

Genetics of Focalization in *L'Éducation sentimentale*

Flaubert uses focalization extensively in his novels, and this applies to *L'Éducation sentimentale*: most of the descriptions use internal focalization, being focalized principally on the main character, Frédéric Moreau. However, if focalization occurs, in *L'Éducation sentimentale*, as a generalized device linking description and narrative, it remains mostly implicit (an issue which has to be stressed, as it is seldom addressed in narratology). Today I would like to put aside focalization as it appears in the published versions of texts, in order to consider it from a genetic standpoint, which tries to give an account of the textual phenomena which form and transform within manuscripts, and which also tries to redefine their theoretical status. In this respect, Flaubert's case is a privileged one, as almost all his drafts have been preserved, and as his obsession with perfection made him correct his text often more than ten times. It is therefore possible to consider focalization along with the diverse writing phases, and to see *if* (and *how*) it takes part in the transformational dynamics of the pre-text.

I have prepared a series of handouts containing the examples that I am going to study here in English, so that everyone will be able to follow the demonstration. For each of the examples, you will find the final version of the text, followed by a short list of quotations which I have extracted from the manuscripts to illustrate my point (see references placed in the Dossier at the end of the file).

When considering the manuscripts of *L'Éducation sentimentale* at first, one is struck by an obvious phenomenon: if focalization of descriptions is frequently implicit in the published version of the novel, the same is not always the case with the drafts. It is even possible to

establish the following rule: the signs, more or less discrete, of an implicit focalization, are often the superficial remains of a focalization that was originally literal.

I will take the example of the description of Arnoux's apartment, at the beginning of the second part, which appears when Frédéric returns to Paris (example 1). Even if the text does not mention sight of the character, the context implies that it is implicitly focalized:

finding Madame Arnoux in a setting which was unfamiliar to him, he had the impression that she had somehow lost something...

all the more so, since Frédéric's disappointment is allusively connected to the middle-class appearance of the details which are conjured up by the description.

However, in the first version of the text, which is a scenario (a first writing stage in Flaubertian creation, I will return to this later on), focalization is explicit. It is added in parallel, in the margin, along with the details which outline the "mediocre, middle-class apartment" (quotation 1): "he looks around him while speaking".

In the following drafts, this utterance is written and removed to the incipit of the description that it permits to introduce (quotation 2): "while speaking he was looking around him". It is maintained until the sixth draft, where it is suddenly deleted: focalization becomes implicit.

I will now take another example: that of the short sentence during the episode of the race, which describes the sky and foreshadows rain (example 2).

This time, the context indicates an implicit focalization, thanks to both the modalization of the adverb *however*, and the free indirect style contained in the sequence following the description, "Rosanette was afraid it was going to rain".

In the drafts, the description is independent of vision when it germinates (quotation 1): "overcast sky. Big clouds. etc. dialogue". Nevertheless the perception of anonymous characters manifests itself in the fourth scenario (quotation 2): "one has doubts about the weather". Focalization appears on the fifth version of the passage, when Flaubert begins to write. He adds, in the margin (quotation 3): "Rosanette raised her head to the sky with a

worried look"; the vision of the character is substituted for the perception of the previously undefined group; but it is canceled after eight versions, and focalization becomes implicit.

These two precise examples imply a more general comment concerning the status of focalization. First of all, it is obvious that it is not possible to define any rule that could predict either the suppression or the maintaining of explicit focalization, or even the writing stage during which the suppression intervenes, if and when it occurs (which is not always the case).

In the first example, Flaubert underlines the pronoun belonging to the focalizing utterance, *lui*; and any underlined passage, in Flaubert's drafts, indicates a problem which will have to be solved, and which is, most of the time, related to repetition. It is obvious that an assonance worries Flaubert here, as *lui* repeats the sound of the preceding verb *nuire*; it does not matter if focalization is no longer indicated.

The second example is slightly different. On the seventh draft, assonances of *en* preoccupy Flaubert. They are underlined, and the text reads in French: *cependant*, *effleurant*, *grands*, *craignant*. However, it seems that Flaubert wants to maintain focalization here, since on the eighth draft, although he cancels at first the focalizing utterance, he adds in parallel in the margin: "Rosanette raised her head" (and also once, in the space between the lines (quotation 4): "Rosanette looked at the sky". After hesitating several times, Flaubert prefers the simple notation "Rosanette was afraid it was going to rain. The suppression of focalization is then quite contingent.

This first remark implies another one: among the writing - or stylistic - processes of textualization, focalization is not considered by the writer as an isolated process, or even a privileged process that should be elaborated independently of the context in formation. In other words, literal focalization is secondary, and therefore appears as a surface structure: it suffices that the perception of characters be implicit in order for the situation of the description to be legitimized in the narrative.

Another issue needs to be considered, as I have only alluded to it until now: it concerns the diachronic modes of appearance of focalization in the scenarios. Indeed, Flaubert's

scenarios are mere sketches where he drafts the narrative without actually writing it, setting out the elements which constitute it, restructuring them, and placing the details of future descriptions. From a diachronic standpoint, focalization is not uniform, and neither is its theoretical status.

First of all, it is obvious that a conjunction between character and space needs to be established in order to imply focalization. In the scenarios, where Flaubert tries to classify and link bits of narrative information, such a conjunction almost immediately takes the form of *vision*. For instance: "walks to the Champs-Élysées - looks at the coaches" in the main text, while the margin contains the descriptive precision which will result in the final focalized description of the Champs-Élysées, in the third chapter. Vision is therefore *anterior* to the description; this phenomenon simultaneously establishes the focalization of the future description and its modes of narrative introduction; moreover, the reference to vision itself seems to imply elaboration of the description.

In all the cases where focalization is immediate and occurs prior to the actual descriptions, it appears as a generative principle that is inherent in narrativity, and therefore that takes part in the modalities of the text in expansion.

Nevertheless, in Flaubert's scenarios, the most frequent phenomenon is the opposite from a diachronic - and theoretical - standpoint. In these cases it is no longer a question of a generative principle, but of a strategic device of descriptive insertion. I will now consider two different examples of this phenomenon.

A description of Dambreuse's dining-room appears in part two, chapter three. In the published version, it is focalized on Frédéric in an implicit way (example 3).

In the scenarios, this description is foreshadowed by means of both a predicate and the effect that the room produces on the character (quotation 1): "luxurious comfort. Frederic remembers, as a contrast, the lunch at Arnoux's".

Focalization is already implicit: if the character is able to compare and contrast two different places and times, then he certainly has to be able to perceive (that is to say: to *see*) the place beforehand.

Details appear in the margin of this scenario once corrected; they illustrate and amplify the initial "luxurious comfort" (which was vague and syncretic), following a generative principle of expansion that is frequently found in manuscripts. And in parallel Flaubert adds, in the margin too (quotation 2): "Frédéric looks".

In the scenario, the juxtaposition of signs which are reduced to a minimum acts as a shifter for the semio-narrative organization of the statements. When reference to the character is associated with an idea of space, the character's *action* almost immediately takes on the form of *vision*. In all probability the notation of vision, becoming literal, merely permits legitimizing the position of the description in the narrative. Once past that initial stage, description can rid itself of these practically artificial constraints, and the writing can progress; in the following draft, vision disappears and focalization becomes implicit again.

The second example is that of a description of Paris viewed by Frédéric from his balcony, a description which may be the paragon of focalized description in *L'Éducation sentimentale* (example 4). Nothing like this occurs in the scenarios, at least originally. First of all the statement is organized according to space, without even mentioning the character, in such a way that the first descriptive notations are in focalization zero (quotation 1): "sadness and length of the Summer in Paris - emptiness of the Latin quarter". However these two descriptive sentences are essentially metonymical: not only does Paris appear as the medium of a psychological statement, but also Paris's emptiness reflects the absence of Mme Arnoux, which, precisely, saddens Frédéric. Indeed, this underlying cause is literally added in the space between the lines (quotation 2): "she was absent for three months", while the link between Paris and the character appears, also in the space between the lines. It contains multiple focalizing devices, both vision and strategic position of the character (quotation 3): "view from

his window". The status of focalization shifts from zero to internal; as if the description was even more justified, from now on, it increases rapidly.

Considered in itself, focalization has therefore a double theoretical status in manuscripts. On the one hand, it represents an initial motivation that participates in the generative devices of the narrative; on the other hand it may be a mere shifter for descriptive expansion, a stereotyped rule that Flaubert systematically applies in order to insert topographic details into the narrative, and then details are amplified until they form a focalized description.

However, focalization only represents one of the aspects of narrativity, and appears quite imbricated with others, in such a way that all these related phenomena are in fact inextricable when they are considered in synchrony. In the published version of texts, it is impossible to decide between one status of focalization or another, or even to designate with any degree of certainty implicit focalization. Moreover, focalization itself is likely to imply the use of *intermotivation* processes, as if, although legitimizing the narrative situation of descriptions, it needed in counterpart signs justifying itself. These processes can be seen at work in the drafts, and stem from stereotyped narrative codes which, according to Philippe Hamon, are the essential components of what he calls the readable-realist text (referring particularly to Zola's narratives). However they do not all reveal themselves in the same way; I will now briefly consider two different cases of this.

It is generally admitted that description, focalization and temporality interact. Vision of the character establishes a temporal conjunction between description and narrative: on the one hand the course of the narrative is not suddenly interrupted, as the character looks at the place (unlike what happens with descriptions in focalization zero); on the other hand an internal diachrony is reinstated; it corresponds to the duration of contemplation, as the character looks at the place *for a certain amount of time*. The manuscripts clearly show that this phenomenon is not a mere textual effect: these processes are interactive.

I will take the example of the first description of the castle of Fontainebleau. In the published version, it is explicitly focalized at its incipit (example 5).

Originally, focalization is implicit. The monument is (quotation 1) "seen from its façade" and makes Frédéric and Rosanette "grave". The verb *to see* implies vision, but it is used here as a simple participle describing the place (that is to say, its layout according to the descriptive perspective) rather than representing the characters' action; Frédéric's and Rosanette's contemplation is not literally stated, even if the castle is able of affecting them.

Focalisation becomes explicit on the following folio, as Frédéric and Rosanette "admire the façade" (quotation 2). The text denotes the vision of the characters, but simultaneously states their waiting, which appears in the margin: "they were made to wait at the lodge-keeper's".

This loss of narrative time is going to be transformed into a gain of intradescriptive temporality, as it is elaborated in parallel with focalization, on the same folio, where the description is copied again and corrected. The introductory sequence worries Flaubert, who rewrites it several times. Indeed, it is successively modified in the following way (quotation 3):

- * a feeling of respect gripped them when they looked at the façade
- * They were made to wait behind the gate, then they looked at the façade
- * They were made to wait behind the gate, then they had plenty of time to look at the façade

While justifying vision, focalization and descriptive insertion, these signs are mere pretexts of narrative concatenation, and they also permit to reinforce diachrony in the description. They are modified on the following folio (quotation 4): "as they were going through the main gate, they saw the façade" (a version which is already very similar to that of the final text); whereas focalization is maintained, motivating notations disappear now, as Flaubert only uses the topos of the *entrance* into a place. The final text bears the allusive trace of this phenomenon, in the sequence which follows the description: "at last a servant appeared carrying a bunch of keys". The modalization contained in the adverb *at last* (which might connote, for instance, impatience of the characters, whose waiting, however, is no longer present in the text now), is the superficial remains of this interaction between focalization and temporality, that only the drafts can clearly reveal.

It has also been stressed by narratologists that focalization is narrowly linked with the use and the situation of intradescriptive details. The choice of certain terms, and even the textual disposition of space, often have meaning only when they relate to the presence of a contemplating character. However, the elaboration of some of these details is sometimes pure convention, as it stems from narrative rather than descriptive discourse, that is to say, from stereotyped coded constraints which strategically interact with focalization.

I will take the example of the description of the guard-post. In the published version, an introductory sequence focalizes it in an explicit way (example 6). Contrary to what might be expected, Flaubert had a lot of problems writing this sequence, as the drafts will show.

As is the case with numerous descriptions in the novel, focalisation appears after the details have been actualized, and only seems to justify them retroactively. In two scenarios the description is in focalization zero; in a quite Balzacian way, it comes and illustrates the "Aspect of the guard-post at night", as Flaubert writes in the second scenario (quotation 1).

The sequence "aspect of the guard-post at night" is deleted in the third scenario, and replaced by a focalizing sequence which announces and justifies the description (quotation 2): "Frédéric cannot sleep and looks". However, in this case, Flaubert is not satisfied with simply indicating vision; he introduces a psychological notation ("cannot sleep"), as if, due to the narrative program of *sleep*, which is anterior in the narrative (the scene takes place at night, but moreover Arnoux and the other national guards are asleep), he had to motivate and therefore justify the character's vision. But then the nightwatch itself has to be motivated, a narrative problem which is obvious when one considers the successive drafts of the passage (quotation 3):

17607 f° 99: It was very warm. Frédéric who could not sleep, sat up again and looked around him.

17607 f° 98. Frédéric who could not sleep because of fleas, out of boredom amused himself by looking around him.

17607 f° 95 v°. Frédéric out of boredom looked around him.

17607 f° 100. Frédéric, tormented by fleas, looked around him.

The detail of the *fleas* appears on one draft before it recurs at the end of the writing, and remains in the final text. Indeed, it comes and adds to the description (there are fleas in the

guard-post), and to its significance, reinforcing for instance the unpleasant aspect of the place; nevertheless its presence stems from a strategic artifice that the drafts unveil. Narrative motivations (among which is focalization) derive from one another and motivate one another in an interactive way, so that they appear inextricable in the definitive version of the text.

Let me try now to draw some conclusions. First of all, it is obvious that, as Henri Mitterand writes, inherited narrative codes often impose their rules on the writer. Description is without a doubt a privileged textual space for the appearance and the concentration of such stereotyped structures, even if Flaubert has a tendency to delete them little by little, or to erase their artificial aspect.

Nevertheless, genetics permits us to demonstrate that, on the one hand, if focalization is indeed one of the strategic rules which take part in the organization of narrative, then on the other hand it is not systematic and depends on other constraints which constitute the very form of the writing.

Finally, the pertinence of the theoretical concept is not denied by genetic examination, but its status and sometimes its operative value are questioned by the diverse processes unveiled by the manuscripts. Moreover, these different examples, while revealing the devices of *one aspect* of textual production, offer the possibility of a new theoretical approach that will become a *genetic poetics*, avoiding the didacticism and excessive generalization so frequently found in current theories. Indeed, the text in formation reveals itself as another object, requiring great analytical and methodological caution from both critic and theorist.

Dossier: references to final texts and manuscripts

EXAMPLE 1 (Arnoux's apartment)

In short, he was settling in Paris, this time for good; and he said nothing of his legacy, for fear of showing up his past.

The curtains, like the chair covers, were in brown damask wool; two pillows lay side by side against the bolster; a kettle was warming among the coals; and the shaded lamp standing on the edge of the chest of drawers cast a dim light over the apartment. [...]

Frédéric had expected to feel paroxysms of joy; but passions wilt when they are transplanted, and, finding Madame Arnoux in a setting which was unfamiliar to him, he had the impression that she had somehow lost something, that she had suffered a vague degradation, in short that she had changed.

Quotation 1

mediocre, middle-class apartment / he looks around him while speaking

Quotation 2

While speaking he was looking around him.

EXAMPLE 2 (the sky at the race)

However, some big clouds came rolling up, touching the tops of the elm-trees opposite. Rosanette was afraid it was going to rain.

Quotation 1

overcast sky. Big clouds. etc. dialogue.

Quotation 2

one has doubts about the weather

Quotation 3

Rosanette raised her head to the sky with a worried look.

Quotation 4

Rosanette raised her head / Rosanette looked at the sky

EXAMPLE 3 (Dambreuse's dining-room)

Two servants were waiting on the family, moving silently over the parquet floor; and the high-ceilinged room, with its three tapestry door-curtains and its two white marble fountains, the gleaming dish-warmers, the carefully arranged hors-d'oeuvre, even the stiffly folded napkins - all this luxurious comfort reminded Frédéric by contrast of another meal he had seen at Arnoux's house.

Quotation 1

luxurious comfort. Frédéric remembers, as a contrast, the lunch at Arnoux's.

Quotation 2

Frédéric looks.

EXAMPLE 4 (Paris)

He spent hours on his balcony looking down at the river flowing between the grey quays, which were blackened here and there with smudges from drains; or at a pontoon for washerwomen moored to the bank, where children sometimes amused themselves by giving a poodle a mud-bath. His eyes, leaving the stone Pont de Notre-Dame and the three suspension bridges, invariably strayed in the direction of the Quai aux Ormes, towards a clump of old trees which looked like the lime-trees in the port of Montereau. Facing

him, the Tour Saint-Jacques, the Hôtel de Ville, Saint-Gervais, Saint-Louis, and Saint-Paul rose among a maze of roofs, and the genie on the July Column shone in the east like a great golden star, while in the other direction the dome of the Tuileries stood out against the sky in a solid blue mass. It was over that way, behind the dome, that Madame Arnoux's house presumably lay.

Quotation 1

sadness and length of the summer in Paris - emptiness of the Latin quarter.

Quotation 2

she was absent for three months

Quotation 3

view from his window

EXAMPLE 5 (the castle of Fontainebleau)

As they were going through the main gate, they saw the whole façade in front of them: the five towers with their pointed roofs and the horseshoe staircase at the far end of the courtyard, which was flanked on left and right by two lower buildings. In the distance, the moss-covered paving-stones blended with the fawn tint of the bricks; and the whole palace, rust-coloured like an old suit of armour, gave an impression of royal dignity, of sombre military splendour.

At last a servant appeared carrying a bunch of keys.

Quotation 1

The monument, seen from its façade, makes them grave.

Quotation 2

They admire the façade / They were made to wait at the lodge-keeper's.

Quotation 3

* a feeling of respect gripped them when they looked at the façade

* They were made to wait behind the gate, then they looked at the façade

* They were made to wait behind the gate, then they had plenty of time to look at the façade

Quotation 4

As they were going through the main gate, they saw the façade

EXAMPLE 6 (the guard-post)

Frédéric, tormented by fleas, looked around him. Half-way up the yellow wall there was a long shelf, on which the knapsacks formed a row of little humps, while underneath, the lead-coloured muskets stood side by side. Snores came from the National Guards, whose stomachs were dimly silhouetted in the darkness.

Quotation 1

Aspect of the guard-post at night

Quotation 2

Frédéric cannot sleep and looks

Quotation 3

* It was very warm. Frédéric who could not sleep, sat up again and looked around him.

* Frédéric who could not sleep because of fleas, out of boredom amused himself by looking around him.

* Frédéric out of boredom looked around him.

* Frédéric, tormented by fleas, looked around him.