In the following essay, Dauner discusses the ways in which physical description evokes emotion in the novel. Dauner argues that Flaubert's attention to the symbolic aspects of everyday life lends the work its poetic quality.

April 15, 1857, Madame Bovary was published in book form after a mutilated version, begun in October, 1856, in the Revue de Paris, had culminated in prosecution of the managing editor of the review, of Flaubert, and of the printer. Although the court decided that the book was not irreligious and immoral, and it was an undoubted financial success, Madame Bovary received few favorable contemporary reviews; many, indeed, found it "utterly immoral and irreligious"; almost all found it shocking in its "brutality"; and the review written by Duranty, the editor of Realisme, noted an excessive and indiscriminating use of detail, "neither emotion nor feeling nor life in this novel," a style "never personal," a method "always physical description, never impression"; in brief, a book in which "all interest is lacking." Even Saint-Beuve, who wrote admiringly of the style and of many pictorial scenes, submitted as a main reproach that "there is no goodness in the book. Not a character represents it."

But time sometimes laughs at critics; today, nearly one hundred years later, it has neatly reversed these verdicts. Mr. Percy Lubbock finds Madame Bovary "perpetually the novel of all novels which the criticism of fiction can not overlook; as soon as ever we speak of the principles of the art, we must be prepared to engage with Flaubert." Mr. Allen Tate says in an essay on the techniques of fiction, "Gustave Flaubert created the modern novel"; and "it has been through Flaubert that the novel has at last caught up with poetry." Analyzing the scene in which Emma, after her receipt of Rudolphe's letter, runs into the attic, where in agitation and growing hysteria she hears the turning lathe of Binet, Mr. Tate finds in the lathe the tool by which "Flaubert gives us a direct impression of Emma's sensation at a particular moment ... and thus by rendering audible to us what Emma alone could hear he charged the entire scene with actuality."

These insights by modern critics provide an ironically amusing counterpoint to Duranty's criticism of 1857, along with the suggestion that through this rendering of the impression, this charging of the scene with actuality, Flaubert approaches the realm of poetry. Taking off from this point, we may suggest another method by which Madame Bovary comes to us as poem.

Granted that Madame Bovary is among the most "perfect" of novels, as a work of self-conscious art it delights us by its masterly management of point of view, its pervasive, sustained irony, its sharp, objective characterization, its dramatic presentation of realistic detail and setting to the point where, as Mr. Lubbock has observed, Yonville acting upon Emma is "as essential as she is herself" and like a character in a dramatic cast. Everything in this novel is deliberate. "It is difficult for me to imagine," wrote Flaubert in a letter in 1853, "that I will ever write anything more carefully calculated."
In addition to all this, one of the major achievements of this novel lies in its superb use of symbolism. Here too the novel moves into the realm of poetry; for poetry, as indirect statement, must depend largely upon the use of symbols, and much of the aesthetic and even moral interest of Madame Bovary lies in the symbols: those elements in the narrative which communicate so richly values over and above their literal meanings.

Speaking generally, Flaubert's symbolism in Madame Bovary functions much like that of a poet such as Robert Frost: It is not an esoteric, personal symbolism, like, for instance, Mr. Eliot's, but a symbolism which is literally rooted in the nature of things. As in Frost's poetry, one need never read for any meaning beyond the literal. An adequate unit of meaning will still be apprehensible, for the symbol is always a natural part of, or element in, the given situation or instance. Yet, to comprehend and use the symbols is enormously to enrich the aesthetic and even moral values of the novel and to walk simultaneously on two levels, as though one maintained a delicate balance both on the earth of the commonsense literal and in the air of the poetic, which is an integral part of the experience that poetry gives us.

Among "major" symbols, those which reappear with either a consistent or thickened meaning in different parts of the narrative, selected somewhat arbitrarily, are the symbol of the garden, interpreted semantically, and in associations of time, place, mood, and even produce (Rudolphe's gifts of fruit); the symbol of water, as it is associated here with rivers, pools, boats; the lathe of Binet; and the blind beggar. From those "minor" symbols which appear only briefly, but significantly, may be mentioned the whip, the stag head, the fireworks, and the arsenic.

The garden is probably the dominant symbol of the novel, considering the number of times it appears and its richness of connotation. It appears four times in Part I, the Tostes section of Emma's life. We note it for the first time when Emma is making a bride's inventory of the house to which Charles has brought her. One of her first acts as mistress of the house is to have seats made around the sundial in the garden, an act which suggests not only her energy and initiative (and perhaps her ambition to endicate as much of the first wife as she can, and to impress Charles with her domestic competence) but also her incipient romanticism. A little later, when she has realized the wide discrepancy between her idealized vision of Romance and the routine of marriage to a man who eats largely of boiled beef and onions, then goes to bed, lies on his back, and snores, she repairs to the garden by moonlight and, reciting passionate rhymes and singing melancholy adagios, tries to make herself in love with him. In both instances the garden functions as a character symbol, suggesting her ambition and her bourgeois romanticism.

At Vaubyessard, at the ball, she glances out the window which opens upon the garden, where she sees "the faces of peasants pressed against the window looking in at them." Then she remembers her father, his farm, herself as she skimmed the cream off the milk pans in the dairy. From the garden the memory-association rises of a past as remote from her present as her actual present is remote from this single night of wealth and society. All that is real and good in Emma lies in this recalled vision of her early life, as all that is to be artificial and corrupt is also at the very moment implicitly there. For this night, Flaubert tells us, "made a hole in her life ... in its friction against wealth something had come over it that could not be effaced." After the details fade, the occasion still remains for her as a long regret. Here, then, the garden poses a kind of antiphony in time and character, embracing past, present, and, by implication, future; suggesting Emma as presently at the still point of her turning world: not as she was, nor yet as she will be.

The final garden appearance in Tostes is a pure mood mirror. It is winter; no birds are to be heard; all seems asleep. The vine is like a great sick serpent, and the plaster curé has lost his be effaced." After the details fade, the occasion still remains for her as a long regret. Here, then, the garden poses a kind of antiphony in time and character, embracing past, present, and, by implication, future; suggesting Emma as presently at the still point of her turning world: not as she was, nor yet as she will be.

The final garden appearance in Tostes is a pure mood mirror. It is winter; no birds are to be heard; all seems asleep. The vine is like a great sick serpent, and the plaster curé has lost his right foot. All is dormant and depressing. Here the garden is the objective correlative of Emma's disgruntled, self-pitying disillusionment in her marriage.

In Part I, as Mr. R. P. Blackmur points out, Flaubert has "surrounded a possibility" with anecdote, comment, scenes, and images. Whatever Emma is we do not as yet know. But in the rest of the novel "the sequence begins to discover a direction"--Bovaryisme--"an habitual, an infatuated practise of regarding ... the world as other than it is; it is an attempt to find in the world what is not there." It is for Emma a tragic and fatal attempt. Much of the fatalism is psychically contiguous with the garden or actually enacted within its physical bounds. Since the stage lights of the novel will gradually darken into the blackness of Emma's horrible and pitiful death, we may rightfully expect some correlation between the tonal symbolism of the garden and the denouement; and when we inquire briefly into the semantics of the word "garden," an inquiry not necessary in the "lighter" first part of the novel, this is exactly what we find.
and the Garden of Gethsemane, the scene of Christ's betrayal. These connotations are richly and variously present in the symbolic gardens of Madame Bovary.

In the later fulfillment of Emma's destiny the garden appears, with light or dramatic importance, in at least seven instances. Emma's single taste of "high life" having created in her such a malaise that her bad health persuades Charles to move to Yonville, she meets there Leon, the young clerk at the notary's. They are immediately attracted to each other by their mutual boredom, romantic "delicacies," interests in "art," and the world of society and drama represented for them by Paris. It is not long before Leon accompanies Emma on a walk to see her infant, who has been put out to nurse. As they slowly return to Yonville, Emma, still frail and easily fatigued, takes Leon's arm.

They pass by the walls of gardens, where "wallflowers had sprung up between the bricks, and with the tip of her open sunshade Madame Bovary, as she passed, made some of their faded flowers crumble into a yellow dust, or a spray of overhanging honeysuckle and clematis caught in its fringe and dangled for a moment over the silk." They speak inconsequentially; "yet their eyes were full of more serious speech, and while they forced themselves to find trivial phrases, they felt the same languor stealing over them both."

Now this is the 1850's, and Freud has not yet made his suggestive interpretations of sex symbolism; nevertheless, we must trust to the accuracy of the creative intuition. In these quick objective details and in Emma's casually deliberate violation of the wallflowers with the tip of her sunshade, Flaubert has employed a sharp symbolic "touch" that immediately crystallizes the implicit sexual tone which underlies both the concept of the garden and the tension of the walk, and which also foreshadows Emma's affair with Leon. Indeed, as yet, she is herself a kind of "wallflower"—emotionally untouched; we remember that marriage makes no difference at all in her; it is Charles who is noticeably changed after his wedding-night. And the honeysuckle and clematis, with their sensuous sweetness and frail clinging insistence, suggest some of the very qualities which Emma's false perspective attributes to romantic love. The symbolic detail is quick and transient, but highly valuable for both the emotional tone of the scene and for later developments in the narrative.

After Leon's departure for Rouen, Emma's melancholy revives her memories of their togetherness, of the happy afternoons they had spent at the end of the garden as he sat reading aloud to her, and "the reverie which we give to all things that will not return" mingles with her self-reproach for not having allowed herself to love him. Again the garden acts, now as the physical stimulus which recreates the emotion. Later, after her seduction by Leon, and when he comes to Yonville to see her, it is behind the garden that she meets him, as previously she had so often met Rudolphe.

The garden is the necessary and literal stage for Emma's affair with Rudolphe. The fissure in the garden wall becomes the "post-box" for their daily love notes. And all through the winter, three or four times a week, it is here that they hold their trysts.

An associated symbol, the fruit which Rudolphe often sends to Emma, should be mentioned here. Often a love letter from Rudolphe is hidden in the bottom of the basket, and it is thus in a basket of apricots that he conveys to her the letter with which he finally breaks the relationship. Not only are the apricots symbolically suggestive of the primarily sexual nature of their relationship, but the psychological association of the fruit with the garden of Eden, which brought to man his tragic and sinful knowledge, comes at once to mind to underscore Emma's fall from grace. And Emma's ultimate realization of Rudolphe's insincerity is like a flaming sword—not angelic but demonic—which slashes into the very core of her consciousness.

After her ensuing collapse and long illness, her first walk is around the garden. It is October, and the sand of the paths disappears beneath the dead leaves. Charles guides her into the arbor to the garden seat, but she is made giddy by the invoked memory of her past affair, and from that evening her illness recommences with more complex symptoms. Now she develops an antipathy for the garden, keeps the blinds of the house down on that side, and the next spring, in a sort of psychic vengeance, has it ploughed up from end to end. In these moments, the garden functions quite simply as a symbol of mood and memory.

In the days which are tending toward Emma's growing desperation under the pressures of Lheureux, Charles walks alone in the garden or tries to teach the child, Berthe, to read there. Now, choked with long weeds, it reflects their mutual depressions. After Emma's death, it is here that we find Charles, "a long-bearded, shabbily-clothed, wild man, who wept aloud as he walked up and down"; and it is here that he sits in benumbed grief; and finally, it is here, on the seat in the arbor, that he dies, holding in his hand the long strand of hair which Homais had cut off for him as Emma lay in her casket.

Thus the garden functions as a poetic symbol in a variety of ways: Moving from the lighter tone of a character symbol and an emotional backdrop, it assumes the darker qualities that foreshadow Emma's increasing involvements. It repeatedly carries the sexual connotation and so becomes a thematic symbol. With its connotation of betrayal it underscores Emma's betrayals of Charles, which are also betrayals of social and moral order. As such, it assumes an ethical and even mythic significance. Finally, at Charles's death it is pervaded with a...
tone of tragic irony. In possessing all of these values, it acts exactly as does any appropriate poetic symbol.

Perhaps the next most apparent symbol is that of water. Again, classic and modern interpretations come immediately to mind: Freud's version of water as a female sex symbol, Jung's interpretation of water as symbolizing the Collective Unconscious, Thale's definition of it as the source of all life. Recurring to Emma's first walk with Leon, we note that they return to Yonville by the river. "It flowed noiselessly, swift, and cold to the eyes; long, thin grasses huddled together in it as the current drove them, and spread themselves upon the limpid water like streaming hair." In one spot, where the ground is muddy, they have to cross on large stones placed in the mud. "She often stopped a moment to look where to place her foot, and tottering on the stone that shook, her arms outstretched, her form bent forward with a look of indecision, she would laugh, afraid of falling into the puddles of water." The sexual implication is insistent in the flowing water and the grasses like streaming hair; and Emma's crossing of the muddy spot and her physical unbalance delicately highlight her psychic and moral indecision.

Water provides the symbolic background for her seduction by Rudolphe. "He drew her farther on to a small pool where duckweeds made a greenness on the water. Faded waterlilies lay motionless between the reeds." When she visits Rudolphe in the early morning, she has to go by the walls alongside of the river. The bank is slippery--like her own moral position now--and in order not to fall, she catches hold of the tufts of faded wallflowers (and again we note the "matching" of the wallflowers to her emotional and moral state). On her return home her shoes are often muddied, again a highly suggestive detail.

The three-day "honeymoon" with Leon was spent at the Hôtel-de-Boulogne on the harbor. In the evening they took a covered boat to one of the islands, and when they returned at night "the boat glided along the shores of the islands. They sat at the bottom, both hidden by the shade, in silence. The square oars rang in the iron thwarts, and, in the stillness, seemed to mark time, like the beating of a metronome, while at the stern the rudder that trailed behind never ceased its gentle splash against the water." It is all here, scarcely requiring comment: The gentle caress of the gliding water, the boat itself with its darkness and silent secret intensity, and the sense of escape from time and place, all adding up literally to the consummation of their mutual desire and symbolically to an emphasis upon the completely sensual. The boat is especially suggestive, its darkness and interiority giving it appropriately a uterine symbolism.

Water, by association, appears in the description of the hotel room where Emma and Leon hold their trysts, where the bed is "in the shape of a boat," and the chimney holds two pink shells "in which one hears the murmur of the sea." One may note in passing other sexual symbols that describe the room, the "bell-shaped bedside," the curtain rods ending in arrows, and the great balls of the andirons. And the description of the cab in which Emma's seduction by Leon occurs as "with blinds drawn ... shut more closely than a tomb, and tossing about like a vessel" is strongly and cumulatively female in its symbolism.

Emma's last tryst with Rudolphe before their intended elopement occurs in the moonlight beside the river. Perhaps it is not excessive to note also that it is Charles's errand to get Emma barley-water at the theatre at Rouen that occasions the encounter which reintroduces Leon into Emma's life.

Thus, throughout, the water symbolism serves a thematic function in that its strong sexual connotation reminds us of the sexual drive of the novel, which, as Blackmur has said, "is the shape of a life which is the shape of a woman which is the shape of a desire."

We come now to the symbol which seems to have made the sharpest impression on critics, though it has been studied not as "symbol" but as an instrument employed in a special literary technique, the lathe of Binet. When Emma has received Rudolph's shattering letter and has gone up into the attic, the sharpest of her various sense impressions, of heat, the glare of light, the awareness of height, is the humming sound of the turning lathe. Her emotional confusion becomes a physical vertigo. "It seemed to her that the ground of the oscillating square went up the walls, and that the floor dipped on end like a tossing boat." As she stands at the open window, the humming of the lathe, "like an angry voice," calls to her to throw herself on the paving-stones below. But here the lathe is more than merely a sense stimulus. It is an extraordinarily fine symbol for her volcanically crumbling mental world, for the crazy spinning of her distracted thoughts. She is hysterical; literally, at the moment, schizophrenic, both a self that wills destruction and a self that, the next moment, nearly faints with terror at the nearness of her escape.

Later, when she has been served the notice of the distraint, she goes to try to borrow money from Binet, who is working over his wood... "the white dust was flying from his tools... the two wheels were turning, droning..." This is a characteristic activity for Binet; but for the reader, the reappearance of the turning wheels instantly recalls the attic scene and so produces not only a cause-and-effect connection but also a kind of Greek inevitability; for Emma's compulsion to elude the monotony and emptiness of her life has caused her illicit passions, which cause her mad extravagances and deceptions, which cause her death.
Still a third time the lathe functions, when, hardly knowing what she is doing, she leaves Binet, who has rejected her plea, and finds herself at Nurse Rollet's. As she throws herself, sobbing and nearly hysterical, on the bed, Nurse Rollet, not knowing what to do for her, withdraws to her spinning-wheel and begins spinning flax. Emma fancies that what she hears is Binet's lathe and begs her to stop. If we allow the lathe to act now as a cumulative symbol, it will again recall to us the invitation to suicide that Emma first heard in it. So carefully is every detail in this novel laid, we may suspect that, consciously or not, Emma too heard in Nurse Rollet's spinning-wheel an echo of the same insidious suggestion. At any rate, it is only a little later, after her humiliating and fruitless visit to Rudolphe, that she carries out the psychic suggestion of the humming voice. In all of these scenes, the lathe has been effectively employed as a symbol of her mental convulsion. It is purely a psychological and emotional symbol.

The fourth major symbol to be treated here, and surely one of the most memorable in the novel, is that of the blind beggar. Flaubert does not shrink a single one of the revolting details:

A mass of rags covered his shoulders, and an old staved-in hat ... hid his face; but when he took it off he discovered in the place of eyelids empty and bloody orbits. The flesh hung in red shreds, and there flowed from it liquids that congealed into green scales down to the nose, whose black nostrils sniffed convulsively. To speak to you he threw back his head with an idiotic laugh; then his bluish eyeballs, rolling constantly, towards the temples beat against the edge of the open wound. He sang a little song as he followed the carriages--

Maids in the warmth of a summer day
Dream of love, and of love alway.

Sometimes he suddenly appears behind Emma; he particularly appears after her trysts in Rouen with Leon and on the Sunday when she has gone frantically to Rouen to try to raise money, when she tries to induce Leon to steal to get her money--perhaps the most overt revelation of her moral deterioration. Finally, almost melodramatically, in her dying moments she hears his song, and, thinking she sees the hideous face of the poor wretch "standing out against the eternal night," she laughs "an atrocious, frantic, despairing laugh" and falls back in her death convulsion.

In his diseased and idiotic being the blind man is a brutal, violent, unforgettable symbol of Emma's moral and spiritual corruption, which is the corruption of beauty. Perhaps the most painful item is that of his eyes. This, too, is significant. For it is in Emma's eyes that much of her beauty has lain. Charles' first awareness of it lies here. "Her real beauty was in her eyes. Altho brown, they seemed black because of the lashes, and her look came at you frankly, with a candid boldness." After her seduction by Rudolphe, she marvels at her face in the mirror. "Never had her eyes been so large, so black, of so profound a depth." During the affair, when her beauty seems to blossom in full plenitude, "her eyelids seemed chiselled expressly for her long amorous looks, in which the pupil disappeared." And Charles thinks her then "delicious and quite irresistible" and is himself, and always, and with an almost Grecian tragic irony, "blind." In her final appeal to Rudolphe, when he has drawn her on his knees before his refusal to help her, "she was charming to see, with her eyes, in which trembled a tear, like the rain of a storm in a blue calyx."

The song of the blind beggar, in its ironic contrast, has a Shakespearean overtone; one thinks of the mad song of Ophelia, though what is poignantly pathetic there becomes horrible here. But the song connection with Emma is notable, for Emma's "theme-song" too is love, which, like the blind man's idiocy, tends at last to mania.

Thus the blind beggar becomes a pure character-symbol, focusing for us in his tormented and foully diseased body the tormented and diseased spirit of Emma, who failed because she, too, was "blind." Nowhere does Madame Bovary, "the book which is moral--ultra-moral," as Flaubert wrote of it, speak more powerfully of the eternal corruption that may reside in the spirit of man and of woman than in this symbolic figure.

Considering now the minor symbols, let us look briefly at two which relate to Rudolphe. Early in the affair with him, Emma has ordered from Lheureux a riding whip to give to Rudolphe. When the next day Lheureux calls upon her with a bill, which she is unable to pay, and says that he will be forced to take back the goods, he also says that he will ask Charles to return the whip to him. On Emma's emphatic protests, he immediately senses that she is carrying on an intrigue, and this is the first hold which Lheureux gains over Emma. From now on, and increasingly, he literally holds a "whip hand" over her. It is also of interest that Charles's first inflammatory contact with Emma occurs when, concluding his first visit to her father, he looks for his whip, which has fallen to the floor and which both stoop to recover. During this gesture his breast brushes against Emma's back. "She drew herself up, scarlet, and looked at him over her shoulder as she handed him his whip." The whip functions as one of the many intricate strands which integrate the plot. Also, in both instances, it suggests itself appropriately as a masculine symbol.

The other "Rudolphe-symbol" is that of the stag head, which hangs over Rudolphe's bureau. He sits directly beneath it when he writes his letter of rejection to Emma. It has a triple
value. First, it is the stag head with the horns, the traditional folk symbol for the cuckold which Rudolphe has made Charles. Then Rudolphe too is pre-eminently the male animal: He knows nothing of love, only of lust. Emma is a pretty mistress, who ministers to his male ego and his sensuality, a pleasing toy for him to enjoy and corrupt; but he has no intention of eloping with her or of becoming involved in any serious, responsible relationship. Rudolphe came, saw Emma, conquered—and departed; and Emma too is a trophy, a sign of pursuit and capture. The stag head, as trophy, is a souvenir, like the contents of Rudolphe's biscuit box, his mementos of past conquests: Emma's handkerchief and miniature and letters, other women's bouquets, garters, pins, light and dark hair, all are jumbled indiscriminately together. Typical sensalist that he is, Rudolphe often remembers nothing at all of the givers and dismisses them all and the experiences they represent with the bored epitaph, "What a lot of rubbish!" "For pleasures, like school boys in a school courtyard, had so tramped upon his heart that no green thing grew there, and that which passed through it, more heedless than children, did not even, like them, leave a name carved on the wall." Thus the stag head is a fitting and concentrated symbol of the character of the man who had captured it—the hunter of both animals and women.

A poetic symbol with "recall" value like the lathe is that of the fireworks. Rudolphe's mental seduction of Emma can be timed rather sharply to the day of the agricultural show. They have walked and sat together during the speeches and awards, after which he has escorted Emma home. In the evening, she sees her again during the fireworks, and as she watches the luminous rays of the rockets, so Rudolphe watches her.

The fireworks, which may well connote the emotional state of Rudolphe and Emma at this time, also carry an implication of the nature of the affair itself, with its explosive, luminous quality for Emma, and its transience and black extinction. Again, when Rudolphe has refused to lend her the money, and she has left him, the fireworks appear as a brilliant visual and psychological metaphor. As Emma leaves Rudolphe's chateau, she is lost in stupor; though her blood is roaring through her veins, the earth seems to her as the breaking waves of the sea, and "everything in her head, of memories, ideas, went off at once like a thousand pieces of fireworks." Suddenly it seems to her that fiery spheres are exploding in the air "like fulminating balls when they strike," and are whirling, whirling. ... The madness that is coming upon her is actualized by the kinesthetic power of the images, and the whirling of the mental fireballs again recalls to us Binet's lathe. It is in this state of mental turmoil, which she feels as "an ecstasy of heroism," that she goes directly to the druggist's shop to get the arsenic.

The arsenic, like the blind beggar, is a brutal symbol. Its first manifestation is the bitter taste which awakens her out of her sleep. Then, a terrible thirst, choking, vomiting, and an icy cold that creeps from her feet to her head. And then the real agony begins. As the poison works, her beauty literally disappears. Her lips are drawn, her limbs convulsed, and her body is covered with brown spots.

As the poison destroys her body and corrupts her beauty, so have her adolescent romanticism, her false vision, her sensual lust, and her dishonesty poisoned and destroyed her spirit. Even some of the symptoms, the bitterness, the thirst, became metaphorical of her embittered spirit and her driving thirst for the passion that she conceives to be romance. As the poison only slowly achieves its final effect, we are reminded of Emma's slow inevitable descent into the immorality of which her suffering and death are now the inevitable end. So the extreme unction administered to Emma by the priest summarizes the sins of this perennial romancer: "first, upon the eyes, that had so coveted all worldly pomp; then upon the nostrils, that had been greedy of the warm breeze and amorous odours; then upon the mouth, that had uttered lies, that had curled with pride and cried out in lewdness; then upon the hands that had delighted in sensual touches; and finally upon the soles of the feet, so swift of yore, when she was running to satisfy her desires, and that would now walk no more." As though not content with its living torment, the effect of the poison lingers after Emma's death. As the women raise her head to place upon it a wreath, a black liquid issues from her mouth to the hazard of her wedding dress—a powerfully ironic touch, for the wedding dress is all that remains of the Emma whom Charles had married and adored.

Horrible as is the nature of her death, perhaps no other means of suicide would have been as appropriately, even as profoundly, impressive; for the poison's dissolution of her body and her beauty is a visible manifestation of the spiritual corruption that follows upon her frantic seeking for romance and self-fulfillment. The irony is that these are legitimate quests, and we all live in hope of achieving them. But Emma, shallow, weak, immature, selfish, made them direct ends or goals, never realizing that they can exist probably only as by-products of mature acceptance and responsibility and disinterestedness. Thus the arsenic's functions, like the blind man, as an objective correlate, and its tone is ironic: in its "reversal" of life, love, and beauty, it correlates with Emma's reversal of values; for even when she sometimes appears to act morally, she acts for the wrong reasons; and she never recognizes "first things," nor leams to put them first.

It is not the purpose of this study to evaluate the "morality" of Madame Bovary, the ultimate significance of its ethical comment upon human life. And certainly Flaubert is no Dostoevsky and offers here no redemptive formula or hope for the Emmas of the world. Yet the book does possess a morality of its own—the kind of morality that Henry James, for instance, recognized as the goodness, the trueness, that inheres in the aesthetic object. In this sense, which is the Greek sense, the Good, the True, the Beautiful do tend to merge, and Beauty is Truth, Truth, Beauty. Flaubert was enough of a classicist and student of Greek literature to have absorbed a good deal of this attitude. Thus, in so far as Madame Bovary...
achieves a near-perfection of technical and artistic value, it creates its own intrinsic aesthetic morality. The thing of beauty is a joy forever, and one of the enduring delights of this novel lies here; and this "here" means the exquisitely chiselled structure, which includes the symbolic usage.

The symbols, then, are "naturals," real elements, always in the objective situation. But they also exist, as we have seen, for varied values: as character definers, as foreshadowers of events, as mood and objective correlatives, as theme-intensifiers, and as tonal devices, especially for irony. These values would seem to place *Madam Bovary* on one more level within the realm of poetry; so the ethical energy of its theme is even more effectively communicated through the moving power of its aesthetic.

**Note**

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