

## I. Introduction

### Flaubert's Satire on French Society

That Flaubert was one of the greatest writers who ever lived in France is now commonly admitted, and his greatness principally depends upon the extraordinary vigour and exactitude of his style. Less perhaps than any other writer, not of France, but of modern Europe, Flaubert yields admission to the inexact, the abstract, the vaguely inapt expression which is the bane of ordinary methods of composition. He never indulgently or wearily went on, leaving behind him a phrase which almost expressed his meaning. As a writer, Flaubert was nearly equal parts romantic, realist, and pure stylist. Hence, members of various schools, especially realists and formalists, have traced their origins to his work. The exactitude with which he adapts his expressions to his purpose can be seen in all parts of his work, especially in the portraits he draws of the figures in his principal romances. The degree to which Flaubert's fame has extended since his death presents an interesting chapter of literary history in itself.

Gustave Flaubert's masterpiece *Madame Bovary* took him five years to complete. Flaubert was a perfectionist. His aim was to achieve a rigidly objective form of art presented in the most perfect form. He often worked seven hours a day for many days on a single page trying to achieve the perfect balance. Flaubert would write important scenes, such as the agricultural scene in *Madame Bovary*, over and over again to obtain a flawless style.

The circumstances of Flaubert's life have nothing in common with those he created for his most famous character Emma Bovary. Though admired by his French contemporaries, Flaubert was deeply hurt by the moral outrage *Madame Bovary* provoked at its publication in 1857. The novel depicted extramarital sex and Flaubert

and his publisher were put on trial for violation of public morals. They were acquitted, but the experience intensified Flaubert's hatred of middle-class morality.

The hatred of middle-class values is strongly apparent in *Madame Bovary*. In Flaubert's lifetime, France was caught in the throes of immense social upheaval. The Revolution of 1789 and the imperial reign of Napoleon were recent memories, and the collapse of the aristocracy was paralleled by the rise of a new middle class—or bourgeoisie—made up of merchants and capitalists with commercial, rather than inherited, fortunes. As a member of the educated elite, Flaubert found the moral conservatism, rough manners, and unsophisticated taste of this new class appalling. He attacked the merchant class in *Madame Bovary*, the story of a woman imprisoned by her middle-class surroundings.

In addition to criticizing the middle class, Flaubert's novel also reacted against romanticism. Romantic writers, who were popular in France between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, wrote emotional, subjective novels that stressed feeling at the expense of facts and reason. In *Madame Bovary*, romanticism is present, but Flaubert treats it with irony. Flaubert allows himself a few romantic moments but recognizes their flaws.

Flaubert approaches romanticism with self-conscious irony, pointing out its flaws even as he is tempted by it. Emma, on the other hand, never recognizes that her desires are unreasonable. Emma's failure is not completely her own. Her character demonstrates the many ways in which circumstance, rather than free will determined the position of women in the nineteenth century. If Emma were as rich as her lover, Rodolphe, for instance, she would be free to indulge the lifestyle she imagines. Flaubert suggests at times that her dissatisfaction with the bourgeois society she lives in is justified. Emma's plight is emblematic of the difficulties of any sensitive person

trapped among the French bourgeoisie. But Emma's inability to accept her situation and her attempt to escape it through adultery and deception constitute moral errors. These mistakes bring about her ruin and, in the process, cause harm to innocent people around her. Emma's role as a woman may have an even greater effect on the course of her life than her social status does. Emma is frequently portrayed as the object of a man's gaze. Even Flaubert's, since the whole novel is essentially a description of how he sees Emma. Moreover, Emma's only power over the men in her life is sexual. Near the end of her life, when she searches desperately for money, she has to ask men for it, and the only thing she can use to persuade them to give it to her is sex. Emma's prostitution is the result of her self-destructive spending, but the fact that, as a woman, she has no other means of finding money is a result of the misogynistic society in which she lives. Even to take her own life, she must resort to sexual power, using Justin's love for her to convince him to do what she wants.

Though Madame Bovary escapes Flaubert's predilection for overblown, histrionic description, his heroine is primarily a woman of gestures, a mime of the grandly operatic emotions she yearns to feel. Flaubert may have wanted us to regard her as essentially kitsch, a creature formed by impossible reveries of blissful self-fulfillment, whether in marriage, passion or religious observance. But Emma nonetheless tries, and tries hard, to live her dreams. Emma Bovary's desire to have extramarital affairs because she felt that her life was needlessly boring and she deserved better. She would build up these fantasies of amazing men who traveled the world, and went on adventures, and were rich and powerful. They would sweep in like knights in shining armor filling her life with riches and pleasures and excitement. These were her dreams, the fantasies she played out in her head as she snuck opium and other make-me-happy substances from her pharmacist husband. And, she did

have affairs with men exactly like this throughout the book. But, in the end, they would use her and leave her, ascending off on more adventures and leaving her none the wiser as to why her heart ached because she would repeat the mistake over and over again with different men. The end result was always the same. In the end, she was depressed, broken, and had romanticized suicide to the point of committing it.

Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* negotiates between the world as it is and the world as Emma would wish it to be. This French novel is brilliant in its realistic portrayal of the ennui that was endemic in the French countryside of the time. *Madame Bovary* is forward looking, revolutionary, and controversial for its time. The novel was influential in the shaping of future work of realism and modernism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Madame Bovary* got to the very center of the romanticism of the previous century and exploded the myths that lay at its foundations, especially by stressing romanticism's incompatibility with the modern world. Flaubert treats sex in a straightforward and modern way, admitting that sexual pleasure is not merely the preserve of the men, but that willful, irresponsible desire can be as much the property of women. *Madame Bovary* treads a fine line between the desire for a more romantic life and understanding the inevitability of its eventual frustration.

Flaubert is rarely sarcastic in his descriptions of the bourgeoisie, preferring to portray the class through example or a less intrusive irony. Comedy is often present where the negative aspects of the middle class are being conveyed, even in the case of bourgeois churchgoers. Throughout *Madame Bovary* religious followers are shown to be primarily concerned with the superficial, showy side of their faith, and actually demonstrate little genuine piety. Class distinctions in *Madame Bovary* are proven to be of vital importance. No character places greater significance on social class than Emma Bovary herself. She reflects Flaubert's opinions of the middle class in many

ways. She is bored by Homais's lengthy speeches and is generally dissatisfied with the attitudes of those in her class. Emma is also a member of the bourgeoisie. With regard to religion, she too is drawn to sensation rather than piety, as illustrated by her fascination with the sounds of religious words and the pictures in her prayer book during her time at the convent. It seems that Emma's original attraction to religion is not dissimilar to the superficial nature of the Church that she meets later in the novel.

Emma is a very vivid character. She is somebody desperately looking to elevate herself above her petit bourgeois environment. She craves riches and refinement. She craves excitement. She is dreadfully capricious and deceitful in her quest to rise above. She has poetic dreams of living life in castles and on beautiful islands with dashing lovers. The most realistic part to her is that she is not particularly tinged with any nobility but is greedy and brutal. *Madame Bovary* is at once an unsparing depiction of a woman's gradual corruption and a savagely ironic study of human shallowness and stupidity.

The importance of irony in modern art and literature and, more latterly, in the intellectual sciences and in culture generally, can hardly be overestimated. For some writers, the cultivation of irony is the most essential qualification for any thought, any art or literature or social or political theory to be truly modern. Literature participates just as powerfully in the nineteenth-century's interpretation of classical culture.

Gustave Flaubert possessed strong opinions on political and social matters in society. Governmental, religious, and literary interests were among his concerns. Flaubert rejected all forms of government, especially the State. He strongly resented the "Neo-Catholicism" views that began replacing older religious ideas. Writing techniques and beliefs separated Flaubert from other writers of the time. Gustave Flaubert also embraced personal views and definitions of the "bourgeois." These

political and social views formed the underlying foundation for his writings.

In September 1849, Flaubert completed the first version of a novel, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*. At the end of the reading, his friends told him to throw the manuscript in the fire, suggesting instead that he focus on day to day life rather than on fantastic subjects. In 1850, after returning from Egypt, Flaubert began work on *Madame Bovary*. The novel, which took five years to write, was serialized in the *Revue de Paris* in 1856. The government brought an action against the publisher and against the author on the charge of immorality, but both were acquitted. When *Madame Bovary* appeared in book form, it met with a warm reception. In 1858, Flaubert traveled to Carthage to gather material for his next novel, *Salammbô*. The novel was completed in 1862 after four years of work.

Flaubert's curious modes of composition favored and were emphasized by these peculiarities. He worked in sullen solitude, sometimes occupying a week in the completion of one page, never satisfied with what he had composed, violently tormenting his brain for the best turn of a phrase, the final adjective. His incessant labors were rewarded. His private letters show that he was not one of those to whom easy and correct language came naturally the letters also undermine Flaubert's self-image of remorseless work and austere living: not just in the sexual escapades during trips to Paris, but in his undiminished activism in various causes. Much energy goes into lobbying, both in person and by letter. He gained his extraordinary perfection with the unceasing sweat of his brow. Many critics consider Flaubert's best works to be models of style.

Classicism, like other commonplace discourse, was available for exchange amongst the middle-class and literate, signaling a set of uninvestigated general values characterized as "bourgeois." Flaubert ironizes these unreflecting bourgeois values in

*Madame Bovary* as a particular kind of bovarism. Flaubert's novel ironizes those fictions that make grand statements about life. In *Madame Bovary* Flaubert's use of irony is exceptionally vivid. Flaubert's use of irony contributes to the character development of Madame Bovary and other characters in the novel. By combining ironic romanticism and literal realistic narration, Flaubert captures his characters and their struggles more than he would be able to by relying mostly on the literal or the romantic. Flaubert's artistic sensibility veered most naturally to gaudy excess, not to say a voyeuristic passion for the fleshy, sanguinary and transgressive.

*Madame Bovary* is in essence, an exploration of provincial boredom and ironically one of the best loved of all nineteenth-century novels. Published in 1857, it was a controversial novel causing a moral uproar that, before his subsequent acquittal, actually landed Flaubert in court. Despite this fracas, the novel became a trailblazing exploration of the themes of boredom, adultery and materialism, and is, therefore, as relevant today as it has ever been.

The publication of *Madame Bovary* in 1857 was followed by more scandal than admiration; it was not understood at first that this novel was the beginning of something new. The scrupulously truthful portraiture of life. Gradually, this aspect of his genius was accepted, and it began to crowd out all others. At the time of his death he was widely regarded as the most influential French Realist. Under this aspect Flaubert exercised an extraordinary influence over Guy de Maupassant, Edmond de Goncourt, Alphonse Daudet, and Zola. Even after the decline of the Realist school, Flaubert did not lose prestige in the literary community. He continues to appeal to other writers because of his deep commitment to aesthetic principles, his devotion to style, and his indefatigable pursuit of the perfect expression.

Flaubert was by nature melancholic. His perfectionism, long hours at his work

table with a frog inkwell, only made his life harder. Flaubert's other, non-literary life was marked by his prodigious appetite for prostitutes, which occasionally led to venereal infections. His last years were shadowed by financial worries. He helped with his modest fortune his niece's family after their bankruptcy.

Flaubert is famous as the French novelist of the realist school, best-known for *Madame Bovary* (1857), a story of adultery and unhappy love affair of the provincial wife Emma Bovary. As a writer Flaubert was a perfectionist, who did not make a distinction between a beautiful or ugly subject, all was in the style. The idea, he argued, only exists by virtue of its form, its elements included the perfect word, cunningly contrived and verified rhythms, and a genuine architectural structure.

Flaubert's severe stylistic economy heavily depends on its terse, efficient quotation of bovarism in the novel. He relies on the same culture he ironized, both participating in and critiquing the novelistic expectations of his readership. Flaubert, in countless letters, ironizes and satirizes the thoughtless clichés of his contemporary bourgeois culture. Flaubert's first published novel, *Madame Bovary*, demonstrates this deep fascination with the thoughtless banalities of bovarism in his careful, even tedious crafting of the novel.

Many of the characters and events in the novel *Madame Bovary* were based on actual events and people from Flaubert's life. The Bovaries were based on the Delamares. Doctor Lariviere was based on Flaubert's father, and the maid, Felicite, was based on Flaubert's nurse, Julie. Flaubert's constant attention to detail and his use of actual events as a basis for the book led to his literary masterpiece, *Madame Bovary*. One of Flaubert's main motivations in writing the novel *Madame Bovary* was his antipathy for the bourgeois. Flaubert's definition of bourgeois was not related to social rank. Flaubert considered society a monster, and rejected the humanity and



uniqueness of the individual person. The bourgeois were responsible for the war with Prussia, Flaubert thought.

The setting of *Madame Bovary* is crucial to the novel for several reasons. First, it is important as it applies to Flaubert's realist style and social commentary. Secondly, the setting is important in how it relates to the protagonist Emma. It has been calculated that the novel begins in October 1827 and ends in August 1846. This is around the era known as the "July Monarchy", or the rule of King Louis-Philippe. This was a period in which there was a great up-surge in the power of the bourgeois middle class. Flaubert detested the bourgeoisie. Much of the time and effort, therefore, that he spends detailing the customs of the rural French people can be interpreted as social criticism.

Flaubert put much effort into making sure his depictions of common life were accurate. This was aided by the fact that he chose a subject that was very familiar to him. He chose to set the story in and around the city of Rouen in Normandy, the setting of his own birth and childhood. This care and detail that Flaubert gives to his setting is important in looking at the style of the novel. It is this faithfulness to the mundane elements of country life that has garnered the book its reputation as the beginning of the literary movement known as "literary realism".

*Madame Bovary* was published in two volumes in 1857, but it appeared originally in the *Revue de Paris*, 1856-57. Emma Bovary is married to Charles Bovary, a physician. As a girl Emma has read Walter Scott, she has romantic dreams and longs for adventure. For whose sake was she virtuous? Emma seeks release from the boredom of her marriage in love affairs with two men. The novel provoked an outrage. Flaubert was even tried and acquitted on charges of immorality for it. The

character of Emma was important to the author as society offered her no escape.

Flaubert's protagonist Emma in the novel *Madam Bovary* (1994), is presented as the romantic heroine or middle class neurotic that attracts the attention of most of the contemporary critics. The controversial nature of the novel and Flaubert's paradoxical presentation of female heroine causes to express different kind of criticisms of this book. Some of the critics comment over the Flaubert's text as the transition between romanticism and realism. Judy Richardson, in the essay *A read aloud for romantic and realists* says:

Flaubert wrote in an age when romanticism was waning and realism was taking hold. The popularity of Byron had diminished. Flaubert himself was a bourgeois and observed carefully the culture of his time. His characters illustrate romanticism and realism. Emma is a romantic, Charles is the typical bourgeoisies, satisfied to sit back and let the world happen all around him. (5)

Some of the critics accuses Flaubert as a misogynist due to his portrayal of Emma as the victim of the male superiority. William C. Vanderwolk in his essay *The masculine: Gender and creativity in Madam Bovary* writes, "Flaubert's correspondence reveals him to be a misogynist, his reflection on women and sex consisting mainly of vulgarities transmitted to male friends and condescending homilies sent to Louise Colet" (210). Despite the massive outpouring of historical and historiographical writings during the nineteenth century, few writers question the possibilities for writing history more than Flaubert. Jed Deppman writes about the paradoxical double movement of Flaubert's work and says:

On the one hand, he selects overtly historical material and combines it with rigorous research, meticulous documentation, and a drive to

amass "what is known" about the subjects he treats. On the other hand, his books never commit blindly to archival empiricism, and all of his texts have complex and studied stylistic features that make it impossible to reduce them to historiography. (29)

Some other critics comment over the novel as the transition of Western Europe between secular and religious. Susanna Lee in her essay *Flaubert's Blague Superieure: The secular world of Madam Bovary* comments, "Madam Bovary's writing coincides with a significant periods of spiritual and philosophical transition in Western Europe from a religious to a secular culture" (79).

This novel is also criticized as the spiritual wasteland as well as from the existential point of view. It becomes obvious as Roger Clark, in the Introduction ' of the novel says, "Forced to exist in this spiritual wasteland, surrounded by an army of hollow men, creator and character [...]. A feeling of existential disgust" (XIII).

The primary source of observation and analysis will be the text itself. For secondary sources, available critical reading and evaluation from authentic sources on the text and author will be thoroughly studied. This dissertation will take ideas developed in the field of Marxism as a supportive tool to prove the hypothesis.

The first chapter deals with an introductory aspect of the dissertation. The second chapter delves into the theoretical modality that is to be effectively applied in the analysis of the novel. Therefore, it provides an introduction of the tool that is Marxism, and its development. The third chapter of the dissertation presents an analysis of the novel at considerable length on the theoretical modality defined and developed in the second chapter. The fourth chapter concludes the research work. Standing on the firm foundation of the analysis of the text done extensively in the third chapter, it tries to prove my hypothesis stated in the thesis proposal.

## II. Irony as a Theoretical Modality

Irony, one of the literary devices, is saying something contrary to what is understood or it is the difference between form and meaning, appearance and reality. According to Samuel Johnson, irony can be defined, "as a mode of speech of which the meaning is contrary to the world" (qtd. in Enright 5). The significant word *eironeia* first occurs in the dialogues of Plato with reference to Socrates. Etymologically irony is derived from the Greek 'eiron' where the dissembling character Eiron deliberately spoke pretending less knowledgeable than actually he was. In this way irony in its Greek use in the Eiron, were deliberately spoken in understatement and alazoo, the self- deceiving stupid is a victim of the irony. Such a contrast between appearance and reality or eironic and alazo features in irony have been later explored as powerful rhetorical enforcement in which surface meaning is totally different from the intended meaning. So, it becomes difficult to immediate understanding.

Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian had defined irony with reference to Socrates. According to Cicero, "a Latin word *ironia* was a way of making what one said and meant more effective.; it was not a way of abstaining from belief or commitment" (44). Aristotle has defined it in the sense of "Self depreciating dissimulation, modesty, though only pretended, at least seems better than ostentation" (qtd in Muecke 16). Whereas Friedrich Schlegel defines irony, "a form of paradox; a 'paradox is the *condllia sine qua non* of irony, its soul, its source and its principle". It is equally fatal for the mind to have a system and to have none. It will simply have to decide to combine the two" (qtd in Muecke 24). *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* defines the term irony as, "Irony is a device used in speaking and writing to deliberately express

the ideas so they can be understood in two way” (404). According to *Concise Oxford Dictionary* the literary meaning of the irony as:

Expression of one's meaning by Language, especially simulated adoption of another's point of view or laudatory tone for purpose of ridicule; ill-timed or perverse arrival of event or circumstance in itself desirable, as if in mockery of the fitness of things; use of language that has an outer meaning for the persons addressed or concerned. (5)

Earlier the irony was defined as a gap between sayings and said, between speaking position and posited truth. It was also understood as a parody where expressed meaning becomes different from intended meaning, but at the dawn of nineteenth century and end of the eighteenth century, the word irony got multiple meanings so old way of knowing irony became changed, and radical concept of its transformation came in existence. After that irony could be understood as intentional and instrumental that can be representative in art. So, irony became double natured: instrumental and observable that can generalize the whole world as a theatre and in the hand of cosmic force all human being as a mere characters.

### **Types of Irony**

We can see many differences in the term irony from the perspectives of defined and undefined irony. According to these difference ironies can be classified as a Socratic irony, verbal irony, situational irony, romantic irony, cosmic irony, dramatic irony, structural irony, closed irony and deconstructive irony and so on.

Socratic irony can be found in dialogues written by Plato in which Socrates is featured as an important interlocutor. Later this irony came to be called Socratic irony. This irony refers to the Socrates' deliberate pretension to be ignorant under the guise of seeking to be taught by others but ultimately he teaches others, "investigating

the things beneath and earth and in the heavens" (Muecke 9). In which he finds loopholes of that person and starts praising his failures as his achievements. He wants to show him as skeptical and asks its answers as if he is ignorant about it but indeed, he has already known its possible result. Step by step he finds faults of his discussant partner. This effect of irony is intensified by the listeners so that he can be able to find intended meanings but that discussant partner blindly blames as a white answer for his response. The Socratic irony has also been adopted by Cicero and Quintilian who defined irony, "as a figure of speech to elaborate" the verbal strategy of a whole argument" (qtd in Muecke 17).

Socratic irony has been regarded with the ambivalence, nostalgia and mourning which concerns about the philosophy and literature. The hidden truth of Socratic irony constitutes the denial of a conception of language as word play or production of meaning in favor of the reassuring belief that meaning preexists language. Socratic irony is related to the idea that a meaning or 'said' is behind the particular utterance. His irony is a mode of practical and affirmative self-creation, always different and distant from what is said and presented.

Verbal irony arises from the contrast between the surface meaning and the underlying meaning in which speaker's implied meaning differs from the intended meaning. It brings a straightforward case of an ironic reversal. The ironic intensity of the verbal irony of achieving ostensible meaning. Abrams says, "the ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation but with indications in the overall speech situation that a speaker intends a very different and often opposite attitude or evaluation" (97). According Muecke, the basic features of verbal irony, which are:

A game of two players, the ironist, is his/ her role of naif, proffers a text but in such a way or in such a context as will stimulate the reader to reject its expressed literal meaning in favor of an unexpected transliteral meaning of contrasting import... (in which the basic technique is either that going with the ironic but the place him/ her in high relief or that of depreciating one self, which is the countersinking ontoglid method. (35-36)

There can be realized binary oppositions in respect of verbal irony. Where ironic interpretation depends upon speaker's perspective in which what is said through apposing meaning. Irony becomes feeling of paradox, and ambivalence and the ambiguity of a double contradictory reality. Writers even employ irony as certain structural features that help maintain a double level of meaning can timed throughout a work. The binary oppositions in speaker ironies are often realized as simple logical negation can be realized as a psychological consistency opposition where implicit negation represents a travel way to construct a binary opposition.

Dramatic irony occurs in a play or story whenever the audience sees a character that becomes confident of his action unaware of his ignorance. The effect of dramatic irony depends on the authors ironic intention shared with audience. Characters belief and actions become ironic with the dramatic situation because they are very different from the reality of their actions. Therefore dramatic irony is a situation in which the reader or audience early knows the circumstances of characters deeds but the character that is doing action is totally ignorant about the outcome of his deeds. According to Abrams:

Dramatic irony involves a situation in a play or reader shares with the author the knowledge of present or future circumstances of which a

character is ignorant; in that situation, the character unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or expects the opposite of what we know that fate holds in store, or says something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way that the character intends. (99)

Sometimes dramatic irony can become comic irony if the revelation of reality generates humor, thereby leading the characters to the happy resolution where the term dramatic means "powerful sense of exciting and gripping situation" (66).

Dramatic irony becomes tragic when the demystification of the real situation leads to a typical case involving victim with certain fears, hopes or expectations who acting on the basis of these, takes steps to avoid a foreseen evil or profit from a foreseen good, but this actions serve only to lock him into a causal chain that leads inevitable to his downfall (Muecke 69).

Oedipus Rex, the Greek tragedy by Sophocles presents dramatic irony where king Oedipus quarrels with a king and kills him but he is totally ignorant whom he has killed is his own father Oedipus, wants to find out the murderer of the king Liaus and curses him and makes the determination that he will kill the murderer of King and curses him and makes the determination that he will kill the murderer of King Liaus but indeed he has unknowingly promised and cursed himself.

Romantic irony is most commonly associated with the Jena Romantics: the Schlegel brothers, August Wilhelm and Friedrich Ludwig Tieck, Karl Wilhelm, Ferdinand Solgar and Novalis. The main source of the writings with regard to irony was the Journal Athenaeum, which in its brief history from 1798 to 1800 published a series of text that crossed the genres of philosophy, literature, criticism and review and included a highly influential collection of fragments. Romantic irony regards



irony as some thing like human condition or predicament. Romantic irony is also one of the earliest and most intense modes of anti-humanism which is also called paradoxical irony. Romantic irony has emerged out of the philosophical and aesthetic speculations about the paradoxical relationship between origin and effect, nature and human beings, origin and fall, infinite or what is not infinite. It is not that there is an original paradise or plentitude from which we are separated. On the contrary, it is only in diverse life itself, in all its difference and its fragmentation, that we get any sense or idea of some whole or origin. German thinker Friedrich Schlegel says "irony as no thing to joke about, that's true of course and of course; it is not true... affirm and deny in one sentence and you too can be romantic ironist" (15). He further describes irony as:

The only involuntary and yet completely deliberated dissimulation that everything is playful and serious, guilelessly open and deeply hidden. It originates in the union of *savior vivre* and scientific spirit, in the conjunctions of a perfectly instinctive and perfectly conscious philosophy. It contains and arouses a feeling of indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and the necessities of complete communication (qtd. in Mucke 26).

Enright writes, "Keats mixed ardor with reasoned skepticism; he found life both beautiful and painful". Byron exhibits "a heroic balancing between enthusiastic commitment and sophisticated skepticism, he is at the same time romantic and unromantic solemn and flippant, high flown and down to earth by turn" (74). M.H. Abram's attitude about the irony is a term introduced by Friedrich Schlegel to designate a mode of dramatic or narrative writing in which author wants to express illusion of reality.

The notion of irony has established literature as the site of human consciousness which is full of dialectical tensions. Artist wants to bring balance between these dialectical tensions, and paradoxes and becomes obliged to recognize the limitations of the his perceptions of the infinite as inevitable partial and thus he most rightly value them about which Enright says a balance in his work between rhapsodic affirmation and skeptical reservations.

Fate plays vital role in cosmic irony in which Destiny, Diety, Gods and goddess deliberately manipulate events and human beings and create adverse situation to the protagonist and man becomes the puppet in the hands of destiny or supernatural force. According to Muecke, the cosmic irony is, "irony of the universe with man or the individual as victim" (23).

Some times universe becomes hostile force to the characters and question about the existence of god or supernatural power arises itself. Events and not guided by the human will rather they are directed by the will of gods. If we see the Hardy's work whether characters are good or bad they are derived to the destructed, their struggle to save themselves from the predicament goes in vain. Same times this irony seems as Sophoclean irony but in Hardy's work we can see the representation of the cosmos. Here, significance lies in the human an effort to show himself great and powerful but human existence become temporary and ironic.

Structural irony arises from the mismatch between meaning and evaluation of the work. It depends on knowledge of the author's intension which is shared by the reader but it is not intended by the speaker. It is very much similar to the verbal irony which depends on knowledge of the speaker's ironic intention which is shared by both reader and speaker. This irony invents the naive hero who becomes the main participant in the story or play. Such type of hero neither becomes credulous nor

stupid, he nevertheless manifests a failure of insight, viewing and appraising his own motives. *Gulliver's Travel* by Swift and *Pale Fire* by Vladimir Nobokov can be taken as the example of the invention of the naive hero. So reader must be keen to find out the implicit meaning of the very structure.

Irony of situation consists of the discrepancy between appearance and reality, expectation and outcome of the expectation. According to Kierkegaard, situational irony is, "not present in nature for one who is too natural and too naive, but only exhibits it for one who is himself ironically developed" (271). Situational ironies are most related about the state of affairs rather than individuals. In this irony uninvolved persons is silently contemplating about the affair where nothing is spoken or no one is involved about which Muecke says, "we shall not view a situation as ironic unless we believe, there are those, somewhere or other, who do not" (26). In the situational irony an observer can interpret the irony from the perspective of situation where action and attitudes gets associated and disassociated. So this irony gives focus on the perspectives from which irony can be interpreted. In contrast to the logical and psychological judgments underlying the binary oppositions structured in speaker' ironies, the binary oppositions in situational ironies structured oppositions. Where logical negation plays no roles interpreting the situations.

This irony is based on theoretical concepts of Paul De man and Derrida which shows impossibility to fix ironic meaning. According to De man, Irony divides the flow of temporal experience into a past that is pure mystification and a future that remains harassed forever by a relapse within the authenticity. It can know this in authenticity but can never overcome it. It can only restate and repeat in on an increasingly conscious level but it remains endlessly caught in the impossibility of making this knowledge applicable to the empirical world.

So, it can not be possible to find fix ironic meaning rather this ironic meaning is bound to change and flux. About the De Man's irony Beerendra Pandey puts his essay on "Deconstructive irony" becomes the motor of the entire rhetorical system. It signifies the refusal to hypostatize notions of the self, of meaning, or interpretive as an end point" to the "otherwise vertiginous process of textual such as Booths' sharable norms" (55). This irony believes in the deferral meanings which are beyond the certainty fixity, and centrality. So, thinking irony must be habituated in the context. These contexts as the effect of a multiplicity of forces that will have effects beyond any recognized and intended context: this in turn expands the domain of responsibility and how can read a text.

In this way, irony has become the mode of life which is based on multiple experience and interpretation. Old ways of thinking irony as saying something which is different from understood meaning is now changed. Now irony depends on the various perspectives of the people which differs from context to context and open ended and gets base on multiple explanations and interpretations.

### **Flaubertian Irony**

Gustave Flaubert, one of the prominent French novelists, came in the field of literature as an ironist. For him irony is not just an instrument of deflation and equalization with the climatic convergence of social political and sentimental words like in part three of *L' Education*. Irony becomes an accomplice of the sublime. More especially Flaubert's representation of 1848 revolution tends to bring two modes into a relation of simultaneous opposition and tendency. Flaubert himself is spoken by an anonymous public discourse and his entire aesthetic project consisted in the effort to define on authentic self from within the voice of other.

Flaubertian irony is notoriously double edged, exposing not only the illusions of the characters but also the potential errors of the novelist himself, and almost always Flaubert writes in such a way as to challenge the very novelistic authority upon which his narrative also depends. This type of writing disputes a linear conception of time displacing the idea of history. From its basic ideological discursively and opening it to the ratios of terror and joy, anxiety and freedom and relationship between narrative and knowledge. The novelists' own attempt to be original in which Flaubert uses cliché and recycled knowledge as the very building blocks of his novel. He confronts himself with the near impossible challenge of finding novelty through his very refusal of it. The impersonality of the narrative is a form of ironic dispersion which is narrated from the perspective of the medium in which interaction of both narrative is a form of ironic dispersion which is narrated from the perspective of the medium in which interaction of both narrative discourses make possible ironic meaning in just a position.

Flaubert uses this meaning of the figural narrative situation to construct and recurrence of context. This permits the reader to achieve a specific formation of experience that makes possible the interpretation certain stimuli as irony signals. The spectrum of markings by which perspective is fixed in spectrum is Flaubert's signaling of irony. This fixing of perspective is always most apparent where the figural medium appears expressly and where its means of viewing and speaking to accentuated additionally by means of clichés.

What we characterized at the outset, in opposition to the internal speech situation, as the external reception situation can be described more closely from two angles. On the one hand from the stand point of the fictional discourse itself that is, in terms of what Wayne Booth has called the rhetoric of fiction. On the other from the

standpoint of the real reader, who introduces his own identity into the role given in advance by the text of implicit or as both terms it, the postulated reader. This Socio-cultural and socio-psychological identity of the real reader decides how the role of the postulated reader is concretized in particular case.

The history of approximations of and divergences from this role is the history of the freedom of the real reader in relationship to it, in the history of the reception of the work. The postulated reader is accordingly not a normative construct that could, or would want to, curtail this freedom of the real reader. This rather is a heuristic construct, without which the freedom of the real reader is not even describable. Individual concretizations of a role can be demonstrated as such only to the extent that one is able to refer systematically to a role construct.

The different can be clarified through reference to the readers of novels, on the level of narrated story, his protagonist appears as a real reader, who concretizes Romantic novels in a way that can be characterized today in full accord with the Freudian concept of identification that is as the. "assimilation of an ego to an alien ego, in consequence of which first ego behaves in certain respects like that other ego, imitates it, so to speak absorbs it" (qtd. in Morton 281). The implicit reader is assigned the task of perceiving all this, and thereby the task of perceiving the ironic disputation as a barrier of to identification which thematizes the structures of perception themselves, and to some extent Flaubert is entirely concert when he regards his irony not as a reduction but as intensification of the pathetic.

He writes to Louise Colet, irony subtracts nothing from the pathos; on the contrary it exaggerates it. Irony directs the attitude of the reader away from the initially suggested identification which the suffering figures back to the uncompressible loss of self as the true cause of their suffering. It bases pathos in

reflection and precisely therein is able to exaggerate it. The pain however, remains thereby essentially the pain of ethos, the reader knows himself to be immune. Even the exaggerated suffering remains for him a spectacle in which he is not involved.

Thus the dissociation of irony as a *mariere absolute de voirles* chooses and ironized medium as denied offer of identification refers back to that neoteric exclusion of self that we describe at the outset in connection with Kierkegaard as the characteristics feature of ironic communities of communication. Impersonality does not mean absence of subjectivity but rather the negativity of the ironically free subject. In this freedom it rescues itself in the face of the superior force of discourses. The relation to truths that have been seen through is the truth of irony, which as such can not remain Solipsistic but rather demands a reader.

The implicit reader of Flaubert in the subject of an ironic reading, a reading that, coming from the 'library', shares the distance of the author from the listed, discourses and their victims. Flaubert's comic discourse is a matter of totalizing the reader' solidarity against an object and person and how far this discourse is removed from the perceptions strategy of the act of rhetorical irony. This ironic discourse is realized in so far as it transcendent the status of ironic negation and moves in the direction of an irony that makes distancing and dialogically in distinguishable, indeed, distance makes dialogistic possible. Jean Paul Sartre has rightly stressed that, "Flaubert, despite apparent reader rejection, was the accepted, indeed the decorated, author of second empire. Flaubert had an audience, a bourgeois audience" (qtd. in Morton 283). More precisely on enlighten elite, which Sartre locates in the upper level of the middle classes.

He bases this supposition on his socio-psychological hypothesis of an objective neurosis: the bourgeoisie intelligentsia, so goes the hypothesis, is by nature

essentially republican can it live, however, with the trauma of the proletariat suppressed in the June massacre of 1848: it seeks a compensation for trauma in a scientific ideology, behind which is concluded a sadomasochistic hatred of its men class; and it is precisely this hatred that it encounters in the work of Flaubert, which similarly, in the guise of scientific supersonalite, indulges in a deep misanthropy.

There can be no question that Sartre's socio-logical identification of the reader of Flaubert is accurate and no doubt not only for the Empire on the other hand, the actual history of Flaubert reception remains to be written, and it is reasonable to suppose that the approximation to each other of implicit and real reader, and thus the realization of the irony of irony, only become possible to the extent that consciousness of language and critique of language disclose themselves distinguishing marks of the modern period and he has already included all discourses about him and that of an ideological critique in his critique of discourse.

Jonathan Culler, in one of the most stimulating of recent monographs on Flaubert, has advanced the thesis that in his novels there is none the less one theme that is not ironized, namely the theme of the pernicious effect of literature and that it is here that its central deficiency is to be seen:

If there is anything that justifies our finding the novel limited and tendentious, it is the seriousness with which protagonists' corruption is attributed to novels and romances... it is as if Flaubert had allowed a cliché to occupy the center stage without holding it in the spot light and subjecting it to any of the critical scrutiny or in ironic experimentation which apply in other cases. (146)

Flaubert's attitude is not only to Romantic discourse but also to all the other discourses with which he establishes the background of his ironic negativity, in order



to thematize theme as cited discourses in his ironic universe of discourse. Thus essentially the same thing is true of his treatment of bourgeoisie discourse as was the case with romantic discourse. Citation of the discourse is here, again; first of all discourse critique through reduction to cliché. The festive speeches at the agricultural fair like Yonville spread the ideological euphoria of the one big family from the essential position of the narrator. However, they appear as a petrified order, in which every discursive contingency is eliminated and which thereby reflects most exactly the social order that is celebrated in these speeches. None of those present, including the speakers are, “that this truth is more ideology that every true discourse is purchased at the price aware of concealing an interested claim to truth” (qtd. in Morton 271).

Flaubert's perspectives approximates Schiller's characterization of world history as "basically nothing but the conflict of natural forces", among which Schiller includes “all human emotions” (qtd. in Morton 270). But if Flaubert's historical narrative occasions that Shudder by which Schiller accounts for the human need to foster upon the eternal, it is less by designative the unattainable than by presenting it through semiotic flux. As we have seen, Flaubert's writing like wise seeks to accomplish a revolution, not as in Michelet, by wearing the heterogeneous and incomplete elements of the past into a meaningful whole, but by decentering the narrating subject, by blurring the boundaries between modes, in short, by subverting the autonomy of narrative classes of one are tempted to place Flaubert under the sign of the anti-hegemonic, however, we must keep in mind that his art does not merely disrupt the representational ideology of mimetic transparently. Flaubert, like Michelet, strives to master thanos by transforming it into a narcissistic utopia of omnipotence Flaubert's writing is therefore revolutionary in that it not only transgresses certain aesthetic norms but also uses transgression as an instrument of the will to power.

Flaubert's ironic universe of discourse is constituted: revolutionary discourse in the *Education Sentimentale*, religious discourse in the guise of the *Tanit Cult in Salamambo*, scientific discourse in *Bouvard et Pecuchet*. In all these cases of ironic simulation, the extent to which the ironic subject is still affected by the discourse in question remains visible for this subject, distancing becomes a possibility of aesthetic redemption. The aesthetic is accordingly no longer defined as sensual appearance of the idea, as a manifestation of something else but rather as the truth of "mere" semblance itself. Art no longer accomplishes the total mediation of subject and world, rather, it becomes partial in his critical adoption and continuation of Hegel's notion of the end of art. The mediation of self and world is partial under the aspect of a subject that has become problematic to self-mediation or an inaccessible foundation.

Flaubert, as the author of *Madame Bovary* and the *Education Sentimentale*, himself thematizes in the mode of irony this neurotic synthesis of romantic norms and the historical situation that denies them. This is not to say that the bourgeoisie elite of the Empire already read Flaubert from the distanced standpoint of ironic negativity, on the contrary, those documents bearing on the reception of Flaubert that have hitherto become accessible rather confirm the suspicion of a realistic misunderstanding, as articulated in the Bovary trial.

Gustave Flaubert examines the practice of the writer of drawing paradoxically on personal memories for ironical purposes in his literary works, adapting or cleverly disguising them to the particular coloration of each work. Unvarying uniformity in Flaubert's treatments of the theme of love, his use of a single source for a main thesis, recurrence of the fetish images through protagonist who him/ herself bears the dilemmatic circumstance in which he/ she becomes prisoner which itself becomes irony of human life.

### III. Irony in *Madame Bovary*

During the latter half of the nineteenth century France was undergoing immense social upheaval, resulting in the rise of a new middle class, the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie gained their fortunes through commercial endeavours rather than inheritance and were largely characterised by a gaudy materialism. Flaubert found their moral conservatism and unsophisticated tastes appalling and in *Madame Bovary* used the form of the novel to bring attention to bourgeois mediocrity. The characteristics and effects of social class on the individual are evident throughout the novel, the stifling nature of middle class life eventually contributing to the downfall of the protagonist, Emma Bovary.

In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert uses irony to criticize romanticism and to investigate the relation of beauty to corruption and of fate to free will. Emma embarks directly down a path to moral and financial ruin over the course of the novel. She is very beautiful. Her real, “beauty was in her eyes. Although brown, they seemed black because of the lashes, and her look encountered you frankly, with a candid boldness” (12). We can tell by the way several men fall in love with her, but she is morally corrupt and unable to accept and appreciate the realities of her life. When Charles saw her for the first time he, “was surprised at the whiteness of her nails. They were shiny, delicate at the tips, more polished than the ivory of Dieppe, and almond shaped” (12). Since her girlhood in a convent, she has read romantic novels that feed her discontent with her ordinary life. She dreams of the purest, most impossible forms of love and wealth, ignoring whatever beauty is present in the world around her. She rails emotionally against the society that, from her perspective, makes them impossible for her to achieve. Describing the beautiful Mademoiselle Emma, Flaubert writes:

Her neck stood out from a white turned-down collar. Her hair whose two black tords seemed each of a single piece, so smooth were they, was parted in the middle by a delicate line that curved slightly with the curve of the head: and, just showing the tip of the ear, it was joined behind in a thick chignon, with a wavy movement at the temples that the country doctor saw now for the first time in his life. The upper part of her cheek was rose-coloured. (13)

As the wife of Charles Bovary, Emma is always searching for more. Emma Bovary yearns for a life of luxury and passion of the kind she reads about in romantic novels. But life with her country doctor husband in the provinces is unutterably boring, and she embarks on love affairs to realize her fantasies. She wants beauty, comfort, money, love. She married Charles as a means of escape, to be the wife of a country doctor seemed much more appealing than her life on a country farm. However, she soon discovers that her husband, while he adores her, does not share her interests. Charles, who has barely passed his medical exams, will never amount to much. He is content to live in the provinces, without seeking out inventions and new medical procedures. He is kind, gentle, dense, good-hearted, and devoted to Emma. Becoming a mother does not soften Emma's longing for a more exciting life. She barely notices her child, Berthe.

Despite the masterfully ironic critique of bourgeois in *Madame Bovary*, Flaubertian irony also participates in a methodizing codification of language that partakes in the generalizing assumptions of bourgeois commonplaces. The necessity of participation thus ineluctably draws the narrative into the fashionable but thoughtless uses of language in nineteenth-century bourgeois culture. The very banality of the language in *Madame Bovary* reinforces the generalizing assumptions of

bourgeois that Flaubertian irony is supposed to displace. The language of classical culture reasserts itself just where irony is supposed to make room for critical distance between bourgeois 'truth' and the novel's displacement of that truth.

It is Charles Bovary that frames the novel at either end and, while Emma's position is attributed to tragedy, it is Charles who is most equated with stupidity and incompetence. Charles represents both the society and the personal characteristics that Emma detests. He is incompetent, stupid, and unimaginative. In one of the novel's most revelatory moments, Charles looks into Emma's eyes and sees not her soul but rather his own image, reflected in miniature. Charles's perception of his own reflection is not narcissistic but merely a simple, direct sensation, unmediated by romantic notions. The moment demonstrates his inability to imagine an idealized version of the world or find mystic qualities in the world's physical aspects. Instead, he views life literally and never imbues what he sees with romantic import.

It is through the very eyes of ridicule that we are introduced to him, arriving at a school wearing a ridiculous hat, nervous and socially inept. It is marked not only by symbolism, but also by a sometimes confusing artifice of narrative irony. The unknown narrator, presumably a fellow pupil, simultaneously exclaims that, "it would be impossible for any of us to remember the least thing about him [Charles] now" (3), while immediately afterward describing Charles's temperament, living situation, and the precise evening he would write to his mother. Flaubert is making an intrinsically ironic statement regarding the inherent unreliability of narrative and the mediation of language. As the narrator continues:

In the evening, at preparation, he pulled out his pens from his desk arranged his small belongings, and carefully ruled his paper. We saw him working conscientiously, looking out every word in the dictionary,

and taking the greatest pains. Thanks, no doubt, to the willingness he showed, he had not to go down to the class below. But though he knew his rules passably, he had little finish in composition. It was the cure of his village who had taught him his first Latin; his parents, from motives of economy, having sent him to school as late as possible. (5)

Flaubert made use of irony and contrast on many planes, always with the intention of heightening his meaning and directing the reader's attention to his main themes. Each part of the novel contains pairs of contrasting scenes which clarify the reactions of the participants and the point of the story through their interaction. These scenes are those describing the Bovary's rustic wedding and the Marquis' grand ball. This juxtaposition develops the ironies of *Madame Bovary* more often than any specifically ironic content in the novel. There are other uses of irony, as in the contrast between the speeches of the Prefect's representative and Rodolphe at the Agricultural Show. As the councilor says in his speech:

And this is what you have understood? You farmers, agricultural labourers! You pacific pioneers of a work that belongs wholly to civilization; you, men of progress and morality, you have understood, I say, that political storms are even more to be dreaded than atmospheric disturbances! (109)

A brief investigation of Flaubert's ironic use of classical culture is an important discussion of Binet's obelisk, as it helps to contextualize Flaubert's mock-classical topos in the same way that the concept of the sublime contextualizes Emma's escapist fantasies. Flaubert, like his peers, was required to learn Greek and Latin as a child, and both law and medicine borrowed at least part of their middle-class respectability from the use of commonplace language and concepts of classical culture.

Flaubert ironizes his authorial use of classical topoi in *Madame Bovary* in an attempt to destabilize the authoritative invocation of classical literary culture, while at the same time relying on this culture as a source of quotation. Just as the narrative uses trite language to create stable bourgeois identities for characters like Homais, it uses classical topoi to establish a stable authorial voice. In each case, the narrative's aim is to work against the bourgeois platitudes that prescribe the narrative in unreflective, clichéd.

In the novel, *Madame Bovary* unavoidably participates in the exchange of meaningless clichés with its readers, even as it destabilizes those commonplaces through irony. Emma inexplicably attempts to seduce Binet. An unlikely object of affection, the unprepossessing tax collector (Binet) is at his hobby again, finishing a masterpiece of intricacy on the lathe when Emma bursts in and, apparently, throws herself at him.

The scene reads like a trite romantic tragedy, except that Binet's lathe-work, an obelisk provides an unusual and intriguing context for this otherwise novelistic incident. As a classical topos, the figure of the obelisk references nineteenth-century bourgeois Europe's use of and interest in classical culture. This interest in classical Greece and Rome was hardly innocent, and the exchange of these signs of classical culture was an important element in the daily exchange of unreflective assumptions about the use and creation of meaning. The use of classical topoi in *Madame Bovary* might therefore signal the narrative's participation in banal, commonplace codes of meaning traded amongst the bourgeoisie as empty signs of education and class.

Gossip has a hard time escaping cliché, because it consists of the common coin of daily exchange that ironizes *Madame Bovary*. Its obvious relation to free indirect discourse demonstrates its usefulness as a stylistic mode that juxtaposes divergent

discourses, thereby creating Flaubert's ironic effect. Gossip feeds on novelistic events like passion and suicide. Gossip thus nicely illustrates the intimate and troubling connection between cliché and irony in *Madame Bovary*.

The circular arrangement of the obelisk also mirrors the repetitive entrapment of provincial life. Like Emma's dog, her thoughts run tight circles in a confined space. She continuously cycles through a plot sequence of expectation, disappointment, and despair conditioned by her limited range of options. Emma's high points of passion are structured by the boredom from which they emerge. The repetitive circular motions of quotidian provincial life and the trite bourgeois language that structures this provincial life predetermine all the disappointments that continuously bring Emma back to where she began, despite her furious trajectory along that circular path.

Emma fantasizes about seducing the narrative itself, controlling her story by reaching outside its circular confines, and this is what she sets out to do in the scene with Binet. This strategy gets her nowhere. However marriage and death, present the two poles of life for a nineteenth-century bourgeois woman along which she may organize the linear narrative of life, but Emma is both driven and entrapped by the ecstasy of repetition.

The dynamics of Charles and Emma's relationship illustrate many ironic and ironical patterns. For instance, the verbal irony that Emma's thoughts reveal to us with her romantic ideal of a "post chaise" honeymoon and her disappointment in Charles who, if he could only "read her thoughts" and act with empathy, despite not being able to describe the feelings herself, then, "it would have delivered her heart of a rich load." (29). The irony in the situation becomes manifest when we observe, after learning of what she expects of her ideal man, that such a hope is tragically flawed. The masculine ideal that is expected of



Charles, then Rodolphe, then Leon, is unattainable. Flaubert narrates Emma's dream as:

Before marriage she thought herself in love; but the happiness that should have followed this love not having come, she must, she thought, have been mistaken. And Emma tried to find out what one meant exactly in life by the worlds felicity, passion, rapture, that had seemed to her so beautiful in books. (27)

For Emma, seduction is a strategy for narrativizing her life. After her first tryst with Rodolph she imagines herself as a novelistic heroine with a lover. When Emma decides to elope, she provides her circular life with the serial multi-directionality of romance, imagining herself episodically traveling through Europe with Rodolph. Likewise, Emma dominates Leon with her fantasies of seduction. In Emma's first encounter with Leon they trade the silly platitudes that define their relationship. "There's nothing I love as much as sunsets," she said. 'But my favorite place for them is the seashore.' 'Oh, I adore the sea, said Monsieur Leon'" (97). Their relationship never progresses beyond these commonplaces of romance, and Emma's role-playing with Leon only expresses her most novelistic attributes. With Binet she plays the role of the desperate fallen woman, throwing herself at him just as he is finishing an artwork that figures both the phallus and the narrative. The obelisk represents Emma's notion of seduction, replacing the man with the pure artwork. With Rodolph and Leon she demonstrates her fascination with the role-playing of narrativization more than any interest in these men.

The impossible gap between Emma's ideals and her prosaic situation becomes ironic when those ideals emerge out of and yet remain encompassed in the prosaic allowing these antinomies to perpetually unbalance one another. Ironically, her exalted

ideals fail because they develop out of the provincialism that conditions the naiveté of these very ideals. In a parallel manner, the obelisk represents both the ideals of novelistic art and their wooden artificiality. As a phallus, it is both an object of desire for Emma that promises narrative mastery, and a dehumanized piece that is as sterile as it is autoerotic.

Emma's sight of the Duc de Laverdiere, with bloodshot eyes and dribbling gravy in a bib, is a shocking irony to her. Likewise, when Catherine Leroux finally mounts the stand at the Agricultural Show to accept her Silver Medal for fifty four years of labor, wizened and shrunken in her tattered garments, Flaubert the ironist positions the reader to evaluate the significance of this pittance, a pittance that the local Prefect was too busy to deal with personally. While standing on stage Catherine Leroux is surprised by the occasion as:

Something of monastic rigidity dignified her face. Nothing of sadness or of emotion weakened that pale look. In her constant living with animals she had caught their dumbness and their calm. It was the first time that she found herself in the midst of so large a company, and inwardly scared by the flags, the drums, the gentlemen in frock-costs, and the order of the councilor, she stood motionless, not knowing whether to advance or run away, nor why the crowd was pushing her and the jury were smiling at her. Thus stood before these radiant bourgeois this half-century of servitude.

(115)

The agricultural fair is a very important event for the townspeople of Yonville. It demonstrates the realistic outlook among people living in the French countryside. Flaubert describes how happy and content the farmers are with their

lifestyle, emphasizing their lifelong dedication to hands-on work. Catherine Leroux, is a strong opposite of Emma. Leroux has worked on the same farm for over fifty years and is a timid, quiet, humble woman. In contrast, Emma is extremely displeased with country life and yearns for something greater, more exciting, and more luxurious in life and love.

The speech of the representative of the Prefect is filled with cliches and pompous platitudes. The speaker says only what every other speaker has been saying for years, yet his speech is highly praised. Rodolphe's speech to Emma, delivered against the background of the general prizes being awarded, is a masterpiece of irony. First, we hear about the old peasant woman who is winning a prize for fifty-four years of faithful service and fidelity as a servant. At the same time, Emma is planning on being unfaithful and on beginning a love affair with Rodolphe, whom we know can never be faithful to any person very long. It is a further stroke of irony that his false speeches of passion such as, "I stayed with you, because I couldn't tear myself away" (111), are spoken during the awarding of the first prize in manure. Subtly speaking, Rodolphe's speech is just so much manure, but Emma is not capable of recognizing it and she felt:

This sweetness of sensation pierced through her old desires, and these, like grains of sand under a gust of wind, eddied to and for in the subtle breath of the perfume which suffused her soul. She opened wide her nostrils several times to drink in the freshness of the ivy round the capitals. She took off her gloves, she wiped her hands, then fanned her face with her handkerchief. (112)

Rodolphe's motivations may be born from lust, but many truly tragically ironic results occur from actions born of love and honest affection. It is Charles

who directs Emma into a position to fall into the arms of both Rodolphe and Leon by insisting on horse riding and piano lessons for her out of genuine love and affectionate concern. If he cared less about her then she would perhaps have not been given the opportunity to destroy herself. Likewise, if it were not for Justin's love of Emma, he would never have allowed her upstairs to take the arsenic.

Irony continues to play an important role in the development of Rodolphe and Emma's relationship. Charles is the one who urges Emma to accept Rodolphe's invitation to go riding, which would be imprudent if he really understood Rodolphe's intentions and his wife's interest. Charles believes the riding will help Emma's health, leading her to spend more time outdoors or exercising. Not only that, it is Charles who writes to Rodolphe to request that he escort Emma on a brief riding excursion. Charles has no idea that he is handing his wife over to a sexual predator and, in so doing, he is urging the initiation of a long, adulterous affair. Rodolphe's lust for Emma can be seen when he takes her for a ride as:

The two beasts set off at a trot. Long ferns by the roadside caught in Emma's stirrup. Rodolphe leant forward and removed them as they rode along. At other times, to turn aside the branches, he passed close to her, and Emma felt his knee brushing against her leg. They dismounted, Rodolphe fastened up the horses. She walked on in front on the moss between the paths. But her long habit got in her way, although she held it up by the skirt; and Rodolphe walking behind her, saw between the black cloth and the black shoe the fineness of her white stocking that seemed to him as if it were a part of her nakedness. (121)

As Emma rides alongside Rodolphe, we feel sympathetic to her situation. Emma is in love, but we feel sympathetic for her in the ironic knowledge that she is simply being manipulated. Although she appears to feel true passion, Rodolphe is not to be trusted. It is easy to perceive that Emma is simply caught up in her pattern of short, passionate romantic interludes, from her earlier attempts at religious and maternal love that she is rarely serious for long. Even if Rodolphe were to fall in love with her, would she really stay with him for the long term?

Emma is the prisoner of her illusions, and it is not in spite of but because of that fact that she is extraordinarily beautiful. There is probably no passage that shows this ambivalence more characteristically than the apotheosis of Emma's beauty at the zenith of her love for Rodolphe:

Never was Madame Bovary so beautiful as at that time; she had that indefinable beauty that comes from joy, from enthusiasm, from success, and that is nothing but the harmony of temperament with circumstance. Her lusts, her sorrows, the experience of pleasure, and her ever-young illusions had developed her by degrees, as flowers are made by dung, rain, wind and sun, and she blossomed finally in the plenitude of her nature. (199)

The lies that fill *Madame Bovary* contribute to the sense of language's inadequacy in the novel, and to the notion that words may be more effective for the purposes of obscuring the truth or conveying its opposite, than for representing the truth itself. Emma's life is described as "a tissue of lies." She invents story after story to prevent her husband from discovering her affairs. Similarly, Rodolphe tells so many lies about his love for Emma that he assumes her words are also insincere. Flaubert points out that by lying the lovers make it

impossible for words ever to touch at the truth in things.

It is a bit of Flaubert's irony that Justin is directly responsible for Emma's death. This is ironic because he is the one character in the book who has demonstrated a constant, undeviating love for Emma. His love for Emma exists on a plane which Emma herself never felt and never achieved. Thus it is ironic that the person who most loved and adored her was also the one responsible for her death.

Madame Bovary began taking off his cravat. The strings of his shirt had got into a knot, and she was for some minutes moving her light fingers about the young fellow's neck. Then she poured some vinegar on her cambric handkerchief: she moistened his temples with little dabs, and then blew upon them softly. The ploughman revived, but Justin's syncope still lasted, and his eyeballs disappeared in their pale sclerotic like blue flowers in milk. (98)

That is, had he not loved her so much, he would never have been intimidated enough so as to give her the keys to the secret room where the arsenic was kept. Emma's death reflects the pathetic misuse of her life. As she has spent her life longing for the unattainable and had failed miserably, so in death she longed for a simple but beautiful death. But instead, her death is one of horrible suffering and ugliness, and the ugliness of her death is emphasized by the appearance of the blind man, the symbol of her degradation in life.

In Leon's narrative phase, he seduces Emma and becomes her lover. In the Cathedral, the irony of juxtaposition between Leon's carnal desires and morality are put into play. With Emma's "tottering virtue clinging for support" (85), the beadle and Leon fight for Emma's soul. The irony of Leon's position is that he, "becomes

her mistress rather than she his.” (93). It is his soul that is kissed away. In a moment of cosmic, god-like irony, he that was considered the corrupter is the one corrupted.

The ironizing of Emma's romantically fictitious existence becomes the object of irony, namely, on the occasion of the visit of Madame Bovary senior, who discerningly recognizes in Emma's readings the root of all evil and argues for a ban on books:

Hence it was resolved that Emma's reading of novels would be stopped. The undertaking did not seem easy. The good woman took it upon herself: when she passed through Rouen, she was to go in person to the book-dealer and inform him that Emma was stopping her subscriptions. Would one not have the right to notify the police if the book-dealer persisted nevertheless in his profession of prisoner? (129)

Flaubert also satirizes the romantic idea of love as an overwhelming transformative force of nature by juxtaposing images of hurricanes and tempests with one of the more mundane effects of weather, water damage. By presenting her discovery of the dent in the wall in an ironic tone of regret, he mocks Emma's lack of practical knowledge, as well as her inability and unwillingness to conceive of the actual. Emma's conflict is contained in this passage. She yearns for unreal romantic ideals and is at first ignorant of and then disappointed by the imperfect realities of life, such as decay.

Emma's perspective does mirror the orientation of the romantic culture model, this perspective, and thus also the textual orientation established with it, is negated ironically. Emma's path is the path of her readings. The definitive transcending of the boundary, the planned flight to Italy never materializes. The supposed eventfulness of her love for Rodolphe disintegrates, as does later her love for Leon. Emma is the

heroine of her dreams, not a real threat to Yonville. On the contrary, others profit from her escapades, which enable the usurer Lheureux to drive her and her family to financial ruin. The underdetermined figure of the husband, who in his naiveté becomes virtually the accomplice in the transgressing of the boundary.

Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* scandalized French bourgeois society of the time with its shocking depiction of an adulteress, Emma Bovary, and her lascivious liaisons. Flaubert wrote in an age when romanticism was waning and realism was taking hold. Flaubert himself was a bourgeois and observed carefully the culture of his time. His characters illustrate romanticism and realism. Emma is a romantic, Charles is the typical bourgeois, satisfied to sit back and let the world happen all around him. Ironically, after Emma's death, he becomes dogmatically romantic about her funeral. Homais is ruthless in his pursuit of the "modern" life, he is an opportunist and the depicter of realism in this novel.



#### IV. Conclusion

Gustave Flaubert's novel, *Madame Bovary*, is a novel that has been recognized for many literary achievements, but perhaps foremost amongst them is the use of irony as an active, passive and self-reflexive tool in story telling. The multilayered ironies, or meta-ironies foreshadow and ridicule the composite parts of human society. While Flaubert's principal protagonists belong to the middle class, he uses stark, ironic juxtaposition between the classes as a tool of social illustration. On several occasions, he allows a resounding clash between the romantic image of lower and upper classes and the realist scrutiny of his vision. In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert depicted an entire segment of society and unmercifully analyzed its people. Flaubert's novel ironizes those fictions that make grand statements about life.

*Madame Bovary* explores the possibility that the written word fails to capture even a small part of the depth of a human life. Flaubert uses a variety of techniques to show how language is often an inadequate medium for expressing emotions and ideas. The characters' frequent inability to communicate with each other is emblematic of the fact that words do not perfectly describe what they signify. The strong sense of the inadequacy of language is in part a reaction against the school of realism. Although Flaubert was in some senses a realist, he also believed it was wrong to claim that realism provided a more accurate picture of life than romanticism. He deploys ironic romantic descriptions to establish a tension between various characters' experience of events and the real aspects of life. By combining ironic romanticism and literal realistic narration, Flaubert captures his characters and their struggles more fully than a strictly literal or a wholesale romantic style would allow.

Charles had two wives who contrasted with each other. Emma had two lovers who are about as opposite as two people can be. But the greatest thematic contrast

remains the contrast between Emma's idealized, fictionalized world and the realistic dull world in which she lives. This contrast embodies the differences between her hopes and her achievements. This is finally brought to an ugly conclusion when she desired a beautiful peaceful death, but instead suffered great agonies and endured great pain for hours before death finally came.

*Madame Bovary* is a complex artwork described on the lathe of provincial life, unable to produce anything for Emma but thoughts and hopes that run along the same confined track with ever-deepening intricacy, but without progressing. While the circularity of the obelisk seems to undermine the teleological structure of the bourgeois novel, it also figures the limited and specific space that enacts an aggressive control over Emma's ability to move or think outside of her confinement. The endless circularity of middle-class cliché fills the vacuum left by a non-totalizing narrative voice. The syntax and vocabulary of bourgeois cliché that shape Emma's persona also restrict her field of action. Emma always seduces in the hope of escaping cliché, although this is the avenue of "escape" prescribed by the novels she reads.

The difficulty of *Madame Bovary* lies in the complete lack of morality that surrounds the majority of the characters in the book, especially Emma Bovary herself. Flaubert's scathing irony combined with an often chilling objectivity, in observing events and characters, may not be appealing. It is, however, forward looking in the way that it attempts, by illustrating childhood incidents and other similar devices, to explain some of their psychological motivations. Flaubert's tragic novel stands as a brilliant portrayal of infidelity, an incisive psychological portrait of a woman torn between duty and desire. *Madame Bovary* not only exposes the emptiness of one woman's bourgeois existence and failure to fill the void with fantasies, sex, and

material objects. Emma's thirst for life mirrors the universal human impulse for idealized fulfillment.

Emma's disappointments stem in great part from her dissatisfaction with the world of the French bourgeoisie. She aspires to have taste that is more refined and sophisticated than that of her class. This frustration reflects a rising social and historical trend of the last half of the nineteenth century. At the time Flaubert was writing, the word "bourgeois" referred to the middle class. They were the people who lacked the independent wealth and ancestry of the nobility, but whose professions did not require them to perform physical labor to earn their living. Their tastes were characterized as gaudily materialistic. They indulged themselves as their means allowed, but without discrimination. The mediocrity of the bourgeoisie was frustrating to Flaubert, and he used Emma Bovary's disgust with her class as a way of conveying his own hatred for the middle class. *Madame Bovary* shows how ridiculous, stifling, and potentially harmful the attitudes and trappings of the bourgeoisie can be. In the pharmacist Homais's long-winded, know-it-all speeches, Flaubert mocks the bourgeois class's pretensions to knowledge and learning and its faith in the power of technologies that it doesn't completely understand.

*Madame Bovary* ends in tragedy for almost everyone except the most ridiculous figure of all, Homais, the small minded, pedantic chemist. It is the malicious irony of the ridiculous that is perhaps the greatest irony of all. The dialectic irony permeating the entirety of Flaubert's novel is that life itself is an irony, from the most tragic, such as the life of Charles Bovary, to the most triumphant, such as Homais when he receives his much coveted Legion of Honour.

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