non!
- Si fait!
- Tu es absurde!
- Toi, tu me révoltes!

The passage describing their failure to create new species operates on two of the levels already discussed:

Ils renouvelèrent leurs tentatives sur des poules et un canard, sur un dogue et une truie, avec l'espoir qu'il en sortirait des monstres, ne comprenant rien à la question de l'espèce.

Ce mot désigne un groupe d'individus dont les descendants se reproduisent; mais des animaux classés comme d'espèces différentes peuvent se reproduire, et d'autres, compris dans la même, en ont perdu la faculté. (535)

The first paragraph invites the reader to attribute the failure to Bouvard and Pécuchet's inability to understand the theory behind what they are doing; the second paragraph, pointing out the absurdity of the term 'espèce', implies that such comprehension would in any case be impossible. The two ideas are juxtaposed with no discussion or explanation.

The characters' stupidity is compounded by the absurdity behind their undertaking. Knowledge itself is impossible. In Duchet's words,

La déconstruction s'opère au niveau épistémologique; c'est la totalité d'une discipline qui est désarticulée par les opérations de mise en texte. (536)

This division between reality and fiction is obliterated. On occasions when reality is perceived, Flaubert registers the surprise it causes:

Ce qui les ébahit par-dessus tout, c'est que la terre, comme élément, n'existe pas. (537)

(535) ibid., p226
(536) C. Duchet: 'Écriture et désécritive......', p125
(537) Bouvard et Pécuchet in O.C., vol II, p219
Quelle merveille de trouver chez les êtres vivants les mêmes substances qui composent les minéraux. Néanmoins, ils éprouvaient une sorte d’humiliation à l’idée que leur individu contenait du phosphère comme les allumettes. (538)

The reader's sense of the emptiness of what they read is heightened by the naivety of the characters' reactions: once again the means by which abstract ideas are assimilated into the novel and the point of view from which they are seen allow the author to undermine them. Words conceal a void, and instead of allowing man to penetrate the mysteries of reality, contribute to his constant failure to do so.

Flaubert further emphasises his ironic view of the scientist's desire to create a language of perfect clarity and logic by his increasing use of a language in which words and meanings are dislocated. For in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, more than in Flaubert's earlier works, language ceases to fulfil the functions of establishing reality and communicating it to others. The materiality of phenomena is emphasized by the proliferation of objects - rocks, furniture and pottery, to name just a few of the things collected by the 'deux bonshommes' - and a parallel may be found in the presentation of language as an autonomous and often meaningless set of sounds. In the section which deals with mnemonics,

(538) *ibid.*, p219
for example, words are important because of their sound:

Paris frappe l'imagination au moyen des rébus; un fauteuil garni de clous à vis donnera 'Clou, vis' - Clovis; et comme le bruit de la friture fait 'ric, ric' des merlans dans un poêle rappelleront Chilpéric. (539)

For the method to work, the normal association between words and things must be suppressed. Disembodied from meaning, language also becomes a gesture to accompany physical exercise:

'A nous l'animal timide!
Atteignons le cerf rapide!
Oui! nous vaincrons!
Courons! Courons! Courons!

Et plus haletants que des chiens ils s'animaient au bruit de leurs voix. (540)

Perhaps the most striking passage, and one in which the absurdity of language is revealed to the full, occurs when they construct their ornamental garden:

Bouvard, qui était sur le perron, cria de loin:
'Ici! on voit mieux!'
-Voit mieux' fut répété dans l'air.
Pécuchet répondit
- J'y vais!
- Y vais!
- Tiens, un écho!
- Écho! (541)

Their interest in this phenomenon shows the extent of their fascination with language itself:

Pour essayer l'écho, ils s'amusèrent à lancer des mots plaisants; Bouvard en hurla de polissons, d'obsèques.

Yet the echo appears to take on a life of its own when guests are invited to admire it:

Quand on fut sorti de la charmille, Bouvard, pour étonner son monde avec l'écho, cria de toutes ses forces:

(539) ibid., p240
(540) ibid., p263
(541) ibid., p215
"Serviteur! mesdames!"
Rien! pas d'écho. Cela tenait à des réparations faites à la grange, le pignon et la toiture étant démolis. (542)

Language is, in these cases, neither an instrument of perception nor a means of communication. It exists – or, in the case of the echo, fails to exist – for itself, dislocated from meaning and from human intentionality. Hence the 'système ontologique de la voix' implied by the impersonal presentation of scientific discourse is reinforced by the suggestion that language is meaningless.

The treatment of language in the first part of the novel raises the question of Flaubert's attitude towards the contemporary notion of progress. For Renan, the scientific study of language serves to reinforce the idea that man is moving ceaselessly towards a state of perfection:

Le progrès analytique de la pensée eût-il été scientifiquement reconnu si les langues ne nous eussent montré, comme dans un miroir, l'esprit humain marchant sans cesse de la synthèse ou de la complexité primitive à l'analyse et à la clarté? (544)

For Flaubert, on the other hand, the idea of progress is called into question not only by the content and organisation of the first part of Bouvard et Pécuchet, but also by the projected second part of the novel and its relation to the first part.

(542) ibid., p217
(544) É. Renan: L'Avenir de la Science: ed. cit., vol III, p942
Although, after installing themselves at Chavignolles, the protagonists move rapidly from one area of study to another, Digeon's claim that no profound causality links the chapters is quite accurate, and rightly suggests the futility of discussing the work in terms of its verisimilitude. What is interesting, however, is that at crucial points in the novel, a transition is made from one subject to another because the two protagonists become aware of their lack of knowledge in one field and because their optimism leads them to believe that their understanding can be completed by studying another discipline. At the end of the second chapter, for example, the attempt to create 'Bouvarine' leads to an explosion:

Quand ils purent recouvrir la parole, ils se demandèrent quelle était la cause de tant d'infortunes, de la dernière surtout? et ils n'y comprenaient rien, sinon qu'ils avaient manqué périr. Pécuchet termina par ces mots: 'C'est que, peut-être, nous ne savons pas la chimie'.

The failure of the study of history is similarly attributed by the protagonists to a lack of knowledge:

Ils conclurent que les faits extérieurs ne sont pas tout. Il faut les compléter par la psychologie. Sans l'imagination, l'histoire est défectueuse - 'Faisons venir quelques romans historiques'.

(545) C. Digeon: op. cit. p141
(546) Bouvard et Pécuchet in O.C., vol II, p219
(547) ibid., p243
The movement of the novel, then, parodies progress towards a completeness of knowledge which, because of both the ineptitudes of the protagonists and the failure of the language in which knowledge is couched, can never be reached. Each section ends in frustration and failure and, in the face of language which persistently proves deceptive, only one solution remains at the end of the novel: 'copier'. Progress is therefore replaced by regression. Although Greene has argued that Bouvard and Pécuchet do progress, in that their recognition of the interdependence of areas of study inspires them to reach beyond the intellectual sterility of the Chavignollais, the novel is undoubtedly intended to be circular, and through the use of form Flaubert conveys to the reader his comment on the belief that scientific activity is inseparable from progress.

This is reinforced by the implications of the second part of the novel. Critical discussion of the second volume has focussed largely on the subject of what was to be copied by the protagonists; of equal or greater importance is the very act of copying. For copying implies a completely different attitude towards language from that suggested by the activities of the first part of the novel. There, it was taken for granted by the protagonists that language would provide a means of penetrating the world around them, and of increasing their comprehension and knowledge. The second part, however, develops a tendency which we have shown was previously apparent: their fascination with language has become a slavery: language itself has become the sole object of existence:

(548) J. Greene: 'Structure et épistémologie dans 'Bouvard et Pécuchet'' in Nouvelles Recherches sur 'Bouvard et Pécuchet' de Flaubert, pp.117-128
what is stressed is the
plaisir qu'il y a dans l'acte matériel de
recopier. (549)

For this very reason, discussion of what was to have been included in
the second volume is arguably of secondary importance. For literally
anything is worth copying:

Ils copient au hasard tout ce qu'ils trouvent...
cornets de tabac, vieux journaux, affiches, livres
déchirés etc. (550)

..... aux environs se trouve une fabrique de papier
en faillite, et là ils achètent de vieux papiers. (551)

At times, they are tempted by the desire to 'know', for knowledge would
allow them to at least classify what they copy: yet their role is well-
defined:

Puis éprouvent le besoin d'un classement. Ils
font des tableaux, des parallèles antithétiques
comme 'crimes des rois' et 'crimes des peuples',
'beinfaits de la religion', 'crimes de la religion' -
'Beautés de l'histoire etc. Mais quelquefois ils
sont embarrassés de ranger la chose à sa place....

pas de réflexions! Copions tout de même. Il
faut que la page s'emplisse - égalité de tout, du
bien et du mal..... du Beau et du Laid.... il
n'y a que des faits, - des phénomènes. (552)

There is an obvious link here with the activities of the first part of
the novel, which is sufficient to indicate that the relationship between
the two parts would have been very close. But in this second part, the
point of ultimate absurdity is reached; through the act of copying, they
become aware of the contingency of phenomena: language which, ideally,
would be perfect for the expression of knowledge, serves only to under-
line its absurdity. Perhaps it was for this reason that Flaubert intended
to make the protagonists copy the Dictionnaire des Idées Reçues. For the

(549) Bouvard et Pécuchet, ed. Cento, p124
(550) ibid., p14
(551) ibid., p115
(552) ibid., p14
ideas presented, in the form of a dictionary, provide the very opposite of knowledge: to cite Culler,

The definitions do not present a coherent view of the world. The particular meanings do not exhaust an object or concept - they present a limited view of reality. (553)

Other aspects of the 'scénarios' for the novel allow us to deduce more about the relationship between the first and second parts. For among the things to be copied are books in which Bouvard and Pécuchet initially placed so much naive faith. Their attitude towards these books serves to emphasise what has been said about language and knowledge.

Ils copièrent.... tout ce qui leur tomba sous la main.... longue énumération.... les notes des auteurs précédemment lus.(554)

Copying provides a perfect alternative to the problems caused by the desire to find meaning:

Mais comme souvent deux textes de la même classe qu'ils ont copiés auparavant se contrarient, ils les recopient l'un au bout de l'autre sur le même registre. (555)

Knowledge and judgement are irrelevant: instead there is a proliferation of language. In a world of technological progress, the more theories there are, the more sifting and analysis has to be done; for the protagonists of Bouvard et Pécuchet, however, a multiplicity of ideas simply results in the covering of more paper.

Moreover in the second part of the novel, the 'deux bonshommes' come

(553) J. Culler: op. cit., p159
(555) Bouvard et Pécuchet, ed. Cento, p115
across a letter which refers to their previous activities:

Un jour, ils trouvent par hasard le brouillon d'une lettre écrite par le médecin. Le préfet lui avait demandé si Bouvard et Pécuchet n'étaient pas des fous dangereux.
La lettre est une espèce de rapport confidentiel expliquant que leur manie est douce et que ce sont deux imbéciles inoffensifs. Elle résume et juge Bouvard et Pécuchet et doit rappeler au lecteur toute l'œuvre.
- qu'Allons nous en faire? Le copier, parbleu, - Oui! copions, et ils copient.
Finir par la vue des deux bonshommes penchés sur leur pupitre et copiant. (556)

The novel thus reproduces itself: the protagonists' past experience becomes part of 'leur copie'; life becomes fiction. This paragraph gives a clear indication of the internal cohesion of the work and of the implications of its circularity. Although in the earlier works there are hints of the unchanging and unchangeable nature of human existence, these are not fully developed through the structure of the novels. For in Madame Bovary and Salammbo death comes at a point where life cannot be lived according to language; in L'Education Sentimentale, Frédéric is left just talking about existence, retrospectively; existence cannot survive the dislocation between reality and language. In Bouvard et Pécuchet, however, language becomes the ultimate aim and avoidance of existence, and experience is replaced by the endless process of copying.

(556) ibid., p116
Chapter VI : Silence

In the same way as speech in literature operates according to certain unwritten laws, the silence which often punctuates it is also governed by conventions. Writing about Harold Pinter's drama, Martin Esslin remarks on the 'complete contradiction between the words that are spoken and the emotional and psychological action that underlies them'(557) and his implication that there exists a profundity of feeling which is never fully stated in speech is a valuable point of departure for a discussion of the novelist's use of silence. Silence, often coincidental with an emotional climax in the narrative, tends to convey an intensity of feeling which lies beyond normal prosaic expression.

Culler, in his work on Flaubert, cites Henry James as a novelist whose use of silence has the purpose of suggesting unexplored depths and the possibility of perceptions infinitely finer than those which are expressed.\(^{(558)}\) In the French novel, brief consideration of Balzac's work gives some insight into conventions surrounding silence. Balzac uses silence to give an impression of sympathy between characters, a sympathy intensely felt even when their emotions remain unarticulated. The way in which the narrator focuses the reader's attention on the love between Marguerite and Emmanuel in 'La Recherche de l'Absolu' reveals a highly conventional use of silence:

L'amour enseveli dans le coeur d'Emmanuel et de Marguerite sans que ni l'un ni l'autre ne

(558) J. Culler; op. cit., p126
comprissent encore qu'il s'en allait de l'amour .... cet amour grave et discret, mais fertile en nuances douces, en voluptés secrètes, savoureuses comme des grappes volées au coin d'une vigne, subissait la couleur brune, les teintes grises qui le décorent à ses premières heures.....

Ils avaient l'un et l'autre une certitude qu'ils ne s'avouaient pas. (559)

The feelings are profound and mutually held; that they are not expressed is of no detriment to the relationship.

To convey such depth of feeling through silence is typical of Balzac. When, in Eugénie Grandet, Grandet sends des Grassins to Paris to negotiate the affairs of Guillaume Grandet, the other members of the household can find nothing to say, yet the reader is told that they each experience similar sentiments:

Nanon, Madame Grandet, Eugénie s'examinèrent mutuellement et en silence. La joie du vigneron les épuvantait toujours quand elle arrivait à son apogée. (560)

The narrator's aim here is to direct the reader's attention to the dominant sentiment and to indicate that it is experienced by several characters. Emphasis on facial expression, which forms an important part of non-verbal communication, is characteristic of Balzac's work.

Silence is employed frequently in Le Lys dans la Vallée, a novel to which the discussion of sentiments by the first-person narrator and the women he loves is fundamental. The absence of words frequently

(559) H. de Balzac: La Recherche de l'absolu, in La Comédie Humaine, ed. P. Castex, Paris, Gallimard, vol X, 1979, p748
betrays emotion:

Combien de fois déjà n'étions-nous pas
demeurés silencieux, occupés à regarder un
effect de soleil dans la prairie, de nuées
dans un ciel gris..... sans nous dire autre
chose que 'la nuit est belle!' (561)

Moments of silence occur particularly at the climax of a discussion,
when it is no longer safe to express the characters' depth of feeling
in words. This is clear when Madame de Mortsau urgency Félix to satisfy
his ambition by marrying her daughter:

- Madeleine? lui dis-je, jamais.

Ces deux mots nous rejetèrent dans un
silence plein d'agitations. Nos âmes
étaient en proie à ces bouleversements qui
les sillonnent de manière à y laisser
d'éternelles empreintes. (562)

Complete harmony is also registered by silence:

Quand les mots manquaient, le silence servait
fidèlement nos âmes qui pour ainsi dire entraient
l'une chez l'autre sans obstacles. (563)

Balzac thus uses silence unambiguously to convey a particular depth
of communication which cannot be articulated. The novel also stresses
the importance of 'le regard'; on several occasions non-verbal
communication replaces language to express intense feeling. After a long
separation, Félix returns to Madame de Mortsau:

Je me montrai, nous restâmes tous deux
immobiles, elle clouée sur son fauteuil,
moi sur le seuil de sa porte, nous contemplant
avec l'avid fixité de deux amants qui veulent
réparer par un seul regard tout le temps perdu. (564)

This prefigures certain passages in Flaubert's early work where attention
is drawn to the facial expression of the woman - particularly the 'sourire'

(561) H. de Balzac: Le Lys dans la Vallée, in La Comédie Humaine, ed. cit.,
voll IX, 1978, p1020
(562) ibid., p1042
(563) ibid., p1051
(564) ibid., p1099
of the heroine which emerges as a leit-motif in the *Œuvres de Jeunesse* and is also found in the 1869 version of *L'Education Sentimentale*.

In spite of such similarities, however, the exploitation of the possibilities of silence in Flaubert's mature work reveals a gradual departure from the conventions exemplified in the Balzacian novel.

We have already seen that silence in Flaubert's early works often results from the inarticulacy of certain characters. This is not always the case. It is used in the conventional way outlined above to express an intensity of feeling which is not articulated but which is experienced at certain climatic moments in the narrative. In *Un Parfum à Sentir*, the narration of Marguerite's encounter with Pedrillo as he returns from a gambling den leaves the reader in no doubt as to the characters' emotions:

> Ils restèrent tous deux ainsi, sans rien dire, sans se communiquer ni leurs peines ni leur désespoir, mais leurs yeux pourtant avaient parlé et s'étaient dit des pensées tristes et déchirantes. (SBg)

The function of such a passage is to present the scene dramatically, and to invite the reader to explore the possibilities suggested by their silence. What is characteristic of Flaubert when he is exploiting silence in a traditional manner is his emphasis on the look exchanged: 'le regard' is for Flaubert, as for Balzac, a primary aspect of non-verbal communication which provides the reader with the certainty that what is felt is both intense and common to each character. On the many occasions


(566) *Un Parfum à Sentir*, in *O.C.*, vol I, p61
in Flaubert's early works when emotion precludes words, the author leaves the reader in no doubt as to the nature of that emotion and, by extension, as to the nature of the relationship between the protagonists. In Novembre, the narrator's encounter with Marie is typical:

Elle me dit:
- Eh bien
- Eh bien, repris-je d'un air gai, voulant secouer cette fascination qui m'endormait.
Mais je m'arrêtai là, j'étais tout entier à la parcourir des yeux. Sans rien dire, elle me passa un bras autour du corps, et m'attira sur elle, dans une muette étreinte. (567)

The use of silence contributes to the realism of the passage: at this moment, gestures are far more significant than words. The narrator expresses what the characters themselves do not articulate. Later in the same work, however, a further instance of silence reveals a distance between them:

Marie ne me parla plus, quoique je restasse bien encore une demi-heure chez elle; elle songeait peut-être à l'amant absent. Il y a un instant, dans le départ où, par anticipation de tristesse, la personne aimée n'est déjà plus avec nous. (568)

The final generalisation appears as an attempt to rationalise something which is not fully understood, for the silence implies a distinct lack of mutual feeling with which the protagonist finds it difficult to come to terms. Silence here is a barrier which produces a sense of the individual's isolation, and in this respect prefigures the silences of Flaubert's mature work.

In the first version of L'Education Sentimentale, Flaubert explores the possibilities of silence. In the description of Henry's relationship

(567) Novembre, in O.C., vol I, p259
(568) ibid., p270
with Mme Renaud, it is employed at times in a conventional way, yet as the relationship develops there is an increasing degree of uncertainty about the protagonists' feelings for each other and ultimately a total absence of profound communication which reflects this failure of the liaison.

Silence is used initially to express a level of communication and of sentiment which for one reason or another cannot be expressed in words:

D'abord, leurs entretiens avaient été longs, très abondants d'idées et de sentiments; peu à peu, ils devinrent entrecoupés, presque silencieux. À l'époque dont je parle, ils ne se disent plus guère que se dire......

.... Les plus doux moments étaient ceux où, ayant épuisé toute parole humaine et se taisant, ils se regardaient avec des yeux avides, puis ils baissaient le tête et, absorbés, songeaient à tout ce qui ne se dit pas. Quand ils se réveillaient de leur rêverie, Henry rougisait, Mme Renaud souriait de son plus délicieux sourire, clignant des yeux, la tête en arrière et de côté, le cou gonflé comme une colombe qui roucoule. (569)

Silence here represents both Henry's embarrassment and Mme Renaud's understanding: neither character employs words to communicate feeling to the other, and this is characteristic of the relationship:

Elle n'avait plus de confidence à lui faire ni de récits de son cœur à lui conter; tout en effet avait été dit, redit, répété cent fois, la parole devenait inutile, tout se traduisait par le sourire, un éternel sourire. (570)

Flubert treats with irony the idea that feelings can best be conveyed without words. Indeed, the narrator satirises the attempts on behalf of the lovers to translate their feelings into words when they write to

(569) L'Éducation Sentimentale, (1845) in O.C., vol 1, p292
(570) ibid., p343
each other:

Les amants ont la rage d'écrire; pour peu qu'ils soient gens de lettres, c'est un déluge de style. Peut-être se dupent-ils eux-mêmes et leur passion n'est-elle qu'un sujet de rhétorique qu'ils prennent au sérieux. (571)

That this might be the case in *L'Education Sentimentale* becomes clear when Henry's discovery of Mme Renaud's earlier relationship causes him to reflect on the limitations of communication between them:

Comme il reste toujours, même dans les confidences les plus sincères, quelque chose qu'on ne dit pas, il est probable qu'elle avait plus éprouvé dans la vie qu'elle n'en avait raconté, mais fut-ce la pudeur, l'amour ou l'inexpérience à parler de ces matières qui l'avait empêchée d'en dire d'avantage? (572)

Henry becomes increasingly aware of the illusory nature of the perfection of his relationship:

Il n'avait pas de sérénité qui suit l'accomplissement des joies normales, et il retombait dans ses ennuis. C'était cependant la même femme, il était cependant le même homme, rien en eux n'avait changé, et tout s'était changé. D'où vient cet étonnement sans nom qui s'élevait entre deux comme pour les écarter l'un de l'autre? (573)

Silence here represents Henry's awareness of the fragility of their relationship: the very emotion he experiences is described as being 'sans nom'. Subsequently their misunderstanding over the import of Jules' letter to Henry reveals, as Hirsch has pointed out, the extent of their inability to communicate: Henry is unable to articulate his feelings:

Muet de surprise, pâle et le regard sec, Henry cherchait dans sa prunelle ce rayon sympathique pas lequel les coeurs se réchauffent; ébahi de son silence, il la contemplait sans rien

(571) ibid., p296
(572) ibid., p324
(573) ibid., p344
Il voulait se plaindre mais la vanité le prit à la gorge et l'empêcha de parler....

A partir de ce jour-là tout fut fini pour notre héros. (575)

In spite of this they continue to write to each other; yet language is nothing more than mechanical repetition and fails, inevitably, to reunite them:

Les premiers six mois, en effet, ils s'écrivirent régulièrement toutes les semaines; ils se parlaient de leur passé, de leur amour déjà vieux.... ils se répétaient les mêmes tendresses, ils se lamentaient avec les mêmes exclamations..... (576)

Thus Flaubert again implies the total irrelevance of language to what is most deeply felt.

The narration of the love between Mme Renaud and Henry exploits the notion that silence may represent both certainty and illusion, intensity and isolation: the possibility of perfect communication between one individual and another is therefore questioned. But the impact of this is countered by Flaubert's greater concern with overcoming the problem of communication through the use of style, a concern which is evident both from Jules's quest for a perfect artistic technique, and from Flaubert's own use of rhetoric in the narrative. Hence, the meaning of silence is always conveyed by the narrator; language therefore provides a solution to the problem of silence; and, in spite of the different ways in which it is exploited, its full implications are not explored in L'Education Sentimentale of 1845.

(575) ibid., p345
(576) ibid., p347
In Madame Bovary, silence is treated on occasions with a greater degree of originality, although this is by no means always the case. The usual function of silence may be found in the novel; Old Rouault's inability to convey his feelings at the time of Emma's death is treated without any trace of irony; similarly the relationship between Emma and Léon appears to illustrate a conventional use of silence:

N'avaient-ils rien autre chose à se dire? Leurs yeux pourtant étaient pleins d'une causerie plus sérieuse; et tandis qu'ils s'efforçaient à trouver des phrases banales, ils sentaient une même langueur les envahir tous les deux. C'était comme un murmure de l'âme, profond, continu qui dominait celui des voix. (577)

It is noticeable that the ironic attitude adopted by Flaubert towards the Romantic dialogues of Léon and Emma is not extended into the treatment of silence: the emptiness of language is not reinforced by the emptiness of silence.

In the same novel, however, Emma's relationship with Charles reveals a totally different technique. An examination of an early meeting between the two shows that silence is more than just an aspect of Charles's inarticulacy:

Elle se rassit et elle reprit son ouvrage, qui était un bas de coton blanc où elle faisait des reprises; elle travaillait le front baissé; elle ne parlait pas. Charles non plus. L'air, passant par le dessous de la porte poussait un peu de poussière sur les dalles. Il la regardait se traîner et il entendait seulement le battement intérieur de sa tête, avec le cri d'une poule, au loin, qui pondait dans les cours. (578)

(577) Madame Bovary, in O.C., vol I, p606
(578) ibid., p581
This is the only passage in Madame Bovary to prefigure Flaubert's later presentation of silence. The reader's expectation here remains unfulfilled, for this silence is far from the expression of something which is climactic. The narrator, departing from the role usually adopted, focuses attention neither on the characters' awareness of the significance of silence nor on any profundity of emotion. There is no sense of a concentration of experience, nor of a state of reverie. Instead, the use of disparate detail draws the reader's attention away from the protagonists and implies a singular absence of feeling, an absence which is reinforced elsewhere in the novel:

"... à mesure que se serrait davantage l'intimité de leur vie, un détachement intérieur se faisait qui la déliait de lui." (579)

This detachment is perfectly expressed by the novelist's innovatory use of silence to produce a sense of emptiness.

It is in the second version of L'Education Sentimentale that the more original possibilities of silence are exploited, particularly in the relationship between Frédéric and Madame Arnoux, and it is partly through the use of silence that the reader gains an impression of the distance which always separates them.

From the outset the relationship depends, in a conventional way, on 'le regard': words are not exchanged. But what is significant is that our awareness of the relationship is not guided by an omniscient narrator in the Balzacian mould; instead, the technique of 'style indirect libre'...
means that the reader is largely dependent on Frédéric's point of view; and, at times, the degree of ambiguity in the narrative is so great that there is no certainty as to whose point of view is being put forward.

After Madame Arnoux has argued with her husband, Frédéric attempts to establish a relationship with her:

> Ils l'entendirent fermer la porte de sa chambre.
> Frédéric demanda, d'un signe, à Mme Arnoux, s'il devait y aller.
> Elle répliqua 'Oui' de la même façon; et ce muet échange de leurs pensées était comme un consentement, un début d'adultère. (580)

The extent to which this is a false supposition on Frédéric's part can be assessed by considering occasions later in the novel when Madame Arnoux continues to reject his advances. Whereas in the early works silence expressed feelings held mutually by two or more characters, ambiguity in the use of silence here confirms the fallibility of the individual's viewpoint and hence the illusory nature of relationships. This feeling is compounded not only during the dialogue which takes place at Arnoux's pottery, but also by the silence which terminates it:

> Elle se tenait debout, sur le seuil de sa chambre, avec ses deux enfants à ses côtés. Il s'inclina sans dire un mot. Elle répondit silencieusement à son salut.
> Ce qu'il éprouva d'abord, ce fut une stupéfaction infinie. Cette manière de lui faire comprendre l'inanité de son espoir l'écrasait. (581)

If silence betrays the distance between Frédéric and Madame Arnoux, this is reinforced by Frédéric's surprise. His lack of understanding suggests a degree of isolation not found in Flaubert's earlier works. The

(580) *L'Education Sentimentale*, in *O.C.*, vol 11, p69
(581) *ibid.*, p81
relationship is characterised by a silence which represents a total absence of mutual feeling; even Frédéric eventually becomes aware of its fragility:

Il tremblait de perdre par un mot tout ce qu'il croyait avoir gagné...

Bientôt il y eut dans leurs dialogues de grandes intervalles de silence. (582)

Silence here signifies both the characters' uncertainty and the emptiness of the relationship. Indeed, so much has been left unsaid that the liaison itself is judged on nothing more than a possibility: 'quel bonheur nous aurions eu'. (583) It is at the end of the novel where the sense of impending absence, conveyed in a passage which closely resembles a passage in the first version of the novel, serves to summarise the relationship as a whole.

Tous deux ne trouvaient rien à se dire. Il y a un moment dans les séparations où la personne aimée n'est déjà plus avec nous. (584)

The idea of separation here is ironic, in that the two protagonists have never been truly intimate in the course of the novel; and it could be argued that the leit-motif of silence is a structuring element in the work which acts as an ironic counterpart to the images of convergence which constitute Frédéric's vision of Madame Arnoux.

Flaubert's originality in his use of silence lies in the rejection of a conventional treatment in favour of a more subtle integration of silence into the structure of the novel. Silence is not an extension of verbal communication. It ceases to signify a state of reverie beyond language:

(582) ibid., p107
(583) ibid., p160
(584) ibid., p161
instead it comes, in Madame Bovary and particularly in L’Éducation Sentimentale, to compound the failure of language: it implies the individual's isolation, the absence of any possibility of mutual understanding and, ultimately, the void behind relationships. In this respect it is the perfect counterpart to the cliched and hollow language employed by the protagonists of Flaubert's mature work.

The writing of the Trois Contes reveals an increasing exploitation of the interplay between silence and the autonomy of language. The return to the theme of inarticulacy in Un Coeur Simple has already been discussed, and it has been suggested that the silence of Félicité puts into an ironic perspective the insignificance of language used by Liébard and Bourais. Silence in the first of the Trois Contes is treated solely with regard to Félicité, and it is clear that, in her case, it does not usually imply a profundity of sentiment or understanding. (585) It denotes neither the climax of verbal communication nor its transcendence, but constantly highlights the limitation of words without suggesting that to maintain silence will bring anything other than isolation.

La Légende de Saint Julien L’Hospitalier treats similar themes in a more stylised way. Silence here is a leit-motif of the narrative and is fundamental to the background of the story, to the extent that speech stands out against the silence. It is Bertrand's view that Flaubert's

(585) One exception to this is the passage in which she learns of the death of Victor: Un Coeur Simple, in O.C., vol II, p172
insistence on silence contributes to the creation of 'un espace utopique' but the degree to which it is a utopian state is debatable for, as in Un Coeur Simple, it has many facets. (586)

In Julien's palace,

Il y avait des jets d'eau dans les salles, des mosaïques dans les cours, des cloisons festonnées, mille délicatesses d'architecture, et partout un tel silence que l'on entendant le frôlement d'une écharpe ou l'écho d'un soupir. (587)

In the forest

'C'était partout un grand silence!' (588)

The silence between characters is marked and significant: the parents communicate their visions to no-one; (589) Julien does not speak of his initial act of violence, (590) and his wife fails to communicate with his parents. (591) From this point of view, according to Felman, 'La Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier peut être lue comme l'histoire d'un silence.' (592) Non-communication is fundamental to the story to the extent that silence both signifies and perpetuates the emptiness underlying human relationships, which for Felman is the source of Julian's sadism.

Silence, then, has an ambiguous role. But it is presented as the only alternative to a language the significance of which cannot be penetrated. In Un Coeur Simple, language is seen as autonomous, repetitive and lacking

(587) La Légende de Saint Julien l'hospitalier, in O.C., vol II, p183
(588) ibid., p184
(589) ibid., p179: 'les époux se cachèrent le secret'
(590) ibid., p179
(591) ibid., p183
in significance. In *Saint Julien* it is the autonomy of language which is stressed by virtue of the juxtaposition of words and silence.

Although Bertrand has adequately discussed the function of 'la parole sociale', what is important to the story is the portentous quality of language. In this respect, it prefigures Iaokanann's speech in *Hérodias*:

It appears devoid of human intentionality - speech is delivered by visionary figures or animals - and allows Flaubert to draw attention to the implications of human silence. Julien's reaction to the stag's prophecy is typical of the confrontation between man and language:

> Julien fut stupéfait, puis accablé d'une immense fatigue soudaine; et un dégoût, une tristesse l'envahit. Le front dans les deux mains, il pleura pendant longtemps. (593)

The theme of suffering in the face of a language which cannot be dominated gives way, in the final passage of the story to an awareness that man has no option but to accept the autonomy of words. When confronted with the leper, Julien should not seek to comprehend, question or justify his demands: only in this way can the human state be transcended. Acceptance of the autonomy of words brings 'une joie surhumaine' which Julien experiences. (594) Silence itself does not imply an insight into or transcendence of the significance of words.

In *Hérodias*, Flaubert relies more heavily on dialogue than in the preceding stories, but although there is communication between individuals, its limitations may be judged by studying the dialogue at the feast in the third part of the story. More significant is the way in which, through the speech of Iaokanann, Flaubert stresses the social and prophetic power

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(593) *La Légende de Saint Julien l'hospitalier*, in *O.C.*, vol II, p181
(594) ibid., p187
of language. The tension between language and silence, which, for
Bertrand, provides the organising principle of the story, is most
clearly felt by the Tetrarch Antipas, for whom silence provides welcome
protection from the sufferings caused by the words of his prisoner. As
in the previous stories, description of the background is significant:

Des aigles volaient au-dessus de sa tête;
les soldats, le long du rempart, dormaient
contre les murs; rien ne bougeait dans le
château.

Tout à coup, une voix lointaine, comme
échappée des profondeurs de la terre, fit
pâlir le Tétrarque. Il se pencha pour
écouter: elle avait disparu. Elle reprit;
et en claquant dans ses mains, il cria
- 'Mannaeï, Mannaeï.' (595)

The Tetrarch speaks 'd'un air d'épouvante'. Although attracted by
laochannan, he is unable to comprehend the enigmatic nature of the latter's
utterances, and lives in a state of fear. He is persecuted by his
prisoner. Hérodias too is tormented, although she is affected more by
the social impact of words:

laochannan l'empêchait de vivre... Ses discours,
criés à des foules, s'étaient répandus, circulaient;
elle les entendait partout, ils emplissaient l'air.
Contre des légions elle aurait eu de la bravoure.
Mais cette force plus pernicieuse que les glaives,
et qu'on ne pouvait pas saisir, était stupéfiante;
et elle parcourait la terrasse, blêmie par sa
colère, manquait des mots pour exprimer ce qui
l'étouffait. (596)

In both cases Flaubert shows the frustration of man in the face of a
language which is essentially alien. Significantly, the use of the
word 'stupéfiante' recalls Julien's reaction to the prophecy of the stag:
the feelings described by Flaubert transcend both time and culture.

(595) Herodias, in O.C., vol II, p188
(596) ibid., p189
Vitellius's visit provides a further instance of the invasion of silence by language.

Les Galiléens, les prêtres, les soldats, formaient un cercle par derrière; tous se taisaient dans l'angoisse de ce qui allait arriver.

Ce fut d'abord un grand soupir, poussé d'une voix caverneuse.

Hérodiade l'entendit à l'autre bout du palais. (597)
Vaincue par une fascination, elle traversa la foule....

On this occasion anguish and fear are not limited to the Tetrarch and to Hérodiade. Everyone remains silent before the prophetic voice: yet no-one is able to penetrate the significance of what is said:

De quel conquérant parlait-il?.... Des plaintes s'échappaient: - Assez qu'il finisse! (598)

The desire for silence signifies a desire for respite from the all-powerful Word. Ultimately, however, the death of the speaker does not bring an end to fear and incomprehension. Language is self-generating. The words of laokanann, comprehensible only to the initiated, are repeated even as his head is carried away.

Silence in the Trois Contes is more than simply a dramatic technique by which the power of words is emphasised. It is in itself significant, not, as in Balzac's work, indicative of communication beyond words, but rather as a sign of man's inability both to understand language and to communicate with it. Whilst Flaubert's early works are interesting for their highly personal treatment of the theme of inarticulacy, each of the Trois Contes demonstrates, in a different way, a more mature working-out of the implications of human silence, the impossibility of dominating language, and the destructive consequences of being dominated by it.

(597) ibid., p193
(598) ibid., p193
Conclusion

The pessimism of Flaubert's novels stems from his belief in man's inability to know, to express, and to communicate his own experience. Whether this be attributable to the nature of man or to that of language, it is clear that it has its repercussions not only on Flaubert's view of the world, but also on the way in which he portrays it.

The novelist's own pronouncements on the transmutation of life into words underline the difficulty of the task. Although he writes in a letter of 1852 to Louise Colet that

_Ces distinctions de la pensée et du style sont un sophisme. Tout dépend de la conception._ (599)

the 'conception', or identity of words and experience is not something the artist can take for granted, but rather a goal to be achieved.

The struggle to achieve this goal is clear not only from the manuscripts of the novels, and their many stages of development, but also from the Correspondance. On more than one occasion, Flaubert writes that he is _ennuyé de mots qui ne rendent pas une idée_, (600) and bewails the autonomy of words:

_Le plastique du style n'est pas si large que l'idée entière. Mais à qui la faute? À la langue. Nous avons trop de choses et pas assez de formes._ (601)

(599) Correspondance, vol II, p399, to Louise Colet; 14-i-1852  
(600) ibid., vol I, p427; to Louise Colet; 19-xii-1846  
(601) ibid., vol III, p157; to Louise Colet; 6-iv-1853
At times, the artist himself is at fault because of his failure to manipulate words:

C'est comme un homme qui a l'oreille juste et qui joue faux du violon. Ses doigts se refusent à reproduire juste le son dont il a conscience. (602)

The difficulty of matching words and experience is a constant aspect of Flaubert's view of the problems of artistic creation: for even facility with words does not imply facility of expression:

Quand on aime trop le style on risque à perdre de vue le but même de ce qu'on écrit. (603)

Consequently, art is regarded as chimerical: (604) the artistic process involves, as Culler has stated, desire rather than accomplishment. (605)

The artist is, to a large extent an idealist.

Recognition of the gap between words and experience is not simply a source of difficulty; for Flaubert, it also has wider implications for the practice of writing. Man, as the novelist shows, fails to understand and express experience. The artist, on the other hand, must make language signify. He must transform it into art, and employ the materiality of words in the creation of 'le Beau'. The artist can no longer take for granted the referentiality of words. He must create significance, and this accounts for the importance of style in Flaubert's work. 'Le style' replaces Emma's Romantic clichés and bourgeois 'idées reçues' as a system of signification, and it is the artist's task to

(602) ibid., vol II, p47; to Louise Colet; ix-1847
(603) ibid., vol III, p381; to Louise Colet; 3-xi-1853
(604) cf Correspondance, vol III, p338; to Louise Colet; 12-ix-1853, and vol IV, p50; to Louise Colet; 4-iv-1854
(605) J. Culler; op. cit., p12
refine his style in order to communicate with the reader.

As a result, the artist's concern is shifted from the referentiality of words to their materiality, 'le plastique', and this in turn throws light on Flaubert's search for 'le mot juste'. Although the Correspondance shows that, in his criticism of the work of others, he was rigorous in substituting the most fitting referent for a word or phrase which he considered failed to render meaning adequately, his own manuscripts reveal an emphasis on a different sort of substitution. As Willenbrink's detailed study of 'Un Coeur Simple' has shown, Flaubert's main reasons for changing words were to avoid repetition and to create particular effects of sound. He was intent on preventing the recurrence of syllables, unwanted rhymes and alliteration, and it has been shown that, in some cases, he went so far as to allow his concern for sound to affect the substance of what he wrote. The term 'le mot juste' refers less to signification than to the artistic effect of the word in the sentence:

'plus les chevelures sont peignées, plus elles sont luisantes. Il en est de même du style, la correction fait son éclat. (609)

The artist's labour consists in finding an expression of his idea which will have both force and harmony:

'A force de chercher, je trouve l'expression juste, qui était la seule et qui est, en même temps, l'harmonieuse. (610)

(606) cf Correspondance; vol III, p90-91: Flaubert's criticism of Louise Colet's 'Paysanne' shows him suggesting substitutions for reasons both of meaning and of style, cf also the letter to Louise Colet of 22-xi-1852 in Correspondance, vol III, p51

(607) G. Willenbrink: The dossier of Flaubert's 'Un Coeur Simple', Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1976, Chapter VI

(608) ibid., p184

(609) Correspondance: vol III, p52; to Louise Colet; 22-xi-1852

(610) ibid., vol VII, p290; to George Sand; iv-1876
Flaubert's concern with style as a system of signification is also clear from his insistence on 'la phrase', rather than 'le mot', as the basic unit of his writing. 'La phrase' is conceived of as a polished, refined object rather than as a part of a communicative discourse:

Une bonne phrase de prose doit être comme un bon vers, inchangeable, aussi rythmée, aussi sonore. (Personne n'a jamais eu en tête un type de prose plus parfait que moi.) (611)

Flaubert's aim in writing prose is, as Sartre has pointed out, to 'exalter la matière verbale'; (612) and this is not an easy task. In a letter of 1853 to Louise Colet, he writes:

'L'idéal de la prose est arrivé à un degré inouï de difficulté; il faut se dégager de l'archaïsme, du mot commun, avoir les idées contemporaines dans leurs mauvaises termes, et que ce soit clair comme du Voltaire, touffu comme du Montaigne, nerveux comme du La Bruyère, et ruisselant de couleur, toujours. (613)

The transformation of language into Art becomes an end in itself:

'je voudrais faire des livres où il n'y eut qu'à écrire des phrases. (614)

The signified is secondary to the signifier:

je me demande si un livre, indépendamment de ce qu'il dit, me peut pas produire le même effet (que l'Acropole). Dans la précision des assemblages, la rareté des éléments, le poli de la surface, l'harmonie de l'ensemble, n'y a-t-il pas une vertu intrinsèque, une espèce de force divine, quelque chose d'éternel comme un principe. (615)

(611) ibid., vol II, p469; to Louise Colet; vii-1852
(612) J.-P. Sartre: op. cit., vol I, p931
(613) Correspondance; vol II, p434; to Louise Colet; (vi-1852?)
(614) ibid., vol III, p248; to Louise Colet; 25/26-vi-1853
(615) ibid., vol VII, p294; to George Sand; 3-iv-1876
The concept of 'un livre sur rien' (616) is the logical outcome of such an aesthetic. Flaubert's awareness of the potential insignificance of words leads him to draw the reader's attention to this by pointing to the material quality of language and making this the basis of his art. To use Sartre's phrase,

Le style transmet l'indisable par l'irréalisolation du langage. (617)

and the devaluation of content is one means by which the usual chain of communication between author and reader is broken, leading, as Culler has shown, to a type of novel which is less a communicative act than an aesthetic object.

The adoption of Art as an end in itself links Flaubert with the contemporary movement of 'l'Art pour l'Art', but it is also clearly coherent with the nature of his pessimism. The novels testify to the continual failure of language to describe or communicate experience and to the stasis this produces. The ideal is illusory, and the dominant representative of the 'real' world is the bourgeois who accepts language without questioning its significance and wields it to serve his own base ends. The impossibility of progress through human relationships, political action and knowledge is shown in L'Education Sentimentale and Bouvard et Pécuchet, and the reader's overall impression is of an immobile world in which man is imprisoned. Flaubert's reaction to this is a rejection of and withdrawal from the world he describes, and an

(616) ibid., vol II, p345; to Louise Colet; 16-i-1852
(617) J.-P. Sartre; op. cit., vol II, p1987
attempt to create something other: art provides an alternative to the real. The autonomy of form is a reaction against the failure of the significative function of words. Art is an attempt to transcend the meaninglessness and sterility of history, and to redeem the universe.

Thus the novels as aesthetic objects prefigure an art in which the problem of language is intrinsic to the human situation, the art of Proust, Eliot and Beckett. In a detailed work on Samuel Beckett, Bernal claims that

"'entre le Cratyle de Platon et À la Recherche du Temps Perdu, le statut de la parole est essentiellement le même: la parole est cautionnée par un ordre extralinguistique." (618)

Yet it is clear from Flaubert's emphasis on the autonomy of words and from his corresponding search for meaning through art that his work serves to undermine the whole concept of such an 'ordre extralinguistique'. This is, perhaps, the essence of Flaubert's modernity.
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2. Critical works on Flaubert
3. Other works consulted: I  Source material
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