

# The New Criterion

## Features

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### Flaubert's simple heart

by [Anthony Daniels](#)

On a master's lesson in true tolerance.

Goodness knows why, but my wife (who is Parisian) likes me to read to her in French. I have heard Englishmen speak French, and on the whole, except for those who grew up bilingual, I have not been impressed, not at any rate favorably impressed, with the result.

I cannot believe that the English accent in French is anything other than charmless and painful on the ears of native speakers; and though I do not think I am by a long shot the worst of my countrymen (who make no concessions whatsoever to the pronunciation of foreign languages, of whose very existence they do not really, in their heart of hearts, approve), and though the local bookseller in my nearest town in France once flatteringly asked me not to lose my accent, as if she believed there were any possibility of my actually doing so, mine is no exception. True, my pronunciation is absolutely perfect, even Parisian, so long as it remains with ...

**Anthony Daniels's** most recent book is *In Praise of Prejudice* (Encounter Books).

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