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包法利夫人

MADAME BOVARY

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

英语经典世界文学名著丛书

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MADAME BOVARY

LIFE IN A COUNTRY TOWN

Gustave Flaubert

Translated by Gerard Hopkins

With an Introduction by Terence Cave &

Notes by Mark Overstall

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作者简介

居斯塔夫·福楼拜1821年出生于法国北部的鲁昂市。他的父亲是当地医院的主治外科医生。福楼拜10岁时进鲁昂中学读书。在那里，他渐渐对历史和文学发生了兴趣，写了很多各种题材的文章。他对这些试笔之作不甚满意，因此，除一两篇外，全部都压在自己的抽屉里。

1841年中学毕业后，福楼拜在父亲的安排下去巴黎大学攻读法律。这期间，他仍坚持文学创作。1844年，因病辍学。他的父亲爱子心切，为他在克鲁瓦塞购置了一座乡村别墅，让他在那里安心养病。

在幽静的别墅中，他专心致力于写作。1856年，他根据当时轰动鲁昂的一场家庭悲剧而创作的《包法利夫人》问世，并立即引起了读者和评论家的注意，众说纷纭，甚至受到"作品有伤风化"的指控。虽然最后《包法利夫人》获胜诉，福楼拜却因此十分厌恶现实社会。他开始转向历史小说的创作。1862年，《萨拉宝》发表了。1869年，经过多年的酝酿，他完成了《情感教育》的创作。这部作品以当时巴黎生活为背景，对纷乱动荡的社会现实作了极其深刻的描绘。1874年，福楼拜又发表了《圣安东尼的诱惑》。1887年，福楼拜患脑溢血离开了人世。第二年，他的遗作《布瓦尔和佩居榭》发表。

福楼拜作品时隔一个世纪后，受到越来越多人的关注与研究。在纪念他逝世一百周年时，评论家指出："他无疑是法国不朽的作家之一。他把一种崭新的思维方法应用于文学，从而成为现代小说的始祖。"

内容简介

查理·包法利是个乡村医生。一次出诊中他结识了农夫卢欧老爹的女儿爱玛。爱玛非常美丽，读过大量的浪漫小说，脑袋里充满了浪漫的遐想。一年后，查理的妻子病逝，他娶了爱玛。

婚后，查理心满意足，但爱玛很快就对单调乏味的生活感到厌烦。4年后，他们迁到永镇。在这里，爱玛认识了一个法律事务所的见习生赖昂，两人一见如故。但爱玛此时已有身孕，赖昂也还单纯稚嫩，两人不敢越雷池一步。赖昂决定远走巴黎以割断情丝。

赖昂走后，爱玛更觉生活乏味，对丈夫的庸碌无能也很不满。这时，永镇附近的一个庄园主罗道耳弗注意到爱玛。他很快用甜言蜜语把爱玛哄骗到手。爱玛自以为她找到了"浪漫小说"中描写的"爱情"，经常赊账买礼物送给情夫。孰料罗道耳弗不过是逢场作戏，很快就离开了她。爱玛大病一场，皈依了宗教，想借此拯救自己的灵魂。

为了使爱玛高兴起来，查理带她去听歌剧。在歌剧院他们巧遇了赖昂。赖昂抓住机会，诱使爱玛投入了他的怀抱。爱玛又开始了挥霍、放荡的生活，终于债台高筑，不得不求助他人，可所有的人（包括赖昂在内）都托词拒绝。最后，爱玛落个家产被抄、身败名裂的下场，含恨服毒自杀。

这部作品充分展示了现实生活中人们在理想与现实间的苦苦挣扎，并以此震撼了读者。《包法利夫人》被认为是法国第一部真正的现实主义小说。

INTRODUCTION

In September 1851, when the first pages of *Madame Bovary* were drafted, Flaubert was thirty and had published nothing. He had, however, written a great deal: short stories on more or less exotic subjects, semi-autobiographical narratives, a novel called *L'Éducation sentimentale* (not to be confused with the better-known version of 1869), and the first draft of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, a grotesque fantasy in dialogue form. All in all, these works reveal a decided preference for the extravagant and the bizarre, although *L'Éducation sentimentale* is already a notable exception. While travelling in the Near East in 1850, he had had three new projects in mind: *Une nuit de Don Juan*, *Anubis*, and a novel about a 'young girl who dies a virgin and mystic after living with her father and mother in a small provincial town' (letter of 14 November 1850).

It was this third subject which was to be taken up. Flaubert preserved the provincial setting and characters, together with something of the interplay between the mystical and the erotic, but invented a new heroine who would make the story, as he put it, more 'entertaining' for the reader. Despite this concession, the writing of *Madame Bovary* was for Flaubert both an exercise and an experiment. From the outset, his letters speak of the atrocious stylistic difficulties the subject presented, and although there were moments of optimism and enthusiasm, his most characteristic feeling was one of disgust for the sheer banality of his materials. He viewed the whole enterprise as training ('gymnastics') for a later novel which would suit his own tastes and what he believed to be his own talents. The nearest he came to this ideal was *Salammbô*: a magnificent novel in its own way, but one which would hardly be read except by historians of literature, had *Madame Bovary* never been written.

The story of Flaubert's fanatical self-mortification during the five years of composition, although a highly readable one, might well seem to be just another of those colourful portraits of the artist which contribute nothing of real value to the understanding

of the work itself. Yet it is always instructive to see a writer reaching the height of his powers by denying himself the very resources he feels most tempted to exploit. And in this instance one can go further. The absence of what Flaubert cut out in writing *Madame Bovary* arguably creates the most important part of the effect of the novel: it determines both the angle from which the action is viewed and the precise sense in which that action is tragic.

The pertinence of this way of looking at *Madame Bovary* – as an exercise in amputation – will, however, become clearer after a brief account of the experimental character of the novel. What was new about *Madame Bovary* in the 1850s? As a portrait of 'life in a country town' it owes something to Balzac, who used provincial settings in many of his novels; Balzac's *Physiologie du mariage* anticipates Flaubert's anatomy of a marriage doomed to failure from the outset by inexperience and illusion; and the theme of lost illusions, the subject of another of Balzac's novels, is a commonplace of French Romantic literature. Furthermore, a number of the motifs used in *Madame Bovary* had already appeared in Flaubert's own earlier writings. Thus the general conception of the novel's plot, subject, and characters could hardly be called experimental. What was exceptional for the mid-nineteenth century was the rigour with which Flaubert restricted himself to the petty details of everyday life, avoiding high drama and grand moral dilemmas. While writing the first half of the novel, he referred more than once in his letters to the problems of making an almost eventless narrative interesting:

> What worries me in my book is the element of *entertainment*. That side is weak; there is not enough action. I maintain, however, that *ideas* are action. It is more difficult to hold the reader's interest with them, I know, but if the style is right it can be done. I now have fifty pages in a row without a single event.
>
> (letter of 15 January 1853)

By 'ideas', Flaubert seems to mean something like 'psychology': not explicit psychological analysis, of which there is very little in *Madame Bovary*, but the gradual accumulation of apparently trivial responses which finally, after long preparation, leads to the outbreak of 'action' in the conventional sense:

'I think that this is rather characteristic of life itself. The sexual act may last only a minute, though it has been anticipated for months' (letter of 25 June 1853).

These aspects of the experiment allow *Madame Bovary* to be classed as a realist novel in the strict, historical sense of the term. It was in fact in the 1850s in France that 'realism' became a fashionable term of literary criticism and literary history. Brought into prominence by the controversial experiments of the painter Gustave Courbet in the unadorned representation of mundane objects, it was subsequently adopted by a not very distinguished group of anti-idealist and socially progressivist writers; in 1858, it was applied retrospectively by Taine, in an important essay, to the novels of Balzac. Baudelaire detested the more literal forms of realism as a denial of the aesthetic imagination: he believed that the artist's task was to seek the conjunction of a precise, immediate representation of phenomena with the maximum degree of imaginative penetration (his *Salon* of 1859 provides a lucid series of essays on this topic). Flaubert's view was remarkably similar, although it should be remembered that *Madame Bovary* was begun before realism became a burning issue. Thus his *boutade* 'I undertook this novel in hatred of realism' (in a letter of 1856) should be understood as a reaction against a local variant of realism; it is clear from many references in the letters that he saw his own task as the aesthetic transformation of mundane and vulgar reality.

This is indeed another of the principal senses in which Flaubert thought of *Madame Bovary* as an experiment:

> It is perhaps absurd to want to give prose the rhythm of verse (keeping it distinctly prose, however), and to write of ordinary life as one writes history or epic (but without falsifying the subject)... But on the other hand it is perhaps a great experiment, and very original. (letter of 27 March 1853)

Four years later, Sainte-Beuve was to make much the same point in his review of the finished novel: 'One precious quality distinguishes M. Gustave Flaubert from the other more or less exact observers who in our time pride themselves on conscientiously reproducing reality, and nothing but reality, and who occasionally succeed: he has *style*.'

Flaubert's conception of a prose which was flawlessly elegant in its colours and rhythms, without being either *flowery* or bombastic, and which might succeed in fusing the vulgar with the poetic, could well be considered in relation to the contemporary emergence of the prose poem: Baudelaire's first experiments in this new genre date from the 1850s. But it is in a rather different context that Flaubert's cultivation of style makes its greatest impact on the novel. It is the counterpart of what is perhaps the most significant experiment of all: the suppression of the author as a source of reflections and judgements external to the narrative. At the earliest stages of composition, Flaubert speaks almost exclusively of the difficulty of stringing sentences together. In January 1852, he sketches a more general theory of style, defining it in a much quoted phrase as 'an absolute manner of seeing things'. Three weeks later, the decision to eliminate the authorial presence is explicit: 'I do not want my book to contain a *single* subjective reaction, nor a *single* reflection by the author.' By December 1852, the absence of the author has become a special kind of presence: 'An author in his book must be like God in the universe, present everywhere and visible nowhere.' Flaubert will return to this point again and again. It has two aspects: rejection of first-person-singular, quasi-autobiographical narrative; and the exclusion of a moral discourse imposed from 'outside'. What Flaubert calls style – the aesthetic point of view – guarantees the moral autonomy of the novel.

Madame Bovary is not the first novel in which the narrative is presented without authorial commentary: the epistolary form of *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, to cite one example at random, has the same effect. And there are some apparent lapses. The narrator does appear briefly in the unexplained 'we' of the opening chapter, and the perfect tense is used here and there to imply a connection between the fictions of the novel and the real world ('nothing has changed in Yonville. . .'; 'He has just received the Legion of Honour'). Then there are general observations and aphorisms ('One should never touch idols: the gilt may come off on one's hands'), and occasional uses of morally loaded vocabulary. But these intermittent instances do not add up to a consistent authorial presence, and in other respects a strict economy is maintained in order to ensure that the reader will

not be conscious of a voice telling him how to interpret the story. The reader must, in the end, accept full responsibility for what he makes of it.

Flaubert's attempt to use the technique of non-intervention systematically in all his mature novels marks the beginning of a new and fruitful development in the history of the genre. The major innovations of novelists as different as Zola, Henry James, Gide, Woolf, Faulkner, and Alain Robbe-Grillet all have to do with the displacement of the author from the narrative scene. In retrospect, Flaubert's ideal of a 'book about nothing' (letter of 16 January 1852) with its implied suppression of plot (exciting adventures), character (interesting, large-as-life people), and even theme (love, adultery, ambition, art) as anything other than a pretext, may indeed seem remarkably close to the calling in question of standard conventions of the novel by the French 'new novelists' of the 1950s and 1960s.

The most celebrated and wide-ranging of Flaubert's techniques for 'showing' rather than 'telling' is a persistent use of irony, which he himself saw as innovative. Speaking of the conversation between Emma and Léon in Part Two, chapter 11, he remarks:

> It is something that could be taken seriously, and yet I fully intend it as grotesque. This will be the first time, I think, that a book makes fun of its leading lady and its leading man. The irony does not detract from the pathetic aspect, but rather intensifies it. In my third part, which will be full of farcical things, I want my readers to weep. (letter of 9 October 1852)

Ironic narrative, as well as the analogous mixing of comedy and pathos, has a long history in which Ariosto and Cervantes are major landmarks: *Don Quixote* was one of Flaubert's favourite novels. Oddly enough, he was scornful of Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le noir*, which has some of the same characteristics. But the use of irony in *Madame Bovary* is highly distinctive. It is not simply a means of making fun of the characters by inflating and then deflating them. Only the crudest of misreadings would maintain that in *Madame Bovary* Flaubert is uniformly destructive of his characters. Nor does his irony consist in an alternation of contrasting tones or registers: he aimed at, and achieved, an extraordinary consistency of style.

Within this uniform medium, there are infinite nuances of irony, covering the whole spectrum from caricature (the officials at the agricultural show, Homais and Bournisien arguing beside the corpse) to an acutely tragic sense of the discrepancy between Emma's dreams and the real world.

Irony, as used by Flaubert, is thus a medium which creates a dual vision. In the 'honeymoon' episode of Part Three, chapter III, for example, a delicate equilibrium is maintained between the fresh immediacy of sounds, flavours, light and shade, sensations of all kinds, and the undercurrent of indications that Léon and Emma inflate their experience and turn it into a Romantic cliché. It is essential to avoid reducing this perpetual changing of angle to a fixed interpretation of character and action. The reader who is not disconcerted by the shift from the schoolroom scene of the opening chapter to the moments Charles spends looking out of his window in Rouen, or to his dawn arrival at Rouault's farm, has already grasped the sense of Flaubert's method. The key here, I think, is to recognize that the novel invites us to share not the mental responses of the characters but the physical surface of the world – real or imagined – through which they move. The intensity of this world is preserved in scene after scene, regardless of the extent to which its value, as assessed by the character, is undermined. The principle is maintained even in the dialogue passages: utterances so evidently banal nevertheless emerge, in Flaubert's prose, elegant in sound and rhythm: 'My characters are completely commonplace, but they have to speak in a literary style, and the politeness of the language takes away so much picturesqueness from their way of expressing themselves!' (letter of 19 September 1852). The immaculate evenness of style both creates the irony by which the world is seen so often as false and petty, and presents that same world as a thing of extraordinary beauty. No other novelist has ever preserved the fineness of that balance.

'I have dissected myself to the quick, with total honesty, at moments which were not in the least amusing' (letter of 6 June 1853). This remark epitomizes the dual vision of Flaubert's novels, the fusion of sensibility with the sharpest irony. It is also an example of the way Flaubert's imagination draws on

medicine – and, more precisely, on surgery – as a source of metaphor both in his letters and his fiction. That he was the son of a celebrated doctor, that as a child he surreptitiously looked through the windows of his father's mortuary, and that he was considered not bright enough to become a doctor himself, is sufficient to give scope to anyone who wants to speculate on his psyche: Sartre's vast, unfinished study *L'Idiot de la famille* takes this theme as its starting-point. What is perhaps more pertinent here is simply the observation that, in *Madame Bovary*, the inadequate husband is also an inadequate doctor. Two hundred years previously, in Molière's comedy, the caricaturing of doctors as pedants and charlatans called in question no fundamental beliefs. But in the mid-nineteenth century, when the progress of medical science and the transformation of society had already made the doctor a figure no less prestigious than the priest, Charles's impotence is more pathetic and more alarming. The point here is not that Flaubert is portraying contemporary attitudes to medical science (although he is no doubt doing that, too), but that, as a metaphor, medical incompetence goes deep.

At the metaphorical level, it needs little reflection to discern that the figure of the doctor is one variant of the figure of the artist: the remark quoted above, which refers to the sense in which Flaubert felt himself to be incorporating his personal experience into his novel, already suggests that the equivalence came naturally to him. But, before pursuing this and other equivalences, a more general point needs to be made. Flaubert's excision of the authorial presence from his novels – itself a kind of surgical operation – is accompanied by another form of invisibility. Aesthetically self-conscious novelists are inclined, at some point in their career, to make writing (or another art) the principal subject of a novel. Balzac's fiction is full of artists, geniuses, journalists, inventors, and the like; Henry James's *Roderick Hudson*, and a number of his short stories, enable him to analyse overtly the problems of the American artist; in Gide's *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, one of the characters is writing a novel called *Les Faux-monnayeurs*; and Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* proves, in the end, to be an aesthetic odyssey. But none of Flaubert's mature novels place such a figure at the centre of the stage. His only extended experiment in this mode

was the early version of *L'Éducation sentimentale*, and it is worth looking at this text briefly in order to see why the experiment was not repeated.

Henry and Jules, the two central characters, begin with idealistic visions of becoming great artists and lovers. Henry has a passionate affair, runs away with his mistress (a married woman who in some respects anticipates Emma Bovary), gets bored, and ends up as a successful but banal man of the world. Jules fails in love, is disillusioned with life, and turns to art as the only medium through which the powers of the imagination can be brought to fruition. The novel already illustrates a theme which will recur in the mature works, namely, that the attempt to make the real world conform to the world of the imagination is a fundamental error which can only end in disaster (*Madame Bovary*) or emotional bankruptcy (*L'Éducation sentimentale* of 1869). But Jules is a special case, since his abandonment of the world in favour of a hermit-like existence dedicated to art is the pretext for an overt exposition of the view of art Flaubert was to adopt in the years to come. The novel ends, in fact, with a substantial piece of aesthetic theory, attributed to Jules, but representing the nearest Flaubert was ever to come to a credo. The fact that the experiment was not to be repeated is no doubt due to the perception that the artist's solution is, paradoxically enough, death to the novel. There is literally nothing to say about Jules once he has assumed his pose as high priest of the imagination. Minor figures in the later novels provide a parody of art at its most banal – Binet and his napkin rings; Pellerin, the painter turned photographer, in the 1869 *Éducation sentimentale*. Otherwise, the portrait of Flaubert as an artist can only be constructed from his letters.

The excision, however, leaves its traces, and the most visible of these is the way Flaubert exploits in his narrative works themes which appear elsewhere as metaphors of the writer's condition. Next to the image of the doctor, one may here place that of the writer as a monk or hermit, enjoying 'debauches of the imagination' which are more intense than any lived experience: Jules's meditations on this theme recur in the correspondence and are mirrored in the scenarios of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* and, in miniature, in *La Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier*. The association of abstinence with

sexual desire is fundamental to this group of themes. In a letter of 24 April 1852, Flaubert speaks thus of his writing:

I am leading an austere life, stripped of all external pleasure, and am sustained only by a kind of permanent frenzy, which sometimes makes me weep tears of impotence but never abates. I love my work with a love that is frantic and perverted, as an ascetic loves the hair shirt that scratches his belly.

Equivocations between sexual and religious longings dominate Emma's sensibility from convent to death-bed, and the pattern will reappear in *Salammbô*, *Trois contes*, and even *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

In the correspondence, Flaubert insistently, even obsessively refers to sex in relation to writing. Metaphors of potency and impotence are frequent. Rather less frequent, but no less striking, are his fantasies of self-castration. In a letter of 27 December 1852 he speaks of the shock he received when he read Balzac's *Louis Lambert*:

At the end, the hero wants to castrate himself, in a kind of mystical madness. During my wretchedness in Paris, when I was nineteen, I had that same wish... later I spent two entire years without touching a woman. (Last year, when I told you about my idea of entering a monastery, it was my old leaven rising in me again.) There comes a moment when one needs to make oneself suffer, needs to loathe one's flesh, to fling mud in its face, so hideous does it seem. Without my love of form, I would perhaps have been a great mystic.

Louis Lambert, it should be added, is a genius whose mental (and physical) powers come to nothing.

The presentation of sex in the novels is much less sensational. It is usually left to the reader's imagination, as in the consummation of Emma's affair with Rodolphe, or the famous episode of the cab-ride with Léon. Indirection is Flaubert's most characteristic technique in this respect. One of the most sensual passages in the book is a description of Emma in full bloom at the height of her affair with Rodolphe, and elsewhere much of the powerful erotic effect is conveyed through reference to other pleasures and other sensations – the sound of melted snow dripping on Emma's tightly stretched parasol, the falling of ripe fruit and the scuttling of nocturnal beasts in the garden where she makes love with Rodolphe.

It is clear, then, that in *Madame Bovary* the 'debauches of the imagination' are achieved by a practice of veiling, suppression, and transference. From this it follows that sexual implications may be present in episodes which are not ostensibly erotic. It is at this point that we may return to Charles's double incompetence. The operation on Hippolyte's club-foot, which occurs at the very centre of the novel, is directly implicated in Emma's erotic motivation. She has begun to grow tired of Rodolphe, and her fantasy of Charles's fame as a surgeon momentarily arouses in her a sexual response. But his pathetic failure finishes him in her eyes, and she returns to Rodolphe with a renewed and blatantly physical passion. The turning-point takes the form of a scene in which Emma watches Charles pacing up and down the room while from outside come the terrible screams of Hippolyte as he undergoes amputation.

I would emphasize that these remarks are not designed to assert the idiotic theory that what *Madame Bovary* is 'really' about is Flaubert's fears of castration or impotence. I merely wish to point to the fact that these different echoes of the writer and his exercise permeate all of Flaubert's work. Whether they are linked in his subconscious is not in question here. The narrative is demonstrably fabricated from materials which, in Jules's meditations, or in the scarcely less fictional drama of the correspondence, are figures of the writer's problems.

The examples considered so far already suggest that the displacement of these materials from one side of the fence to the other may often take the form of an inversion. Charles's botched surgery is, in one sense, at the opposite end of the scale from Flaubert's accomplished stitching together of sentences to form a perfectly seamless textual body. But one can go further than this and say that the failure of the characters is a necessary condition of the artist's success. The world of Flaubert's novels is notoriously one in which all values are eroded, all dreams deflated. The only way for its inhabitants to achieve success is to remain immaculately and aggressively banal. Imagination is a disease which will infallibly cripple or kill unless one learns, like Henry, to immunize oneself against it. Emma enacts this predicament by attempting to apply to the real world an imaginative sensibility which can only be productive, according to Flaubert's logic, in the realm of art. Indeed,

her error – the attempt to live life as if it were a novel – is one which is peculiarly visible to a novelist who has learnt Jules's lesson, and thus eminently suited, as Jules's story is not, to be the subject of a novel. Emma's experiments are doomed to disaster, one might say, because she fails to recognize that she *is* a character in a novel; the fact that the writer and reader know she is provides the ultimate grounding for the novel's ironic perspective. What is loss for the character is gain for the novelist; *Madame Bovary* is the apotheosis of the mastered imagination, its subject the tragedy of imagination dissipated and broken on the wheel of reality. The pathos is all the greater because the subject is, in its basic essentials, a 'realist' subject: Emma perceives the triviality of everyday reality, but can't escape from it; the writer can.

At the point where Léon begins to tire of his vacuous relationship with Emma, Binet says to him:

> 'The trouble with you is that you don't know how to relax.'
> 'And what's the best way of doing that?'
> 'If I were you, I should invest in a lathe.'
> 'But I don't know how to work a lathe.'
> 'I hadn't thought of that,' said the other, stroking his chin with a mingled air of contempt and satisfaction.

The exchange could almost be a burlesque passage between a travestied author and his even less well endowed character.

It is in this sense, above all, that the view of *Madame Bovary* as an exercise, of what Flaubert denied himself in order to write the novel, has its furthest reach. Like Cervantes, he uses at one remove all the materials and devices of the 'conventional' novel. The actual elopement of the 1845 *Éducation sentimentale* is replaced in *Madame Bovary* by an imagined elopement; Emma's dreams, although shown to be both precarious and dangerous, none the less bring into the novel the kind of exotic fantasies the writer and the reader hanker after; the pleasures of sex, the drama of death, the conversion of heroine into saint, are enacted for us in one form or another. The novel must work at that level – the level of conventional response – if its irony is to bite deep. It is as if Flaubert were out to beat the commonplace at its own game. The reader must sympathize with, identify with Emma, who is after all as seductive as a

good novel, in order to grasp the point about the inauthenticity of such identification. But conversely, once the magic has begun to work, the reader is drawn deeper and deeper into a demonstration of the procedures by which we fictionalize our lives, or mistake the fictional for the real. When Flaubert had written about half of his novel, he described what he was engaged in as 'a work of criticism, or rather of anatomy' (letter of 2 January 1854). The remark is true in more than one sense, but the sense we are concerned with here is the literary one: *Madame Bovary* as an exercise in literary criticism.

Novels can only produce their effect by making things interesting. Their materials, viewed dispassionately, are always commonplace. They deal endlessly in the same currency – quests, embraces, duels, suicides – while building upon it constantly changing imaginative structures. *Madame Bovary* is of course no exception: and, more than most novels, it reveals how the process works. Sexual desire and its consummation, as an unadorned commonplace, appears as unendingly repetitious, the nadir of all commonplaces: 'As the charm of novelty slipped from her like a dress, Rodolphe saw nothing but the naked horror of an eternal monotony of passion, always with the same face, always speaking the same words.' In order to be made interesting, it has constantly to be dressed up, refined on, deferred, transposed into sentimental poetry or romantic novels; the transaction itself must be disguised and displaced. So, too, in Emma's dealings with Lheureux, the circulation of bills of exchange, the naked and banal truth of commerce, supports an ever-growing superstructure of fantasies: Emma uses paper money to furnish the world of her imagination. And, most strikingly of all, language becomes in the mouth of the characters a grossly inflated or counterfeit currency. There is hardly a single oral utterance in the whole book which is not banal or inauthentic. The characters speak in double quotation marks: their dialogues are presented to us not as instances of communication but as examples of the kind of things people conventionally say. The same effect is conveyed outside the dialogue proper by the use of italics indicating that a phrase is an *idée reçue* (Flaubert's project for a *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* developed as he was writing *Madame Bovary*). Language is shown to be doubly inauthentic in that it both exceeds and falls short of