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FLAUBERT'S USE OF SEXUAL SYMBOLISM IN *MADAME BOVARY*

It is a well known fact that Flaubert labored for five long years in writing his masterpiece. Notwithstanding, no one has yet provided a satisfactory reason to explain why it took him those five years. The usual reason given to explain why Flaubert took this length of time was his obsession with style ; his concern for *le mot juste*, his concern to avoid repetition of words and with the smooth flow of the sentence. How many times have his cries of frustration and despair, as heard in his letters to Louise Colet, been cited as proof of this deep concern ? Yet it took Balzac only five months to write *Le Père Goriot*, and Stendhal only fifty two days to write (dictate) *La Chartreuse de Parme*, and the latter work was 60 per cent longer than *Madame Bovary*. Of course one can not compare their style to that of Flaubert's. Nevertheless, why the enormous disparity ? Is it possible that Flaubert was obsessed with more than just style ? Over the period of five years he had the time not only to perfect his style, but to do something considerably more difficult and time consuming, which was to intersperse throughout the story, vocabulary with sexually symbolic value, to establish in the unconscious of the reader a deeper understanding of the emotional condition of the principal character of the story, Emma Bovary.

Flaubert's use of sexual symbolism was far from original. Sexually symbolic vocabulary has been found in literature across the ages and in most all languages, from the literature of the Bible and the ancient Greeks, to the present day. To mention sexual symbolism in regard to a literary text invariably implies a psychological or Freudian analysis of the characters, of the author himself, or of both. The text is analyzed as though it were either the author's dream or his free flowing discourse delivered from the psychiatrist's couch. By analysis of the text (dream or discourse), one supposedly arrives at a deeper understanding of the author, his characters, or the story. For example William J. Berg, analyzed the short story, *La Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier*¹, to obtain a deeper understanding of the

¹ William J. Berg, Michael Grimaud, George Moskos, *Saint/Oedipus Psychocritical Approaches to Flaubert's Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982)

characters of the story. The psychological studies of Stendhal's works by Bernard J. Paris² and Gilbert D. Chaitin³ incorporate in their study of the texts an analysis of Stendhal himself, thereby arriving at a supposedly fuller understanding of the psychological makeup of the characters. In a reversal of this approach, Jean-Paul Sartre, in his monumental work, *L'Idiot de la famille*⁴ psychoanalyzed Flaubert from every possible source including his written works up to the year 1857.

Frankie Rubinstein, in his *Persistent Sexual Symbolism : Shakespeare and Freud*⁵ remarks that, "Centuries before Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* had scientifically established certain 'short-hand' signs for repressed sexual material, these same symbols were evident in the wit not only of Shakespeare, but of Rabelais and Montaigne and Boccaccio and, centuries before them, in the comedies of Aristophanes and Plautus." (P. 1) For 23 pages he cites Shakespearian puns that were based upon sexual symbols : the human body, architecture, plant life, etc. In the examples provided under "stairs and ladders" he writes, "These means of going up and down which Freud linked to the sex act, have similar connotations for Shakespeare. In *The Winter's Tale III .iii*, finding an abandoned baby, the shepherd says, 'This had been some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door-work ; they were warmer that got this than the poor thing here.' " Again, the author, Shakespeare in this case, expects the reader to understand the sexual symbolism.

Rubinstein could have just as well mentioned Molière, especially in relation to his early plays. For example in Molière's *L'Ecole des Femmes* the servant, Alain, is explaining to another servant, Georgette, why their master is so jealous of the young girl he hopes to marry :

La femme est en effet le potage de l'homme;
Et quand un homme voit d'autres hommes parfois
Qui veulent dans sa soupe aller tremper leurs doigts,
Il en montre aussitôt une colère extrême. (II. V.)

The symbolic value of the bowl and the fingers are so evident as to need no explanation. Flaubert's use of such symbols is far more discreet. In almost every case it is the non-symbolic and not the symbolic meaning that we consciously associate with the word, while at the same time the symbolic meaning is registered on the unconscious level.

² *A Psychological Approach to Fiction, Studies in Thackeray, Stendhal, George Eliot, Dostoevsky and Conrad* , (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974).

³ *The Unhappy Few* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1972).

⁴ Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1971-1972

⁵ *Literature and Psychology*, Vol. 34, Issue 2, 1988, pp. 1-26.

With Flaubert there is no conspiracy between himself and the reader, as there was with writers like Shakespeare and Molière. Flaubert uses symbolically charged terms in such a way that the reader is not cognizant of their sexually symbolic value. It is the literal sense of the sexually symbolic terms, deftly deployed throughout the text, that is perceived by the reader on the conscious level, while at the same time, the symbolic value registers on the unconscious level to present a deeper understanding of Emma Bovary's emotional and psychic problems. The following analysis of certain key-nouns (the most frequently occurring nouns that are used significantly more frequently than the norm) of *Madame Bovary* (See table I) should make this clear. (See index for complete list of key-nouns and an explanation of the stylo-statistical method that was used to gather the statistical data for this analysis.)

Table I
Key-Nouns of Madame Bovary
With a Latent Sexually Symbolic Value

Nouns	Abs. Freq	Adju. Freq.	Sta. Dev.	Nouns	Abs. Freq	Adju. Freq.	Sta. Dev.
doigt	60	12	13.3	cheval	68	31	6.4
fenêtre	68	21	10.1	tête	135	82	5.8
bras	92	41	8.0	porte	99	58	5.2
table	63	26	7.1	maison	98	62	4.6
main	171	102	6.7	chambre	74	45	4.2

Abs. Freq.= Absolute Frequency, the number of times the word occurred in the text.

Adju. Freq = Adjusted Norm Frequency, i.e., the norm frequency made proportional to the size of the text under study.

Sta. Dev = The number of standard deviates by which the word deviates from the norm.

It is to be noted that not every occurrence of key-nouns in Table I can be interpreted as having an underlying sexually symbolic value. Notwithstanding, at these times the sexually symbolic value still registers on the reader's unconscious.

Flaubert does not state in the story that Emma Bovary is sexually frustrated nor does he go into great detail about her feelings toward her husband Charles. If Flaubert makes it abundantly clear that Emma has a nervous condition, e.g., at Tostes, and a subsequent nervous breakdown when Rodolphe abandons her, it is with the symbolic vocabulary that he makes the reader feel the frustration and depression that leads to the nervous breakdown. Analysis of

the key nouns makes this quite apparent (A full explanation of "key-nouns" and the stylo-statistical method of analysis is provided in the appendix).

What is most impressive in Flaubert's style of writing is his ability to describe an idyllic scene, which flows quite naturally with the action of the story, while at the same time, with the sexually symbolic vocabulary that the description contains, provides the reader on an unconscious level with an understanding of the psychological conflicts that confront the principal characters. Flaubert's use of the noun, "doigt" is an excellent example of this. "Doigt" is the key-noun that is the most characteristic of the text, i.e., it is the noun that deviates the most from the norm or average frequency of use.

Just after the wedding of Charles and Emma, on the promenade from the ceremony to the Rouault farm where the wedding feast was to be held, one reads :

De temps à autre, elle s'arrêtait pour la tirer, [sa robe] et alors, délicatement, de ses *doigts* gantés, elle enlevait les herbes rudes avec les petits dards des chardons, pendant que Charles, les *mains* vides, attendait qu'elle eût fini. (p. 26)⁶

Notice here that it is Emma who is active with the sexually symbolic terms : *doigt*, *dard*, ("dard" also means "pistil", the sexual organs of the flower, while it also means : "dart" or "javelin", which as symbols need no explanation), while Charles stands by idly, with his hands empty. The picture is one of Charles standing with his hands hanging down, inactive, at his side. As is well known, "hand" is a phallic symbol. Without saying so explicitly, Flaubert has led us to understand one of the principal problems of the story ; sexual incompatibility.

Another example can be seen when Emma plays the piano, a symbolic act for masturbating or for sexual intercourse : "Quant au piano, plus ses *doigts* y couraient vite, plus il [Charles] s'émerveillait." (p. 39) Emma is the active participant, Charles the inactive one. Again reference is to Emma and the piano :

Puisqu'elle ne pourrait jamais, sur un piano d'Erard dans un concert, battant de ses *doigts* légers les touches d'ivoire, sentir, comme une brise, circuler autour d'elle un murmure d'extase, ce n'était pas la peine de s'ennuyer à étudier. (p. 59)

The underlying message is that Charles does not satisfy Emma sexually, that he doesn't provide her with the sexual ecstasy that she has been led to expect from her romantic readings during her adolescence. Flaubert alludes to this at a later point in the story :

⁶ All references to *Madame Bovary* are to the Garnier Frères edition, Paris, 1961. The advantage to the Garnier Frère editions is that, until recent times when Garnier Frères began printing cheap paper back editions of the classics, the layout of the text did not change with each new edition, i.e., the text that was found on a particular page and line in one edition, was on the same page and line in all the other editions.

Jamais Charles ne lui paraissait aussi désagréable, avoir les *doigts* aussi carrés, l'esprit aussi lourd, les façons si communes qu'après ses rendez-vous avec Rodolphe. (p. 175)

As *doigt* appears in the text some sixty times charged with varying degrees of sexual symbolism, there can be no doubt of the effect it has on the unconscious of the reader.

Fenêtre like *doigt* has a symbolic value, but this one is representative of the female sexual organ. "Opening a window" can symbolize "giving outlet to one's urges." As with *doigt*, the initial occurrences of *fenêtre* appear quite innocent. Then the following sentence occurs :

Entre la *fenêtre* et le foyer, Emma cousait ; elle n'avait point de fichu, on voyait sur ses épaules nues de petites gouttes de sueur. (p. 21)

The foyer or hearth has always stood for the family and domesticity while the "window" represents quite the opposite. Emma is torn between her responsibilities as defined by society and her romantic desires.

The following two sentences contain two key-nouns : "window" and "door", and I believe it to be one of the passages that says the most on a symbolic level, and in a very poetic way, about the sexual incompatibility between Emma and Charles. The two are still newly-weds. Charles is about to go on his rounds to visit his patients. (Sexually symbolic terms are in italic.)

Elle [Emma] se mettait à la *fenêtre* pour le voir [Charles] partir ; [...]vêtue de son peignoir, qui était lâche autour d'elle. [...] elle continuait à lui parler d'en haut, tout en arrachant avec sa *bouche* quelques bribes de *fleur* ou de verdure qu'elle soufflait vers lui et qui, *voltigeant*, [...] faisant dans l'air des demi-cercles comme un *oiseau*, allaient, avant de *tomber*, s'accrocher aux crins mal peignés de la vieille *jument* blanche, *immobile* à la *porte*. (p. 31)

In addition to "*fenêtre*" and "*porte*" there are other terms within this passage that have underlying symbolic values : "*bouche* ", and "*fleur*", for the female organ, "*oiseau*/bird" for the male. The horse "*jument*/mare", as a symbol usually represents the sex drive of the individual to whom the horse belongs. The act of soaring or rising upward ("*voltigeant*" is also symbolic of the male member.

Invariably, a description that is on the symbolic level will be reinforced by a few descriptive terms such as "*nu* " or bare, or as in the above example, describing Emma's bathrobe as hanging loosely about her.

If we analyze the passage for its symbolic meaning we will see that "Emma, sitting at the open window" symbolizes her desire for sexual fulfillment. This is reinforced by her "tearing with her *mouth*, bits of a *flower* that she blows into the air, causing them to swirl and fly about like a *bird*." In other words, frenzied sexual activity, following which, as in a dream, the

symbolic female organ is transformed into the male organ, which falls to the ground where the object that had been flying, i.e., the sexually potent, male member, changes into an object that is old, tired, worn out (the old mare). It is also to be noted that the mare is motionless, i.e., inactive, before the door (the female sex organ). While describing a domestic, tender, almost bucolic scene on the conscious level, Flaubert tells us quite another story on the unconscious level.

In another passage, Charles and Emma have moved from the village of Tostes to Yonville-l'Abbaye. Emma has just entered her new home :

Emma, dès le vestibule, sentit tomber sur ses épaules, comme un linge humide, le froid du plâtre. Les murs étaient neufs, et les marches de bois craquèrent. Dans la chambre, au premier, un jour blanchâtre passait par les fenêtrés sans rideaux. (p. 79)

Again we have a passage with numerous Freudian symbols. *House*, such as the one Emma is entering is a symbol for "woman", *vestibule*, for the vagina, smooth walls, the male organ, while "*les marches*" refer to a staircase, which is a symbol for sexual intercourse. Here we have a creaking staircase. It is not a picture of a stairway that the principal character is climbing sprightly, joyfully, or breathlessly. Not only is the window closed, it is unadorned, therefore, bleak and barren.

In *Madame Bovary*, "white" as in *blanchâtre*, usually has the sense of sickly or deathly white. In addition to the depressing scene that Emma encounters, Flaubert lets us know, again through the use of symbols, of her frustration in general.

At this point the question may be asked, "Is it not possible that Flaubert was simply describing a scene without any thought of the symbolic value of the words he was using ?" Of course that is possible. However, psychoanalysts treat literary works as though they are dreams – fanciful creations of the author. They look for terms that represent what is going on in the unconscious of the writer. It is then argued that this is what Flaubert is saying to us on the unconscious level. My claim goes further ; it is that Flaubert consciously used these terms to play upon our unconscious understanding of these words. My argument for this claim comes from statements made by Flaubert himself, in the oft quoted letter to his friend, Louise Colet : " Le lecteur ne s'apercevra pas, je l'espère, de tout le travail psychologique caché sous la forme, mais il en ressentira l'effet " [Letter of Jan. 1, 1854]. Flaubert is saying that he has done something with the language, which will act on the reader's unconscious, in such a way that it will not be noticed – or at least he hopes so.

In addition to this, an analysis of the key-adjectives of *Madame Bovary*⁷ reveals that he has also used the symbolic value of the adjectives to again act on the unconscious of the reader. One can find occurrences of the adjective *immobile* where it adds absolutely nothing to the text on a conscious level, but a great deal on the unconscious level. An example of this is the scene in which Emma has gone to see her parish priest for support and advice to help her through the emotional crisis she is in, brought upon her by her sexual attraction to a man who is not her husband. The priest, caught up by the mundane affairs of the church, never finds the time to listen carefully enough to what Emma is trying to tell him, to be able to give her any spiritual advice or comfort. She returns to her room, totally dejected. Flaubert doesn't tell us that she is depressed, he describes the room as she sees it, " Les meubles à leur place semblaient devenus plus *immobiles* et se perdre dans l'ombre comme dans un ocean ténébreux." (p. 107)

This is poetry in prose in which the symbolic or underlying value of the words are more important than their actual descriptive value. Since, of itself, furniture is incapable of movement, to describe it as "motionless" says nothing, that is, on a conscious level. Through the various contexts where *immobile* occurs in the novel, it has acquired the additional meaning of "deathly stillness". The combination of words : *immobile*, *perdre* ("to lose", leading "to be lost"), *ombre*, and *ténébreux* by evoking their underlying meaning, describe how Emma feels, more than they do the room she is in.

That Flaubert has himself stated he hoped to act upon the unconscious of the reader and that there are examples where the underlying meaning of the word conveyed the deeper sense of the passage, it can leave little doubt that the texts cited above provide examples of the effect he hoped to have on the reader. The question I have is, "how pervasive was his use of this 'Freudian symbolism' ?" Consider Flaubert's use of '*porte*' which occurs 98 times in the novel. It is hard to imagine that every occurrence of the word, or nearly every one, was intended to act on the unconscious of the reader. Is it just a few obvious ones such as the ones presented above (and there are several more like those for each key-noun) ? or do we have the situation where the obvious few set the tone and the remaining occurrences act surreptitiously on our unconscious ? Let us look at the occurrences of "*porte*", submit them to a psychological analysis, and see what we find.

⁷ Robert F. Allen, "L'Atmosphère telle qu'elle est évoquée par les adjectifs-clefs de *Madame Bovary*," *Les Amis de Flaubert*, Part I, No. 33, pp. 16-25, décembre 1968, Part II, No. 34, pp. 11-20, mai 1969.

In the first occurrence Charles is described as standing behind a door in such a way that one hardly noticed him.

Resté dans l'angle, derrière la *porte*, si bien qu'on l'apercevait à peine, le nouveau était un gars de la campagne, d'une quinzaine d'années environ [...] (p. 3)

Is it possible that Flaubert is already giving us indications of Charles' lack of sexual drive by presenting him as a young man (age 15) still or inactive before "la *porte*"? The second occurrence describes his classmates who, as they pass through the door of their home-room, throw their caps under the bench in such a way as to hit the wall; all of them, that is, except Charles :

Il fallait, dès le seuil de la *porte* les lancer [les casquettes] sous le banc, de façon à frapper contre la muraille, en faisant beaucoup de poussière. (p. 4)

"Lancer/throw", "*frapper*/smack" or "hit", are acts that are symbolic of sexual intercourse, "casquettes/caps", either a female or male sex symbol, "*banc*/bench", female sex symbol, and "*muraille*/wall", male sex symbol. On a symbolic level the scene is one of heavy sexual activity. How is Charles depicted during this activity ?

[...] soit qu'il n'eût pas remarqué cette manœuvre ou qu'il n'eût osé s'y soumettre, la prière était finie que le « nouveau » [Charles] tenait encore sa casquette sur ses deux genoux. (p. 4)

As can be seen, Charles doesn't throw his cap or play with it in any way. In later passages we see that he doesn't even know what to do with it.

In another example, Emma has been to the ball given by the marquis de Vaubyessard, where, among other things, she has danced with a vicomte. The ball represented the fulfilment of her romantic dreams. She had hoped that she would be invited to the ball the following year. When this didn't happen, she began to feel that she was trapped in a life that was not only boring, but stultifying, and with a husband that she now realized was so far from her romantic idol, that she found him repugnant. Life was closing in on her and she could see no way of escaping it.

[...] pour elle, rien n'arrivait, Dieu l'avait voulu ! L'avenir était un corridor tout noir, et qui avait au fond sa *porte* bien fermée. (p. 59)

In the last sentence the vocabulary is totally symbolic. We are quite conscious of the symbolism. It is saying that the life that Emma has to look forward to is indeed depressing and that there is no way out of it. Considering Flaubert's penchant for sexual symbolism, there is another level of symbolism that acts on the unconscious level, with the "*porte bien fermée*" signifying that any hope for a satisfactory sexual life has ended.

Having moved from the village of Tostes to Yonville-l'Abbaye to escape from a life she could no longer endure, Emma has become friendly with a young gentleman farmer, by the name of Rodolphe who eventually becomes her lover. She has agreed to go horse-back riding with him – with Charles' assent. "Le lendemain, à midi, Rodolphe arriva devant la porte de Charles avec deux chevaux de maître." (p. 147)

It is worth mentioning here that in so many examples of the occurrences of "door" one finds that the door is open or closed, or that there is activity or lack of activity before the door. There are horses that drive up to the door. As with so many nouns, "horse" may have multiple symbolic meanings. According to Fliess it symbolizes the "father" (p. 31) and J. E. Cirlot's *Dictionary of Symbols* describes "steed" (synonym of horse) as "a symbol of the animal in man, that is, of the force of the instincts⁸." However, as it occurs in *Madame Bovary*, it is apparent that the horse represents the sex drive of the individual to whom the horse belongs. In previous examples we saw that Charles' horse was an old mare standing before the "door." In the above example, Rodolphe, who is about to become Emma's lover, arrives before Charles' door with two superb horses. It is not difficult to understand what Charles' door symbolizes.

Charles warns Rodolphe: 'Prenez garde! Vos chevaux peut-être sont fougueux!' And when he and Emma are riding together: 'Dès qu'il sentit la terre, le cheval d'Emma prit le galop.'

Compare this with Charles who, at the beginning of the story, arrives at the Bertault farm where Emma lives : "Le cheval glissait sur l'herbe mouillée." and "Quand il entra dans les Bertaux son cheval eut peur et fit un grand écart." In other words, Charles' horse is timid and not sure footed, i.e., clumsy. After the above mentioned outing that Emma and Rodolphe had, Charles informs Emma that he has bought her an old filly, slightly scared at the knees : "une ancienne pouliche ... un peu couronnée ... "

When Emma fantasizes about the man of her dreams, she sees a knight galloping on a black horse – a far cry from what she actually has.

Having identified a field of interest – sexually symbolic terms – and then analyzed Flaubert's use of the terms, one can next look to see if other sexually symbolic terms may not be found outside the list of key-words, i.e., among the less frequently used vocabulary, to see if they may not be included in the same field of interest. A close reading of the text and of other critical studies provides some clues. D.L. Demorest in his *L'Expression figurée et*

⁸ New York: Philosophical Library, 1962, p. 297.

symbolique dans l'oeuvre de Gustave Flaubert, mentions Binet, who "est aussi un symbole. Cet échantillon du genre bourgeois, ... se dresse en quelque sorte comme la personnification de la mauvaise conscience d'Emma⁹." and he points out that Emma hears the lathe turning during the worst times of her life. And on analysis it would appear that the lathe (*le tour*) is one of the symbols that Flaubert uses to act on the unconscious of the reader, and which, as Demorest has noticed, is heard in the background when there is a crisis in Emma's life, when she feels crushed by events. According to Fliess, the "rotating symbol is representative of the unconscious idea (experience, expectation) of disintegration or dissolution of ego", (p. 106) and he gives as example the electric fan, phonograph, and roulette wheel. He could have added to this list, the lathe. Consider the following : Rodolphe has just sent Emma a note, hidden in the bottom of a basket of apricots, informing her that he is going away, which Emma quite rightly understands to mean that he is abandoning her. Emma has just received the basket :

Elle fut saisie d'une appréhension, [...] Emma se mit à fuir vers sa chambre, tout épouvantée [...] elle continua à monter les marches, haletante, éperdue, ivre, [...] au second étage, elle s'arrêta devant la porte du grenier [...] alors elle voulut se calmer; [...] [elle] poussa la porte et entra.

En bas, sous elle, la place du village était vide, les cailloux du trottoir scintillaient, les girouettes des maisons se tenaient immobiles; au coin de la rue, il partit d'un étage inférieur une sorte de ronflement à modulations stridentes. C'était Binet qui *tournait*. [nos italiques] (p. 191)

Elle jetait les yeux tout autour d'elle avec l'envie que la terre croulât. Pourquoi n'en pas finir ? Qui la retenait donc ? Elle était libre. Et elle s'avança, elle regarda les pavés en se disant :

– Allons ! Allons !

Elle n'avait qu'à céder, qu'à se laisser prendre; et le ronflement du *tour* ne discontinuait pas, comme une voix furieuse qui l'appelait. (p. 192)

Having survived this crisis, three years later Emma is confronted by another and final crisis, that of her economic destitution at the hands of Lheureux. All possessions belonging to her and Charles are to be seized to pay her debts. As she frantically hurries about the town in an attempt to obtain funds to pay her debts the sound of the lathe is heard in the background, first by some towns-people who are watching Emma as she scurries about, 'Mais il n'était guère possible, à cause du *tour* d'entendre ce qu'elle disait.' then by Emma when she is at the home of the dry nurse, *la mère Rolet*,: "...oh! Finissez ! murmura-t-elle, croyant entendre le *tour* de Binet. "

⁹ Slatkine Reprints, Genève, 1967), p.466.

Shortly thereafter there is the total destruction of the ego, with Emma's suicide.

Very closely related to the lathe is another symbol, the rotating wheel, which evokes, if not the destruction of the ego, one that is disturbed and is having difficulty adjusting to events. Such a circumstance can be seen when Charles and Emma have just been married, had their wedding celebration, and as Charles must return to his practice, are leaving for Tostes. *Le père Rouault* has accompanied the newly weds part of the way. Having said goodbye to them, “ *Le père Rouault s'arrêta, et, comme il vit la carriole s'éloignant, dont les roues tournaient dans la poussière, il poussa un gros soupir.*”

His whole life is about to change. Up until the marriage he had his daughter to keep him company, now he would face life alone.

Il se sentit triste comme une maison démeublée ; et les souvenirs tendres se mêlant aux pensées noires dans sa cervelle, [...] il eut bien envie un moment d'aller faire un *tour*¹⁰ du côté de l'église. Comme il eut peur, cependant, que cette vue ne le rendît plus triste encore, il s'en revint tout droit chez lui.

Another instance occurs as Emma and Charles are leaving La Vaubyessard, after an evening that fulfilled for Emma all her romantic yearnings. Like Cinderella, she is about to return to her drab existence at Tostes with Charles.

[...] les époux Bovary firent leurs politesses au marquis et à la marquise, et repartirent pour Tostes. Emma, silencieuse, regardait *tourner* les roues.

Why does Flaubert mention that the père Rouault and Emma look at (notice) the wheels that turn ? To do so doesn't add anything to the story, either in advancing the story line or creating one of Flaubert's beautiful *tableaux*. The most likely explanation is that his reference to the turning wheels acts on the unconscious of the reader to signify the unsettled psychic condition of the two characters.

If we return to the passage wherein Emma, despondent and depressed, is about to seek the aid of the abbot Bournisien, we again find examples of the rotating symbol :

Le dimanche, à la messe, quand elle relevait sa tête, elle apercevait le doux visage de la Vierge, parmi les *tourbillons* bleuâtres de l'encens qui montait. Alors un attendrissement la saisit : elle se sentit molle et tout abandonnée comme un duvet d'oiseau qui *tournoie* dans la tempête; et ce fut sans en avoir conscience qu'elle

10. I have underlined "tour" of "faire un tour" even though it does not mean "lathe" because it is my belief that Flaubert uses the various forms of "tour": "tourner, tourner, tourbillon, tourbilloner, tournant, étourdi, autour", to act on the unconscious of the reader. The verbe "tourner" is one of the most characteristic verbs of the text (i.e., it was not only among the most frequently used verbs (68 times), but it was used far more frequently than the norm.)

s'achemina vers l'église, disposée à n'importe quelle dévotion, pourvu qu'elle y courbât son âme et que l'existence entière y disparût. (p. 103)

And for Flaubert, the anti-cleric, for Emma to even think of turning to the church for emotional or psychic sustenance, was a sure indication that her ego must be disintegrating.

In conclusion, the above study of the key nouns of *Madame Bovary* indicates that Flaubert employed sexually symbolic terms, as well as other Freudian symbols, such as the rotating wheel, in such a way, that, while registering as an integral part of the story on the conscious level, they establish in the unconscious of the reader, a deeper recognition of the emotional and psychic problems of his heroine, Emma Bovary.

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APPENDIX

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY-WORDS

Before one can have any understanding of key-words, one must first realize that the norm, which really determines whether or not a word is a key-word, is a measure of the probability of the word occurring in the text. The act of picking words out of one's head is comparable to picking different colored marbles out of an urn. If the urn contains, for example, 25 black marbles, 20 white, 15 blue, 12 orange, 10 green, 10 brown, and 8 red marbles (a total of one hundred), there is one chance out of four of picking a black marble, one chance out of five of picking a white one, fifteen chances out of a hundred of picking a blue one, etc. If the marbles are replaced by words and the numbers thought of as norm frequencies, we have some idea of how stylo-statisticians believe that the choice of words is influenced by the laws of chance or probability.

Of course, when a marble is picked out of an urn, it is a completely random choice, while a writer's choice of a word is not. The subject matter, the literary genre, and the conscious and unconscious preferences for particular linguistic structures exclude complete random selection. Nevertheless, stylo-statisticians have observed that the end result is similar to a random situation. If reasonable account is taken of the subject matter and of the literary genre, any resulting significant deviation from the norm can be explained by the author's preference for particular linguistic structures.

The measure of deviation from the norm is referred to as the "standard deviate" and is calculated by using the central limit theorem :

The following terms are used in the formula :

Z = Standard deviate

X = Absolute or observed frequency

ANF = Adjusted norm frequency, i.e., the norm frequency calculated relative to the size of the text.

$$Z = \frac{(X - ANF)}{ANF}$$

In the *Dictionnaire des fréquences*, created by the Institut de la Langue Française (formally the Trésor de la Langue Française), the norm frequencies are relative to one hundred million words, i.e., calculated for a text of one hundred million words. If we are working, for instance, with a text of 118,666 words (the total number of words in *Madame Bovary*), the norm frequencies will have to be calculated so that they are proportional to that size text. If the word deviates by more than two and a half standard deviates, it is considered that the deviation is a significant one.

If one considers the example of tossing a coin in the air, the concept of normal versus significant deviation from the norm may be better understood. If a coin is tossed in the air one hundred times, theoretically one would obtain 50 heads and 50 tails, with a norm frequency of 50 for either heads or tails. A result of 50/50 would be surprising. In stochastic distributions results usually group around a projected figure, so that one expects a slight deviation from the norm. If the proportion were 55/45 we would find that quite normal and results obtained from the central limit theorem would support that belief.

$$Z = \frac{(55 - 50)}{50} = 0.7 \text{ Standard Deviates (SD)}$$

If the proportion were 60/40 (1.4 SD) we would not find that abnormal either while with 65/35 (2.1 SD), we might be surprised at our degree of good or bad luck. With a 70/30 ratio (2.8 SD) we would most certainly feel that the toss was rigged, and at 80/20 (4.2 SD) there would be no question about it. Although there are many more factors to take into account when dealing with linguistic structures, significant deviation from the norm can be felt in much the same way as with a game of heads or tails. We are sensitive to repetition of nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs, while we accept more frequent repetition of other words, such as articles, prepositions, and conjunctions which have higher norm frequencies than the former group.

The Most Frequently Used Nouns of *Madame Bovary*

	Nouns	Abs. Freq.	Adju. Freq.	Sta. Dev.		Nouns	Abs. Freq.	Adju. Freq.	Sta. Dev.
1	jour	179	182	-0.3	26	monde	70	98	-2.9
2	main	171	102	6.7	27	pied	69	58	1.4
3	femme	170	148	1.8	28	cheval	68	31	6.4
4	chose	158	144	1.1	29	fenêtre	68	21	10.1
5	œil (yeux)	156	98	5.8	30	cœur	66	99	-3.4
6	heure	145	118	2.5	31	père	66	67	-0.1
7	homme	141	255	-7.2	32	lettre	64	88	-2.6
8	tête	135	82	5.8	33	côté	63	59	0.4
9	fois	132	95	3.7	34	nuit	63	52	1.5
10	coup	116	62	6.8	35	table	63	26	7.1
11	temps	115	135	-1.8	36	épaule	61	14	12.3
12	mère	102	66	4.3	37	eau	60	43	2.6
13	porte	99	58	5.2	38	doigt	60	12	13.3
14	maison	98	62	4.6	39	doute	60	40	3.1
15	pharmacien	97	2	70.4	40	robe	60	14	12.2
16	soir	96	59	4.8	41	apothicaire	60	55	0.7
17	bras	92	41	8.0	42	bas	59	40	2.8
18	place	92	44	7.2	43	vie	59	130	-6.3
19	air	89	64	3.1	44	figure	59	25	6.3
20	voix	83	49	4.7	45	fond	58	44	2.1
21	enfant	80	82	-0.3	46	bruit	57	26	5.9
22	amour	77	67	1.1	47	vent	56	23	6.9
23	bout	75	26	9.4	48	effet	55	55	0.0
24	terre	75	67	1.0	49	idée	55	94	-4.1
25	chambre	74	45	4.2	50	milieu	55	48	0.9

Abs. Freq.= Absolute Frequency, the number of times the word occurred in the text.

Adju. Freq = Adjusted Norm Frequency, i.e., the norm frequency made proportional to the size of the text under study.

Sta. Dev = The number of standard deviates by which the word deviates from the norm.