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## Echoes of the Past in Flaubert's "L'Education Sentimentale", "Bouvard Et Pecuchet" and "Salammbô".

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**Echoes of the past in Flaubert's "L'Education sentimentale",  
"Bouvard et Pécuchet" and "Salammbô"**

**Pierce, Deborah Lee Trott, Ph.D.**

**The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1992**

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Ann Arbor, MI 48106**

ECHOES OF THE PAST  
IN FLAUBERT'S  
L'EDUCATION SENTIMENTALE,  
BOUVARD ET PECUCHET AND SALAMMBO

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of French and Italian

by  
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## ABSTRACT

Flaubert's novels demonstrate how the nineteenth-century's self-conception was defined by a disciplined obsession with the past. By looking at History, past and present, Flaubert's novels attempt to comprehend the individual and his evolving social reality. As evidenced in L'Education sentimentale, Bouvard et Pécuchet and Salammbô, one of Flaubert's main concerns is that of man's personal connection with history.

The historian and the novelist both work within the constraints imposed upon them by language. Both take from the world around them to construct a narrative that in many ways is similar. By the fusion of the familiar in his work the novelist creates an illusion of reality thereby making it believable. The historian will also rely on imagination to re-create the past. History is written and rewritten from one generation to another from what one finds important to remember of the other.

In L'Education sentimentale Flaubert's views of the cyclical nature of history are much like those affirmed by Marx. Whereas Marx proposes solutions, Flaubert, however, does not believe that there is any way to get out from under history. The Revolution of 1848 that had at first



sparked hope in the minds of many ended up being a failure and disappointment typical of the disillusionment of the time that was the nineteenth century.

Bouvard et Pécuchet in many ways is reminiscent of Ecclesiastes. Both the book of the Bible and Flaubert's novel question the validity and meaning to the quest for knowledge in life. Once again the cyclical nature of history is evident in this Flaubert's last and unfinished novel as the Bouvard and Pécuchet move through the whole disillusioning experience of Flaubert's generation.

In Salammbô by escaping the horrors of his generation Flaubert, in providing a construction of the past, is presenting a reading of the present. What at first seems to be a desire for otherness soon becomes a form of sameness. Once again the teleological view of history is put into question as Flaubert sees the same old problems being repeated over and over again.

## INTRODUCTION

O love, they die in yon rich sky,  
    They faint on hill or field or river  
Our ECHOES roll from soul to soul,  
    And grow for ever and for ever.

Tennyson: "The Princess III"

The nineteenth century may be called the Age of History. Although they may appear to be too dramatic and biased, the nineteenth-century texts represent the culmination of narrative political history.<sup>1</sup> What follows is an attempt to look at how history functions in three of Gustave Flaubert's narratives, l'Education sentimentale, Bouvard et Pécuchet, and Salammbô. The reason for choosing to examine the relationship between history and Flaubert's novels is because of the interesting considerations that are posed by trying to think through questions about "history" and its relationship to fictional writing and about Flaubert's conceptions of history and writings practices.

It is not the outward appearance 'realities' present in the novel that become significant but most importantly the psychological and political temperament of the time felt through it. L'Education sentimentale, Bouvard et Pécuchet and Salammbô must not be viewed as history but rather as a work of art that makes a useful and insightful statement about France during Flaubert's time. Jean-François Tétu argues that:

...Flaubert élabore une représentation de l'Histoire qui se donne les apparences du plus vif réalisme (les dates où la précision de tel épisode de février ou de juin en font foi) mais ce qu'il construit en fait, c'est une sorte de déni de l'Histoire, puisque, au moment même où elle s'affirme dans le texte, sa signification spécifique est niée. En d'autres termes on

pourrait dire que cette "histoire morale de ma génération" nous fournit la morale historique de cette génération.<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore my intent to show that Flaubert's reality is that of showing the illusions of his generation, the disillusionment of a failed revolution and of voicing his hatred for the bourgeois mediocrity: "quelle atroce invention que celle du bourgeois" he writes to Louise Colet in 1836.<sup>3</sup> Forty years later, in 1877 he writes: "Deux choses me soutiennent: l'amour de la Littérature et la Haine du Bourgeois, --résumé, condensé maintenant dans ce qu'on appelle le Grand Parti de l'Ordre." (Correspondance SIV, 23) Flaubert's attitude towards the bourgeois is rather complicated but can best be summed up as a product of his resentment toward a rapidly growing group of people that were, in his opinion, uncultured but yet becoming more and more wealthy and powerful. The lack of money was a constant worry for Flaubert. Although he never had to work for a living he was forced to sell off much of his property to pay debts that he incurred. For Flaubert the bourgeois became scapegoats for venting his frustrations and pessimistic outlook on life.

Contrary to the idea of progress and of teleological history that claim that history moves forward from one generation to another until the ultimate perfection is attained, Flaubert believes in the cyclic nature of time where man can never get out from under the grasps of

history which inevitably leads to his death. This concept will govern the development of all his novels.

Choosing to write on this subject has proven to be a difficult task for several reasons. First of all, virtually everyone has written on Flaubert and said something about history. In the last twenty years the relationship between history and fictional narrative have also been a topic of great discussion. At times I felt totally inundated with all the reading. Everything else had to be put on hold or relegated to a less important position. How could I say anything that has not yet been said, how could I even attempt to say anything of value in the company of so many respected and talented literary critics? For the most part I do not presume to dispute what they have said but rather hope to add another perspective to the problem.

In his The Historical Novel, written in 1938 but not translated until 1962, Georg Lukács examines the development of the historical novel from a Marxist point of view by studying novels by Scott, Balzac, Flaubert and Tolstoy. Lukács contends that Flaubert's literary greatness is evident in the fact that the general tendencies of the nineteenth century appear in Flaubert's works with consistency and honesty. He argues that :

While in most other writers of the time, a negative attitude towards the contemporary prose of bourgeois life was simply a matter of aesthetic amusement, or frequently, a

reactionary feeling, in Flaubert, it is an intense disgust, a vehement hatred.<sup>4</sup>

He concludes that Flaubert's disgust for modern life made him one of the "most important precursors of dehumanization in modern literature."<sup>5</sup>

In 1969 Gilles Nelod's Panorama du roman historique embraces European as well as American authors dealing with history in their novels and how the use of history affected their works. In 1972 and 1975 the Nouvelle Revue Française and the Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France both published special issues on the subject. The later contains, among others, articles written by Jean Molino "Qu'est-ce que le roman historique?" and Claude Duchet "L'Enseignement des Préfaces." Jean Molino deals with the development of the novel and how the nineteenth-century became so conscious of history, and how the novel will rely on history in its attempt to reproduce the "real." He concludes that:

C'est ainsi que l'évolution du roman historique, comme celle des idées sur l'histoire ou de la théorie du roman, doit refléter le rythme que scandent les événements politiques et sociaux...Le roman historique et l'histoire ne sont pas plus que les autres réalités du monde symbolique sous la dépendance directe de l'événement...Le roman historique est ainsi, à tout moment, le témoin et le créateur de l'intelligibilité de l'histoire.<sup>6</sup>

Claude Duchet does not agree with Lukács that the historical novel began and ended in the nineteenth century for he believes that there will always be a close

relationship between the novel and History. History is present in the novel as: "Histoire illisible, opaque, éclatée, irreprésentable et toujours présente, comme désir ou illusion."<sup>7</sup>

In 1981 the colloque de la Société des Etudes Romantiques published Histoire et Langage dans "L'Education sentimentale" that includes Michel Crouzet's "L'Education sentimentale" et le 'Genre historique,'" and French historian Maurice Agulhon's "Peut-on lire en historien "L'Education sentimentale?" Crouzet states that Flaubert's greatness lies in his comprehension and ability to bring to life the spirit of his times.<sup>8</sup> Maurice Agulhon argues that even though there are volumes and volumes of "serious" history written about nineteenth-century France that Flaubert's L'Education sentimentale can contribute much to the understanding of this period as:

un témoignage (à présomption d'authenticité, une fois de plus) sur la mentalité politique (et pourquoi ne dirions-nous pas sur l'éducation sentimentale et politique?) de la génération de bourgeoisie intellectuelle aisée contemporaine de Gustave et de Frédéric.<sup>9</sup>

In 1982 Anne Green's Flaubert and the Historical Novel: Salammbô Reassessed brought new insight into the reading of Salammbô. Anne Green states that the purpose of her book on Salammbô was three-fold. First to reveal that Flaubert chose a distant period in history in order to examine the basic problems that exist concerning the relationship between history and fiction. Second to

examine the basic problem in the way we see and make sense of the past. Third to show how Flaubert, in trying to make sense of the past, desires to offer a means of understanding the present.<sup>10</sup>

Antoine Compagnon's La Troisième République des lettres de Flaubert à Proust published in 1983 discusses in depth Flaubert's last novel Bouvard et Pécuchet. Compagnon asserts that "Bouvard et Pécuchet est la France contemporaine de Flaubert"<sup>11</sup> for Flaubert's novel asks the same questions as Taine. He justifies this statement by saying that:

Bouvard et Pécuchet comble le voeu de Taine: c'est le tableau d'un village de la province, c'est l'illustration de l'état d'esprit, de l'intelligence politique des électeurs, c'est la démonstration de l'impuissance, de la malfeasance du suffrage universel.<sup>12</sup>

Françoise Gaillard's "A Little Story about the bras de fer: or How History is Made" and Frederic Jameson's "Flaubert's Libininal Historicism: 'Trois Contes'" appeared in 1984 in Flaubert and Postmodernism. Françoise Gaillard's article deals mostly with the definition of la bêtise in Flaubert's texts. Françoise Gaillard agrees with Roland Barthes that la bêtise is a manner of speaking, of offering one's opinion but adds that as evidenced in Flaubert's texts:

la bêtise is the voice of instinct and of interest, its (conjectural) clairvoyance is only due to the accidents of a historical situation, where the interest of the speakers is synchronized with what might well be called the



general interest, which is never but a deformed representation.<sup>13</sup>

For Christopher Prendergast the world that Flaubert's heroes and heroines discover and construct is a world made of quotations; a citational world. He continues proposing that the novel in the nineteenth century becomes involved in reproducing and reinforcing standardised ways of seeing the world.<sup>14</sup>

Jameson, upon examining Flaubert's Trois Contes shows how Flaubert:

emits a message about art language, only in order thereby to free some deeper fantasy about history itself. In Flaubert's political unconscious then the mode of representation has become the vehicle of an unresolvable libidinal meditation on the nature of modes of production.<sup>15</sup>

Richard Terdiman's The Dialectics of Isolation provides an excellent examination of the nineteenth-century Realist novel and different novelists' (including Flaubert) attempt to comprehend their evolving social reality. Terdiman demonstrates how the realist novel was born out of necessity to discover how the world around us might explain the individual disorientation.<sup>16</sup> Richard Terdiman's study of history as memory in "Deconstructing Memory: on Representing the Past and Theorizing Culture in France since the Revolution" that appeared in Diacritics, in the winter of 1985, among other things, is an excellent source for understanding what "history" means in key nineteenth century texts. In this article he argues that:

"The nineteenth century became a present - perhaps the first present - whose self-conception was defined by a disciplined obsession with the past."<sup>17</sup>

The Order of Mimesis by Christopher Prendergast (1986) is an excellent study of mimesis (the imitation of nature in art and literature) and the problems encountered in the relation between language and society. For him an authentic mimetic work is one that: "selects and arranges the essential or representative patterns of experience, and in so doing, grasps the underlying laws of reality and history, reveals the world in its inner principle of intelligibility."<sup>18</sup>

Linda Orr's Headless History: Nineteenth-Century French Historiography of the Revolution (1990) examines the rapprochement between the history and the literature about the French Revolution. She contends that Flaubert more than anyone captured the nineteenth-century through his rage and repulsion:

He carries the blend of elements to an extreme where they take on a frightening autonomy. Fog and seamy underside, all of it runs together and thickens into a social glue, both imaginary and real, that measures everything according to its own mediocrity, which can itself be neither measured nor encompassed. Flaubert lashes out at the bourgeois, the republicans, the socialists, for desiring this mediocre society, the "fruit of the democratic stupidity," and he finds and pours his disgust into those blatant examples of the puddle of pile: Lamartine and Thiers.<sup>19</sup>

To these, and many other books and articles, I owe much for the insight into Flaubert and the problems of language, of history and its relation to fictional narrative.

In Chapter I I will examine the differences and similarities between history and fiction, the historian and the novelist. It becomes evident that from the nineteenth century to the present, texts' main concern is that of their personal connection with history. When fiction takes from the world around it for its inspiration the problem of realism in literature naturally arises. This was of particular interest to the nineteenth-century French novelists who in some cases felt that through language a faithful recreation of the world around them was an attainable goal. Flaubert's narratives constantly resist this attempt.

In Chapter II I will attempt to show how given the profound differences in temperament, perspective and intent, the analysis of the Revolution of 1848 given by Flaubert in L'Education sentimentale and Marx in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon are remarkably similar. At the outbreak of the Revolution of 1848 Flaubert was twenty-seven years old, had dropped out of law school, had not yet published his first novel and was living at home with his mother. Marx, on the other hand, although only twenty-nine years old, had received his

doctorate at the age of twenty-three and was recognized as a major theoretician and activist in the revolutionary political circles of the day. The conclusions they both reach about the Revolution are in short that the Revolution was preeminently a farce, a bad piece of political theater in which the actors were ignorant of their own affects. Thus Marx writes of the end of the Revolution and the Napoleonic nephew who ushered it in:

At a moment when the bourgeoisie itself played the most complete comedy, but in the most serious manner in the world, without infringing any of the pedantic conditions of French dramatic etiquette, and was itself half deceived, half convinced of the solemnity of its own performance of state, the adventurer, who took the comedy as plain comedy, was bound to win. Only when he has eliminated his solemn opponent, when he himself now takes his imperial role seriously and under the Napoleonic mask imagines he is the real Napoleon, does he become the victim of his own conception of the world, the serious buffoon who no longer takes world history for a comedy but his comedy for world history.<sup>20</sup>

For both Flaubert and Marx there are no heroes in this drama. All of the participants are caught in the gap between what is desired and the act which inevitably reveals to them the profound ignorance of both their motives and of history. History for both Flaubert and Marx is a repetitive cycle and our ignorance of history leads us to repeat over and over past mistakes. Marx, however, proposes answers whereas Flaubert remains imprisoned by the dilemmas of history. They differ in that Flaubert believes that there is no way to get out from under history for

there are no solutions to the problems which are just passed on from one generation to another. In the end we are all at the beginning, only worse off, having suffered from the erosion of time. Frédéric's life of disillusionment and failed dreams attests to this fact.

In chapter III I will show how in Bouvard et Pécuchet this theme of the cyclical nature of history is again revisited. I will compare the book in the Bible Ecclesiastes with Bouvard et Pécuchet showing how both follow the same circular trajectory. Bouvard et Pécuchet is a comic encyclopedic novel on the degradation of knowledge and the insanity of the human effort. In their "voyage" Bouvard and Pécuchet move through the whole disillusioning experience of the nineteenth-century.

In chapter IV it is my intent to argue that although Flaubert claims that in writing Salammbô he wanted to escape from the horrors of the present day, he nonetheless again demonstrates his anxieties and feelings about contemporary France. In providing a construction of the past he is presenting a reading of the present. Once again Flaubert shows that, contrary to the teleological view of history, the straight line of progress is only an illusion. Through this novel Flaubert reveals his belief that his age was in the same state of decline as that of Carthage.

While writing this dissertation I have felt much like Bouvard and Pécuchet burying myself in books, reading and

searching for that ultimate perfected knowledge. In the end I have become frustrated by the fact that there is always more to read, more to think about, more to write and more to learn. This quest for knowledge is a never ending process, constantly frustrating, constantly seducing while disappointing and discouraging. My desire is, however, that I will not become disillusioned and uninspired as Bouvard and Pécuchet or Frédéric Moreau and return to copying or to be content in remaining a 'petit professeur.'

## NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> Linda Orr, Headless History (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) ix.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-François Tétu, "Désir et Révolution dans L'Education sentimentale," Littérature 15 (1974): 94.

<sup>3</sup> Gustave Flaubert, Correspondance (Paris: Conard, 1926-1933) I, 333. All subsequent references to Flaubert's correspondence will be found within the text.

<sup>4</sup> Georg Lukács, The Historical Novel, trans. Hannah and Stanly Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, Ltd., 1962) 185.

<sup>5</sup> Lukács 185.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Molino, "Qu'est-ce que le roman historique," Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France 75.1-3 (1975): 234.

<sup>7</sup> Claude Duchet, "L'Illusion historique: l'Enseignement des Préfaces," Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France 75.1-3 (1975): 267.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Crouzet, "L'Education sentimentale et le 'Genre Historique,'" Histoire et langage dans "L'Education sentimentale" de Flaubert (Paris: Société d'Edition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1981) 77.

<sup>9</sup> Maurice Agulhon, "Peut-on lire en historien L'Education sentimentale?" Histoire et langage dans "L'Education sentimentale" de Flaubert (Paris: Société d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1981) 41.

<sup>10</sup> Anne Green, Flaubert and the Historical Novel: "Salammbô" Reassessed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 3, 16.

<sup>11</sup> Antoine Compagnon, La Troisième République des lettres (Paris: Seuil, 1983) 281.

<sup>12</sup> Compagnon 281.

<sup>13</sup> Françoise Gaillard, "A Little Story about the bras de fer," trans. Elizabeth Aubé, Flaubert and Postmodernism (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) 86, 96.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Prendergast, The Order of Mimesis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 186.

<sup>15</sup> Frederic Jameson, "Flaubert's Libidinal Historicism," Flaubert and Postmodernism (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) 83.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Terdiman, The Dialectics of Isolation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) xii.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Terdiman, "Deconstructing Memory: On Representing the Past and Theorizing Culture in France since the Revolution," Diacritics, 15.4 (1985): 14.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher Prendergast, The Order of Mimesis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 26.

<sup>19</sup> Linda Orr, Headless History: Nineteenth-Century French Historiography of the Revolution (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) 30-31.

<sup>20</sup> Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (New York, International Publishers, 1979) 76.



## CHAPTER I

### HISTORY AND FICTION: BRANCHES OF THE SAME TREE

--Nous ne savons pas, dit Bouvard, ce qui se passe dans notre ménage, et nous prétendons découvrir quels étaient les chevaux et les amours du duc d'Angoulême!

Pécuchet ajouta:

--Combien de questions autrement considérables, et encore plus difficiles!

D'où ils conclurent que les faits extérieurs ne sont pas tout. Il faut les compléter par la psychologie. Sans l'imagination, l'histoire est défectueuse.

--Faisons venir quelques romans historiques!

Flaubert, Bouvard et Pécuchet

History is the continuum which man is, and if a man does not live in the thought that he is a history, he is not capable of himself.

It isn't a question of fiction versus knowing. "Lies" are necessary in both--that is the HIMagination. At no point outside a fiction can one be sure.

Charles Olson, The Special View of History

Although nineteenth-century texts are very concerned with history, its use is not unique to that period. The novelist's use of history is fundamental to the development of the novel as a genre and dates from as far back as such early literary works as the Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Chanson de Roland where history and literature work together to express human experience. Historians and poets have long blended history and literature through historical events, customs and manners of a particular time and beliefs of a people with imagination and artistic expression.

In the beginning, the novel, being a new form of art, did not share history's prestige and was accused of untruthfulness, deceit and immorality. It therefore relied on history to gain credibility and acceptability.<sup>21</sup> By mixing the recognizable in his work the novelist created an illusion of reality. Initially the novelists relied on the inspirational sources of the classical world but with the passage of time the novel took on a more contemporary character giving the present society and individual the focus of attention. Lukács holds that by early nineteenth-century Scott had grounded fiction in a lived reality of time and place ushering in the modern historical novel.<sup>22</sup>

This relationship between history and literature, however, has been a persistent concern of humanists and

philosophers, historians and novelists. This debate over history's status as science or art has produced enlightening ideas on its relationship to literature. The prestige that fiction now holds has also allowed fictitious writings to be regarded at least as equally important as history, for we now acknowledge the fact that both operate within their own character and limitations to their relationship to truth. Hayden White defines historical narrative as: "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of explaining what they were by representing them."<sup>23</sup>

Historians and novelists alike see advantages and disadvantages in their chosen medium. In his "Avant Propos" to the Comédie humaine Balzac states that because he was freer from constraints than the historian, he was more successful in his quest to state the real, the ideal truth: "J'ai mieux fait que l'historien, je suis plus libre."<sup>24</sup>

Madame de Staël elaborates on this same idea by stating that literature is superior to history from the moral point of view and upholds that literature has greater flexibility to make judgements and to arrive at conclusions, in that a plain reading of history does not necessarily reveal these.<sup>25</sup> A novelist has in his power to go beyond the evidence and to provide a better

understanding of the world we live in and of human character. Historian Herbert Butterfield admits that history is "farther away from the heart of things"<sup>26</sup> for only the poet has the ability to directly reach and express the unrecognizable features inherent in history. Proust was able to well express this idea when writing on Stendhal he says:

En un sens les beaux livres ajoutent aux événements une tranche d'âme coïncidente. Dans Le Rouge et le Noir, chaque action est suivie d'une partie de la phrase indiquant ce qui se passe inconsciemment dans l'âme, c'est le roman du motif.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, however, when one reads a novel there is naturally this mistrust of the historical data for it is supposed to be fiction - therefore not true. But even with history itself there are problems of trust. The people most skeptical of history as a nonfictive discipline are sometimes the historians themselves. In his well-known essay "The Historian and His Facts," E. H. Carr defines history "as a continuous process of interaction between the writer of history and his facts."<sup>28</sup> The American historian Carl Becker goes as far as to say that: "The facts of history do not exist for any historian until he has created them."<sup>29</sup> The structuralist critic Roland Barthes concludes in his essay "Historical Discourse" that "by structure alone historical discourse is essentially a product of ideology, or rather imagination."<sup>30</sup> Therefore there is little difference in techniques of discourse in

both the factual and imaginary narrative except that one claims that it is true.

In examining novels such as Flaubert's L'Education sentimentale we soon become aware that it was not Flaubert's intention, as some may have it, to write history, to write a detailed historical account of the Revolution of 1848 but rather to set his novel within this frame so that history could be felt through his story but not be the central focus of it. He anchors his novels in history in order to recreate this desired illusion of reality. As seen in L'Education sentimentale what Flaubert does is to present his personal observations of his time and his own analysis of the bourgeoisie. He elaborates on what could happen, which is the objet of the novel and not only on what did happen - which belongs to history. Therefore he combined what was possible with what had already transpired.

It is evident that Flaubert in writing L'Education sentimentale envisioned a novel which was primarily historical in character, reflecting the union of fact and fiction or in other words a coming together of private and public dimensions. Crouzet writes: "Car le fait historique, connu, n'est pas objet de roman. C'est le mélange de fiction de l'histoire qui est l'essentiel."<sup>31</sup>

Flaubert went to great pains and showed great concern about how he would go about bringing fact and fiction

together in a meaningful manner. He compared himself to a painter composing an historical picture when he writes: "J'ai bien du mal à emboîter mes personnages dans les événements politiques, les fonds emportent les premiers plans."<sup>32</sup> This problem of preventing his character from being swallowed up by the turmoil of events keeps troubling him and in March 1868 he writes to Jules Duplan expressing his feelings:

J'ai bien du mal à emboîter mes personnages dans les événements politiques de 48. J'ai peur que les fonds ne dévorent les premiers plans; c'est là le défaut du genre historique. Les personnages de l'histoire sont plus intéressants que ceux de la fiction, surtout quand ceux-là ont des passions modérées; on s'intéresse moins à Frédéric qu'à Lamartine. Et puis, quoi choisir parmi les faits réels? Je suis perplexe: c'est dur!" (Correspondance, V, 363)

In order to prevent History from becoming all-absorbing Flaubert will attribute to Frédéric a solid dose of selfish indifference to the world around him.

In his writings Flaubert had a penchant for establishing parallels between history and fiction. Thus in L'Education sentimentale he makes an analogy between the "sentimental" fiasco of his protagonist and the political fiasco in France after 1830. Like his contemporaries Balzac and Stendhal he assumes that the best sujet for the novel is France since 1789 and that what the novelist must do is to find a method by which to portray as much of the whole society as he can. From Flaubert on, time in essence becomes the hero, the focus of the novel. In The Theory of

the Novel, Lukács states that the whole inner action of L'Education sentimentale is nothing else but the struggle against the power of time. It is Lukács' opinion that Flaubert's novel serves as a model form for inscribed in it is the center of Flaubert's literary project, with a self-consciousness not before observed, the problem of temporality and narration that will preoccupy Flaubert's successors.<sup>33</sup>

The nineteenth century is considered by most historians to be the Age of History, for it was the period when historical time came into its own, becoming more sophisticated, more profound, more philosophical than it had ever been before. For the French, especially, this history also had at its disposal the French Revolution which proved to be worthy of its ambition. In The Historical Novel Lukács provides the bases for understanding this phenomenon:

It was the French Revolution, the revolutionary wars, and the rise and fall of Napoleon, which for the first time made history a mass experience, and moreover on a European scale. During the decades between 1789 and 1814 each nation of Europe underwent more upheavals than they had previously experienced in centuries. And the quick succession of these upheavals gives them a qualitative distinct character, it makes their historical character far more visible than would be the case in isolated, individual instances: the masses no longer have the impression of a "natural occurrence."<sup>34</sup>

The effect that history had on nineteenth-century literature is significant. It is quite evident that the

main concern of these texts is with their personal connection with their history and the predicament of the society in which they live.

As Richard Terdiman so aptly states, the force that determines the progression of the novel from Stendhal to Proust is each writer's effort to comprehend the evolving social reality. He further notes that the realist novel was born of a social emergency and that it sought to discover what in the outside might explain the individual disorientation so pertinent during this era.<sup>35</sup> Thus the novel during the nineteenth century becomes the effort on the writer's part to reconceptualize the rapidly changing relationship between the individual and the society he lives in. For novelists such as Flaubert this effort to understand the individual, his social possibilities and his aspirations come together as a story that is an exemplar of human fate situated in a definite historical situation. Through his novels Flaubert discloses the reality of everyday life that becomes covered up in everyday confusion.

In his Preface to the Comédie humaine, Balzac refers to himself as the painter of human types, a narrator of the dramas of private life, as the archeologist, the cataloguer, the record keeper, student, seeker and analyst of society.<sup>36</sup> This is in direct opposition to Flaubert's characters who are not definable. The Balzacian "type" is



comprehensible, representative. In this same preface Balzac outlines the ways in which he, the novelist, will succeed in writing the history of human manners that has been forgotten by so many historians and how he will function in the same realm of causal analysis as a social scientist or historian. He says that French society was to be the historian and he only the secretary.<sup>37</sup> He will collect examples of passion, select from the chief social events of the time and compose types made up from the traits taken from several homogeneous characters.

Flaubert will describe L'Education sentimentale as a novel of modern time set in Paris stating that: "Je veux écrire un roman de mœurs de ma génération, 'sentimentale'... (Correspondance, V, 158)

In light of these statements made by these two novelists how then should we view fiction? Is it possible to read fiction as history and elicit from it a range of historical judgments on the nature of the past and its relationship to the present? In order to answer these questions we must first try to define both history and literary fiction by identifying the nature of historical and fictional narrative and the models they offer in knowing and acting in the world.

A leading historian of ideas, Karl Lowith, has observed that "to ask earnestly the question of the ultimate meaning of history takes one's breath away; it

transports us into a vacuum which only hope and faith can fill."<sup>38</sup> Anyone who tries to think philosophically about history immediately realizes the truth of this observation.

We can say that basically history means the past and all that happened in the past. It also means the record of the past, all that has been written or said about the past - what one age finds important to remember of another. This is why many philosophers and historians believe that all history is contemporary history for as Benedetto Croce says: "However remote in time events may seem to be, every historical judgment refers to present needs and situations."<sup>39</sup> The past exists only in our record of it and without such a record there would be no meaningful past at all. Thus there is no history except as it is composed but this act of composing can never end for history has to be written and rewritten from one generation to another. These records can be in the form of the traditional historical narratives recounting periods and events in the past, or in the form of literature, paintings, and other forms of art.

Theodore Zeldin describes his historical project with words much like Flaubert and other novelists of the nineteenth century may have used:

France 1848 - 1945 may be read in the same way as one would read a series of novels, each of which tells the story of a family or a community from a different point of view....

The analogy with the novel is more than that, for I have tried to combine the

preoccupations of the historians with those of the novelist.... My method is to hold up a multitude of mirrors around the French, so that they may be seen simultaneously from different angles... To adapt to the kaleidoscope vision I offer, the reader must, of course, be willing to put aside temporarily the expectations that he has of history...<sup>40</sup>

We must then look at defining the role of the historian whose job it is to record this history. Over the centuries historians have perceived their role differently. Whereas the nineteenth-century scientific historians saw their function as recording machines with documents being fed into them resulting in a faithful description of the past, the twentieth century historian sees his role differently. No longer is the historian an unbiased copy machine but rather one who, not very different from the novelist, re-creates the past by discovering its lost ingredients and by illuminating its dark area.

History, of course, is there in the fact that it did occur and exists in the conscious or the unconscious memories of men. The memory can be jogged, the consciousness can be stimulated, the image of the past can be changed. It is when the historian does these things that he makes history, the history that will live on in print as a testimony of what once was for generations to come.

We can therefore safely say that history is the past. History is more importantly the memory of the past. This concept of history as memory embraces more than many

historians would claim: the total record of the past - literature, law, art, architecture, social institutions, religion, philosophy, all indeed that lives in and through the memory of man. It is here that the Other is made Ours, that the past and present become one. In his article "Deconstructing Memory: On Representing the Past and Theorizing Culture in France since the Revolution" Richard Terdiman argues that the nineteenth century "brooded obsessively upon memory."<sup>41</sup> It is his contention that memory and therefore history become a preoccupation in the nineteenth century's effort to think through the present. He continues saying:

We could comprehend the nineteenth century's preoccupation with history in just this way: as the attempt to master the crisis of diachronicity, the new and disorienting opacity of the past, by theorizing and retheorizing the relations with time itself."<sup>42</sup>

Flaubert felt that this sense of history was completely new in his world and that history may have been the best thing about the nineteenth century. According to Foucault, history is from then to the present an unavoidable element in our thought.<sup>43</sup>

Taking on innumerable forms and serving innumerable purposes, history is therefore organized memory in the form of a story. If it neglects to tell a story it will lose much of its appeal and authority. Take the Iliad and the Odyssey for example. Here story-telling and history are so co-existent that we do not know whether to classify them as

literature or as history for they are both. But if history is a story it is not an imaginary story. To be sure, it draws on and excites the imagination, but it is not the flight of the imagination. It is a story of what the historian has been able to discern happened in the past and his reconstruction of it. It is therefore, an organized record and interpretation of memory which has been infused with meaning and imagination of what might otherwise have been just a chaotic assemblage of miscellaneous facts. History is nothing more or less than the passage of time itself and the delineation of events as taking place in time.

The definition of literature is also quite problematic for, like history, it means different things to different people. Literature according to Sartre is "the subjectivity of a society in permanent revolution."<sup>44</sup> Roland Barthes says that: "The text is (should be) that uninhibited person who shows his behind to the Political Father."<sup>45</sup>

Literature is the imaginative, creative writing. But can it be purely imaginative? Is it possible for fiction to escape the limits of time? The nineteenth century realists wanted their works to be strongly grounded in the world around them. For them literature, therefore language, had the capacity and responsibility to faithfully represent "reality." Of course this fondness for the

"petit fait vrai" can be found in almost any literary work, but rarely, if ever, did realism dominate a whole work before the middle of the nineteenth century. Never before, or certainly since, had the realistic tendency added up to the proportions of a literary movement as it did in the nineteenth century.

It is, therefore, important to look at how some writers and literary critics define realism in literature however elusive a fixed definition of realism might ultimately prove to be. Defining it becomes quite problematic for realism means different things to different people and in different contexts. It would be naïve to expect reality to be the same for everyone. In looking at how literary critics define realism these divergences become quite evident. For Georg Lukács realism moves in cycles.<sup>46</sup> Proust believed that from age to age a certain kind of realism is reborn as a reaction against the art that was theretofore admired.<sup>47</sup> Roman Jakobson defines realism as an artistic movement aspiring to create an illusion of reality:

...un courant artistique qui s'est posé comme but de reproduire la réalité le plus fidèlement possible et qui aspire au maximum à avoir l'illusion d'une fidélité objective et absolue à la réalité."<sup>48</sup>

George Becker writes that realism is a formula of art which, conceiving of reality, in a certain way, undertakes to present a simulacrum of it on the basis of more or less

fixed rules.<sup>49</sup> Therefore realism becomes essentially an epistemological problem for it raises the problem (especially to the twentieth century reader) of correspondence between the literary work and the reality it seeks to imitate. Barthes concludes that the real is an ideological construct for it is: "essentially a product of ideology, or rather of imagination."<sup>50</sup>

Coming on the heels of the nineteenth century realists who held as an ideal this faithful, unaltered representation of the world around them, Flaubert yearned for a text broken free of history. For him this willed effort of literature to approximate reality, where the novelist purports to give an authentic account of experiences of individuals and of their surroundings, becomes quite problematic.

Roland Barthes describes the attempts of twentieth-century novelists such as Joyce, Kafka, Beckett, and the New Novelists in France such as Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet as "unreadable" texts, where there is a rupture between the language and fiction and the world that it pretends but ultimately refuses to represent. He continues stating:

There are those who want a text (an art, painting) without a shadow, without the dominant ideology: but this is to want a text without fecundity, without productivity, a sterile text (see the myth of the woman without a shadow). The text needs its shadow: this shadow is a bit of ideology, a bit of representation, a bit of subject; ghosts, pockets, traces, necessary clouds: subversion must produce its own chiaroscuro.<sup>51</sup>

As we shall see in Flaubert's novels L'Education sentimentale, Bouvard et Pécuchet and Salammbô his texts carry this shadow, these traces of his generation, of his ideology about life and literature. His novels are not only concerned with these "ghosts" or "clouds" of the world but also with the tension existing between art and what it desires to transcend.

Fiction, however, cannot escape or even hope to escape the constraints of narrative and exist solely in what Barthes calls a pure realism of value or bliss as opposed to the more comfortable, time and culture bound language of pleasure:

Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.<sup>52</sup>

For as E. M. Forster states if it tries to it will fail for as soon as fiction is completely delivered from time it cannot express anything at all.<sup>53</sup>

Although Flaubert claimed to be "le(s) miroir(s) grossissant(s) de la vie externe" it is evident in his correspondence that he was not as naïve about the power of fiction as it may seem with that statement. He admits that "écrire la vie ordinaire comme on écrit l'histoire ou l'épopée (sans dénaturer le sujet) est peut-être une absurdité." In a letter to Huysmans he writes that "L'art



n'est pas la réalité...il faut bien choisir." (Correspondance, VII, 224) In L'Education sentimentale the painter Pellerin asks "Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire, la réalité? Les uns voient noir, d'autres bleu, la multitude voit bête."<sup>54</sup> Reality for Flaubert is a "trucage" and it is the reader who allows himself to be taken along for the pleasure of it. It is as if the reader says: "I know that these are just words, but even so..." This process is what Culler calls the process of "naturalization" - the ability of the reader to assimilate and accept what is in the novel. Thus: "to naturalize a text is to bring it into relation with a type of discourse or model which is already, in some sense, natural and legible."<sup>55</sup> This reading model is necessitated by Flaubert's textual practices in constructing "reality."

Flaubert had a keen awareness of what he must do - that is - to create an illusion of reality, that there is no such thing as unadulterated reality in literature and that no art is free of convention. He writes to Maupassant asking: "Avez-vous jamais cru à l'existence des choses? Est-ce que tout n'est pas une illusion? Il n'a de vrai que les 'rapports.' C'est à dire, la façon dont nous percevons les objets." (Correspondance, V, 23)

Referring specifically to literature, to the various ways in which a writer can "see" the material from which he has to make the work of art, Flaubert, sounding much like

the painter Pellerin, says that no two writers see the same for "il y a des peintres qui voient tout en bleu, d'autres tout en jaune ou tout en noir. Chacun de nous a un prisme à travers lequel il aperçoit le monde." (Correspondance, VIII, 135) The illusion of art is thus two-fold: the artist has to arrange his work so that it gives the illusion of truth, the correspondence to life and to human experiences; and he must show his characters being the victims of their own personal illusions.

Flaubert expresses the idea of literature as illusion in his correspondence and in his novels. Madame Bovary is in fact a fiction about the dangers of fiction. Emma Bovary takes the realist project literally;<sup>56</sup> if the work is able to represent adequately the essence of things, then that essence is available to appropriation as language. Emma wants, in effect, writing without a difference. Félicité in "Un Coeur Simple" when confronted with the signifier of a map of Cuba believes it to coincide so perfectly with the topology it represents that she expects to see the house of her nephew Victor on it:

Elle se pencha sur la carte; ce réseau de lignes colorées fatiguait sa vue, sans lui rien apprendre; et Bourais, l'invitait à dire ce qui l'embarrassait, elle le pria de lui montrer la maison où demeurerait Victor. Bourais leva les bras, il éternua, rit énormément, une candeur pareille excitait sa joie, et Félicité n'en comprenait pas le motif - elle qui s'attendait peut-être à voir jusqu'au portrait de son neveu, tant son intelligence était bornée!<sup>57</sup>

In showing Félicité seeking the real where there is only the surface of an iconic figure, Flaubert ridicules the concept of the possibility of a simple realism. It would be simplistic to treat Flaubert as either a modernist or a realist for while sounding much like a modernist Flaubert still retains some hold on the realist project. Flaubert the documentarian, the archeologist, while replicating in a mimetic way the decor and the events of his time shows the stupidity of mimesis. The paradox of the realist project is that in order to be a realist one must write in a common discourse that is not critical of the "manière de voir." If the text is to be mimetic it reproduces a discourse that is stupidity, citational and as such loses sight of the very basic question of realism. Flaubert therefore comes to the conclusion that "il n'y a pas de vrai, il n'y a que de manière de voir." The novel, the presentation itself is a "manière" - a way of seeing.

Therefore it becomes evident that Flaubert's work is an anguished condemnation of the idea of correspondence between reality and what the imagination invents. It is as if the ultimate object of Flaubert's realism is to represent its own logic, its own rhetoric and in so doing embrace its own bankruptcy. His stories represent to their fullest the failure of distinction in the play of différence, between the sensual (the real) and the verbal or textual. It seems Flaubert was intent on advertising

the void of fiction by relentlessly exposing the artifice of literature. Emma kills herself because of her failure to find a situation worthy of her vocabulary. She tests her life in light of the language she learned in books.

For Philippe Hamon it must become, therefore, no longer the question of "Comment la littérature copie-t-elle la réalité?" but rather "Comment la littérature nous fait-elle croire qu'elle copie la réalité?"<sup>58</sup> Flaubert is able to accomplish this through the fusing of certain familiar and unfamiliar elements into his fictional work. The familiar forms the background for the text and serves as a frame of reference for the reader. Realism thus becomes plausible not because it reflects the world, but because it is constructed out of what is familiar. Art, therefore, is a selection but a selection whose main concern is to be typical.<sup>59</sup>

Whereas Balzac insisted on the veracity of his statements, and that his statements were of the nature of footnotes in a sociological treatise, Flaubert had no such pretension. Since he did not believe that reality was knowable, he was mainly concerned with ensuring that his statements were true, or likely to have been true, for the time in which the novel was set. Perhaps, we can say, his statements offer a critique of what passes for truth.

After all is said and done and regardless of the difference between history and fictional narratives,

between the historian and the novelist, we become aware that all are equally engaged in the study of the nature of time. The historian and the novelist alike construct models of the world informed by an idea of history while offering these models as epistemological paradigms for the constitution of evidence and evaluation of significant actions. Fiction, however, is far less concerned with what we know but much more with how we come to know it. To writers like Flaubert what matters is the journey taken in making sense of our past and then the success or failure encountered in acting on that knowledge. In his novels we witness many means by which his characters try to arrive at a certain knowledge about the world. In Bouvard et Pécuchet the two protagonists conduct all sorts of research, in L'Education sentimentale Frédéric writes novels and histories of the Renaissance and in Madame Bovary Emma keeps up to date on all that is happening in Paris. This knowledge spins around them, however, in ways they are not able to comprehend and these characters always fail to grasp the nature of the world around them. It is Flaubert's belief that history has us imprisoned with no way out, for the world, through cycles of repetition, is headed toward an undifferentiated state of entropic doom.

As Marx states in the opening pages of The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it

under the circumstances chosen by themselves,  
but under circumstances directly encountered,  
given and transmitted from the past.<sup>60</sup>

This is our legacy.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

<sup>21</sup> Georges May, Le Dilemme du roman au XVIIIème siècle. (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1963) and English Showalter, The Evolution of the French Novel, 1641-1782 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

<sup>22</sup> Georg Lukács, The Historical Novel, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, 1974) 41.

<sup>23</sup> Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) 2.

<sup>24</sup> Honoré de Balzac, "Avant Propos," Oeuvres complètes de Honoré de Balzac, (Paris: Louis Conard, 1913), I, 23.

<sup>25</sup> As quoted by Harry Levin, The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

<sup>26</sup> Herbert Butterfield, "History as a Branch of Literature," History and Human Relations (New York: MacMillan, 1952) 242.

<sup>27</sup> Marcel Proust, Contre Sainte-Beuve, ed. Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, 1971) 655.

<sup>28</sup> As quoted by E. L. Doctorow, "False Documents," American Review 26 (1977): 229.

<sup>29</sup> As quoted by Doctorow, 229.

<sup>30</sup> Roland Barthes, "Historical Discourse," Introduction to Structuralism, ed. Michael Lane (New York: Basic Books, 1970) 150.

<sup>31</sup> Michel Crouzet, "L'Education sentimentale" et le 'genre historique', Histoire et Langage dans "L'Education sentimentale" (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1981) 84.

<sup>32</sup> Gustave Flaubert, Correspondance (Paris: Conard, 1926-1933) V, 359. All subsequent references to Flaubert's correspondence will be found within the text.

<sup>33</sup> Georg Lukács, The Theory of the Novel, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1971) 129.

- <sup>34</sup> Lukács, The Historical Novel 23.
- <sup>35</sup> Richard Terdiman, The Dialectics of Isolation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) xii.
- <sup>36</sup> Balzac iii - xxvi.
- <sup>37</sup> Balzac x.
- <sup>38</sup> Karl Lowith, Meaning in History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949) 4.
- <sup>39</sup> Benedetto Croce, History as the Story of Liberty, trans. Sylvia Sprigge (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1984) 9.
- <sup>40</sup> Theodore Zeldin, France 1848 - 1945: Ambition and Love (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) vii-viii.
- <sup>41</sup> Richard Terdiman, "Deconstructing Memory: On Representing the Past and Theorizing Culture in France since the Revolution," Diacritics (Winter 1985): 14.
- <sup>42</sup> Terdiman 15.
- <sup>43</sup> Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences (New York: Random House, 1970) 219.
- <sup>44</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, What is Literature?, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 153.
- <sup>45</sup> Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975) 53.
- <sup>46</sup> Georg Lukács, Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
- <sup>47</sup> Proust 600.
- <sup>48</sup> Roman Jakobson, Questions de poétique (Paris: Seuil, 1973) 128.
- <sup>49</sup> George Becker, Histoire de la littérature française (Paris: Hachette, 1974).
- <sup>50</sup> Barthes, "Historical Discourse" 153.
- <sup>51</sup> Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text 32.
- <sup>52</sup> Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text 14.



<sup>53</sup> E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1927) 41-42.

<sup>54</sup> Gustave Flaubert, L'Education sentimentale (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1964) 47.

<sup>55</sup> Jonathan Culler, Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978) 138.

<sup>56</sup> Nathaniel Wing, Limits of Narrative: Essays on Beaudelaire, Flaubert, Rimbaud and Mallarmé (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

<sup>57</sup> Gustave Flaubert, "Un Coeur Simple," Flaubert Oeuvres, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade 1952) 606.

<sup>58</sup> Philippe Hamon, "Un Discours constraint," Poétique, 16 (1973): 421.

<sup>59</sup> H. James, "The Art of Fiction," Literary Criticism: Essays, American and English Writers (New York: Viking Press, 1984) 48.

<sup>60</sup> Karl Marx, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (New York: International Publishers, 1979) 103.

## CHAPTER II

### L'EDUCATION SENTIMENTALE:

#### THE DISILLUSIONMENT OF DREAMS

But what experience and history teach is this -  
that people and governments have never  
learned anything from history,  
or acted on the principles deduced from it.

Georg Hegel

The bards sublime  
Whose distant footsteps echo  
Through the corridors of Time.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Day is Gone"

It seemed the harmonious echo  
From our discordant life.

Adelaide Ann Proctor, "A Lost Chord"

In 1864 when Flaubert began writing L'Education sentimentale he sounded much like Karl Marx as he looked back on the Revolution of 1848 which for both of them was the central political event of their lives. Although very different in method and approach Flaubert and Marx's analysis of the Revolution of 1848's causes and progress are substantially the same. In 1930 in an essay on L'Education sentimentale Edmond Wilson remarked:

His (Flaubert's) presentation here of the Revolution of 1848 parallels in so striking a manner Marx's analysis in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon that it is worthwhile to focus together the diverse figures of Flaubert and Marx in order to recognize how two of the most searching minds of the century, pursuing courses so apparently divergent, arrived at almost identical interpretations of the happenings of their time.<sup>61</sup>

Marx and Flaubert perceived 1848 as only the ritualistic enactment of the same old thing. In The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon Marx writes:

Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. Caussidiere for Danton, Louis Blanc for Robespierre, the Montaigne of 1848 to 1851 for the Montaigne of 1793 to 1795, the Nephew for the Uncle.<sup>62</sup>

Even before the Revolution of 1848, as early as 1839 Flaubert had conceived history as deterministic, as a repetitive cycle: "Quand on lit l'histoire on voit les mêmes roues tourner toujours sur les mêmes chemins, au

milieu des ruines et sur la poussière du genre humain."<sup>63</sup> Thus history becomes for Flaubert an incomprehensible enigma leading to nothing. For Flaubert things existed the way they did and there was nothing any one of us could do about it. For him there was no glorious past, no glorious future. As he demonstrates in his novel, the world of Salammbô is the same as that of France two thousand years later.

In 1853 he writes to Louise Colet expressing his disdain for contemporary ills:

89 a démolì la monarchie et la noblesse, 48 la bourgeoisie et 51 le peuple. Il n'y a plus rien qu'une tourbe canaille et imbécile. Nous sommes tous enfoncés au même niveau dans une médiocrité commune. (Correspondance, III, 349)

1848 had turned out to be a reproduction of 1789 and in the end the people, who never learned from history, turned out to be as in Salammbô, a stupid herd, despised and controlled by the powerful.

The political situation in France during Flaubert's lifetime was all but stable. What follows is a brief summary of the most important historical events in France from 1830 to 1852. Anyone familiar with the political upheavals during this period of French history can understand how it would affect its writers and thinkers.

In July, 1830 after Charles X published four ordinances completely abolishing the freedom of the press, dissolving the Chamber that had just been elected,

modifying the electoral law in favor of the wealthy leaving only some 25,000 electors in all of France, and ordering a new election to the Chamber under this revised law, street fighting began and in only three days the king was overthrown. But the revolution of 1830 was rapidly taken out of the hands of the insurrectionaries, and those who had borne the brunt of the battle did not enjoy the fruits of the victory. In August 1830 the Duc d'Orléans accepts the interim title of "lieutenant-general" of the kingdom and later becomes King Louis-Philippe. Louis-Philippe adopted the demeanor of a mayor rather than that of a monarch proving himself to be a suitable figurehead for an essentially bourgeois age. Power now passed indeed from the higher aristocracy to the wealthier bourgeoisie. The insurrectionary republicans, however, soon saw that they had been cheated, and the early years of Louis-Philippe were disturbed by strikes and riots, and by the agitation of various secret societies. The working class did not follow the middle classes as in former years and class conflict began to emerge into popular consciousness. The mass of the population, the peasants, the urban workers, the middle and petty bourgeoisie still did not have a voice in politics.

The discontent of the urban workers mounted with their long-endured misery that in 1846 and 1847 was compounded by the greatest economic depression during Louis-Philippe's

reign. In the summer of 1847 this dissatisfaction took on an organized form. After the opposition leaders were denied the right to hold public political meetings they began evading the law by scheduling banquets in the major cities where political speeches were given between courses. Flaubert attended one of these banquets that lasted nine hours in Rouen. A large political banquet was scheduled to be held in Paris on February 22, 1848. With one hundred opposition leaders invited to attend the banquet the government ordered the meeting canceled. The cancellation brought on the assembly of a mob resulting in the outbreak of yet another revolution. Paris plunged herself in yet another three bloody days. When it was over Louis-Philippe had gone into exile leaving his daughter-in-law and grandson in hopes that he would be accepted as king which he was not. Thus for the second time in a generation and for the third time since 1792, constitutional monarchy had failed in France.

To placate the socialists in Paris, the republicans gave Louis Blanc a place in the new revolutionary government, guaranteed to all men the right to work and founded national workshops for the unemployed. The economic crisis of 1847 had intensified the social unrest in the capital. The unemployed from the provinces flocked to Paris to take advantage of the national workshops. The workshops themselves proved only to be a form of

unemployment relief, for men were made to excavate for the new railway stations at St. Lazare and Montparnasse and later to remove earth on the Champ de Mars for two francs (later one franc) a day, and by May there were 100,000 unemployed clamoring for assistance; the whole scheme began to appear a disaster. On June 21, 1848 those between the ages of 17 and 25 were told to join the army or go to the provinces. This provoked the extremists, and from the 23rd to the 25th terrible civil war raged in Paris claiming thousand of lives.

This Paris uprising of June 1848 has great significance in that it was not an attempt at a political revolution but rather for social reforms. The bitterness, the sense of inveterate wrong which drove the Paris workingmen to those terrifying "June Days" were precisely those motives of class hatred which were to torment Paris again in 1871. The "have-nots" turned against the "haves."

In 1789, the oppressors of France had seemed to be the King, the bishops and the noblesse. Bourgeois as well as artisans had joined against them. In 1848 the oppressors of France were alleged to be the thrifty bourgeoisie, the peasant proprietors, the tradesmen, the owners of small factories. It was an attack upon the middle classes, their possessions and ideals.

After the "Days of June" the Assembly gave France a new constitution. The constitution of this Second French

Republic prescribed a legislature of 750 elected by universal suffrage, a president similarly chosen for four years, and a one-chamber legislature. On December 10, 1848 Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, the former emperor's nephew, was elected president of the Republic.

Elected by the whole people for a period of four years, he was to enjoy authority on an independent footing, and as first president, Louis Napoleon made full use of these powers. When the Assembly refused to revise the constitution which forbid the renewal of his tenure of office at the end of the four-year term, Louis Napoleon took matters into his own hand. After arresting many of the party chiefs during the night of December 1, 1851 he dissolved the Assembly, promised a new constitution, and declared himself in favor of universal suffrage. The republicans and socialists in Paris resisted the coup d'état; 26,000 of them were arrested and 10,000 were sent to Algeria. In December 1852 the President of the Republic became the Emperor Napoleon III.

For both Marx and Flaubert the early days of the Revolution had caught them in its fervor, only to turn their initial excitement into disillusionment for the Revolution had brought about the opposite of what it had intended.

Marx views the events of 1848 as the first instance of class warfare, a struggle that would end only in the



collapse of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He saw prefigured in the events of 1848 the ultimate of class struggle and of history as we know it. Flaubert sees in the same revolution the pathetic idealism of a lost generation, one that had the misfortune of being born into decadent times.

It is in their visions of the future that the two differ. Here Marx is more positive than Flaubert for he believes that men act consciously to make their history. He places faith in the rational ability of men to make their world. For Flaubert history is consistently ironic for none of us can get out from under history. He becomes aware of the impossibility of finding real solutions to the problems of his time. This is felt in his novels that suggest over and over again that there are no solutions to the life problems pressed upon us. His novels become verdicts and critiques against the possibility of self-realization.

Time and time again Flaubert creates his characters who dream of a better future only to slap them down, to cut the ground right up from under them. As for all great novelists of the nineteenth century happiness is only an illusion. As Flaubert will write in 1846: "...je ne dis pas heureux (ce but est une illusion funeste)" (Correspondence, I, 209) Malraux says that Flaubert's heroes are Balzacian characters "conceived in failure."<sup>64</sup>

If we look closely at Flaubert's narrative we become aware that, reflecting much of the historical moment, first there is a hopefully ascending beginning, then a middle section of intense desire, and finally a conclusion which destroys the hopes and dreams. L'Education sentimentale falls perfectly into this pattern for its mood is the dark comedy atmosphere of failed aspirations. Before the Revolution the present was never much of a source of hope; now the future held none either. L'Education sentimentale becomes the first test of the new concept of human possibilities after the debacle of mid-century and in the end we witness Flaubert's belief that hopes and dreams can no longer be realized in the world of concrete social activity. A month after he began writing L'Education sentimentale in September 1864 Flaubert writes to Mlle Leroyer de Chanteprie describing his new book: "C'est un livre d'amour, de passion; mais de passion telle qu'elle peut exister maintenant, c'est à dire inactive." (Correspondance, V, 158) Proust makes this same observation: "L'Education sentimentale est un long rapport de toute une vie, sans que les personnages prennent pour ainsi dire une part active à l'action."<sup>65</sup> This is especially true of Frédéric.

We see in his novels the closing down of possibilities in the real world of human action. Emma Bovary, Frédéric Moreau and Bouvard and Pécuchet dream of happiness only to

see it deflated to the point of complete disillusionment. The only alternatives left become suicide for the most courageous and impotent alienation for the rest. For Flaubert History will always reveal that our struggles were to no end for we are doomed to always turn in the same circle, always rolling the same stone. (Correspondance, IV, 61) Therefore freedom exists not in social action as Marx would have it, but in art and even there we have it denied by the limitations of language.

Although it is difficult to establish exactly why, we see in Flaubert's novels and correspondence that he viewed his age as dark and ignorant: "Dans quelle fange morale!" he writes, "Dans quel abîme l'époque patauge! Il me semble que l'idiotisme de l'humanité arrive à son paroxysme." (Correspondance, III, 175) In L'Education sentimentale this same sentiment is echoed in Deslauriers' words: "...jamais on n'a vu tant d'aveuglement, de bêtise!"<sup>66</sup> As he read history and reflected on his epoch he began to understand that history "n'est que la réflexion du présent sur le passé, et voilà pourquoi elle est toujours à refaire." (Correspondance, SII, 19) The truth of history, or the present interpretation of it, will be presented as an alternative to man's previous ignorance. Therefore the story narrated by Flaubert can easily be viewed as an exhortation to the present as well as a guide to the future.

After 1848 dreams were no longer possible in that the bourgeois stopped progressing and became conservative to the point where aspirations of human fulfillment vanished in society's conformity to these ideals. With L'Education sentimentale Flaubert was able to portray with great skill and irony the blatant, catastrophic error of his time. His bitterness is evident when he writes to Maxime du Camp in 1879 saying that:

La France, du reste, vivant depuis quelques années, dans un état mental extraordinaire...cette folie est la suite d'une grande bêtise, et cette bêtise vient d'un accès de blague, car à force de mentir, on était devenu idiot. On avait perdu toute notion du bien, et du mal, du beau et du laid.  
(Correspondance, VI, 16)

L'Education sentimentale is witness to this gradual bankruptcy of an entire generation felt through the consciousness of individuals who themselves are victims of slow disintegration. It is a hopeless and self-destructive, cyclic progress. This relentless degradation of all ideals, this progressive cheapening and prostitution of everything and everybody is the subject of an essay by Victor Brombert. In this article Brombert demonstrates how this decline is evident through the novel beginning with Arnoux's journal "l'Art Industriel" to the eclectic architecture of the Alhambra, from Arnoux as an art dealer to Arnoux as a salesman of religious artifacts, from Pellerin the high-minded theoretician of art to the painter of Christ as driving a locomotive, from Mme Arnoux the

Madonna to the pathetic figure of the last chapter, from Rosanette the beautiful cortisan to Rosanette the fat, ugly mother.<sup>67</sup> This universal decline and cheapening of everything is epitomized when Frédéric, having prepared, like an altar, the room for his encounter with Mme Arnoux, sacrifices his illusions for the body of Rosanette on the February 1848 night of the Revolution.

Thus we feel through this degradation that for Flaubert the Revolution of 1848 was part of business as usual, the old, old story in which ideals struggle with the givens of nature and human limitations only to end in disillusionment and death. Whereas in Marx's narrative he tries to alleviate despair through the vision of a better future by encouraging action in the world, Flaubert sees no possibility of a better future. It is in this emphasis on the action of men, and the choices involved in acting in the world now that we see the differences between Marx the historian and Flaubert the novelist. Marx encourages activity by pointing out that there is a clear correlation between our present and hoped-for future. Flaubert's recreation of the past, on the other hand, may, in some instances, lead to a character's understanding, but rarely, if ever (except in the case of Mâtho in Salammbô) leads to action. For the most part his characters remain on the periphery instead of active participants in the conflicts of the world around them.

Flaubert is constantly making us face the indisputable conflicts between the past and present forcing us to acknowledge that what makes our history is our prehistory. The events of 1848 are proof of this. His novel L'Education sentimentale was the perfect vehicle for him to demonstrate this phenomenon.

L'Education sentimentale is divided in three parts and an epilogue, each part representing the four stages before and after the institution of the Republic in February 1848; the June Insurrection of 1848; and the coup d'état of Napoleon III in December 1851.

The novel opens in 1840 with Frédéric taking a boat to Paris as a "jeune homme de dix-huit ans, à longs cheveux..." (p. 1) seeing for the first time and immediately and hopelessly falling in love with Mme Arnoux: "Ce fut comme une apparition." (p. 4) This adoration for her which will last throughout the novel, is perfectly suited for the last days of the monarchy. In the beginning when his dreams are alive and wild there is the intimation of hope. But his dreams are so adolescent and ill thought out that we soon suspect they will fail. Already in Part I, Chapter 2 of the novel Flaubert reveals this by stating "C'était le premier de ses rêves qui s'écroulait." (p. 15) In this same chapter the announcement of the Republic is made. "Patience, un nouveau 89 se prépare!" Deslauriers exclaims. (p. 16) In both private and public instances it

is a new beginning, one filled with hope and expectation for a brighter future.

In Part I, Chapter 3 while Frédéric and Mme Arnoux's love goes nowhere, nothing goes on in Paris either. It is only in Part I, Chapter 4 that we find the progression of Frédéric's love and the Republic. It is here that Frédéric is finally invited for the first time to dinner at the Arnoux's. In this same chapter filled with so many references to the political situation of the time, we witness the first demonstrations in Paris. The chapter begins with:

Un matin du mois de décembre, en se rendant au cours de procédure, il crut remarquer dans la rue St. Jacques plus d'animation qu'à l'ordinaire. Les étudiants sortaient précipitamment des cafés, ou, par les fenêtres ouvertes, ils s'appelaient d'une maison à l'autre; les boutiquiers, au milieu du trottoir, regardaient d'un air inquiet; les volets se fermaient; et, quand il arriva dans la rue Soufflot, il aperçut un grand rassemblement autour du Panthéon. (p. 27)

While the multitude in Paris feels the excitement of the demonstration, Frédéric is overcome by the thought of spending an evening at the Arnoux's: "Frédéric s'arrêta plusieurs fois dans l'escalier, tant son coeur battait fort." (p. 45) His love for Mme Arnoux blinds him of the significance of the political moment and all he can do is dream of her.

In Part I, Chapter 5 as Frédéric's love for Mme Arnoux increases his friends hope for a political upheaval.

Frédéric, always more concerned with his private affairs than with what is going around him in the world, fills his every waking hour with thoughts of Mme Arnoux:

...et plus il fréquentait Mme Arnoux, plus ses langueurs augmentaient. La contemplation de cette femme l'énervait, comme l'usage d'un parfum trop fort. Cela descendit dans les profondeurs de son tempérament, et devenait presque une manière générale de sentir, un mode nouveau d'exister. (p. 68)

He dreams of her, of living with her, of feeling her close to him at all times:

Cependant, il songeait au bonheur de vivre avec elle, de la tutoyer, de lui passer la main sur les bandeaux longuement, ou de se tenir par terre, à genoux, les deux bras autour de sa taille, à boire son âme dans ses yeux! (p. 69)

The second part of the novel opens after his enthusiastic return to Paris. In Part II, Chapter 2 Mme Arnoux again receives Frédéric into her confidence. It is also in this chapter that Sénécals predicts the uprisings to come in February. His dreams are not fulfilled and his enthusiasm short lived as the political hopes and aspirations are also crushed. Frédéric disillusioned decides to marry Louise and Sénécals is imprisoned. It is only after Sénécals allows for the possibility of any active political engagement on his part that Frédéric and Mme Arnoux get back together again at Auteuil. It is then that once again his hopes for the future are rekindled.

Finally the long awaited and dreamed about rendez-vous between Mme Arnoux and Frédéric is about to happen at the



same time that the decisive demonstration is taking place in Paris. After Mme Arnoux agrees to see him Frédéric goes into a frenzy getting an apartment ready to receive her:

Puis il alla dans trois magasins acheter la parfumerie la plus rare; il se procura un morceau de fausse guipure pour remplacer l'affreux couvre-pieds de coton rouge, il choisit une paire de pantoufles en satin bleu...il changea les meubles de place, drapa lui-même les rideaux, mit des bruyères sur la cheminée, des violettes sur la commode; il aurait voulu paver la chambre tout en or. ...Et il sentait battre son coeur à grands coups sous le délire de son espérance... (p. 277)

The long anticipated day is awakened by the sounds of the demonstration. As Frédéric walks around watching and listening to what is going on around him one senses the same agitation that was growing within Frédéric coming to life in the gathering crowd. It is this slow and deliberate uprising that finally erupts into the chorus of the Marseillaise: "La foule augmentait de plus en plus, quand tout à coup vibra dans les airs le refrain de la Marseillaise." (p. 283) Frédéric does not join the crowd and even hides from his friends because he does not want to miss meeting Mme Arnoux. His private life, his private desires, and private aspirations are much more important to him than his public ones.

As a foreshadowing of what is to come in the public arena, Mme Arnoux, because of her son's illness, does not come to meet Frédéric. Frédéric's hopes and desires, just as those of the French people of 1848, are once more

crushed. Frédéric's desire for Mme Arnoux and the French's desire for something different from 1789 will not be realized. Neither France nor Frédéric will be permitted a long period of happiness for just as Frédéric and Mme Arnoux break up the Second Republic is overthrown by the violent schemes of Louis Napoleon.

For Mme Arnoux her son's illness is seen as a sign from God that she should not commit adultery and her hopes of a future with Frédéric are lost forever. When she fails to keep the rendez-vous Frédéric naïvely believes that he can easily rid himself of his feelings for her:

Une colère d'orgueil le saisit. Il se jura de n'avoir plus même un désir; et, comme un feuillage emporté par un ouragan, son amour disparut. Il en ressentit un soulagement, une joie stoïque, puis un besoin d'actions violentes; et il s'en alla au hasard, par les rues. (p. 283)

He had missed the beginning of the February Revolution waiting for Mme Arnoux. As the Revolution erupts Frédéric turns to the prostitute, Rosanette, taking her to the room he so carefully prepared for the other. At the same moment that Paris changes with a new government, Frédéric possesses Rosanette. She becomes the substitute for what he had so long desired. Rosanette and Frédéric spend the afternoon in bed, watching from their window the Revolution in the streets below: "Ils passèrent l'après-midi à regarder, de leur fenêtre, le peuple dans la rue." (p. 284) The key word here is regarder. Frédéric does not

take an active part in the activities of the world around him. He is always the observer, the witness but never the activist.

At the end of Part II when the Revolution is being described Frédéric again is detached from what is going on in the city around him. At the sound of gun fire Flaubert impassively writes:

"Ah! on casse quelques bourgeois." dit Frédéric tranquillement, car il y a des situations où l'homme le moins cruel est si détaché des autres qu'il verrait périr le genre humain sans un battement de coeur.  
(p. 285)

In the beginning of Part III Frédéric, wanting to see what had happened, wanders the streets of Paris walking over the dead bodies in the streets, watching the spectacle of men risking their lives for their dreams. In one instance he hears a woman pleading with her husband not to fight any more: "Mais reviens donc!" reviens donc!" (p. 287) But the husband, although not too convinced of the good in what he is doing, sees it as his duty and says:

Laisse-moi tranquille! Tu peux bien surveiller la loge toute seule. Citoyen, je vous le demande, est-ce juste? J'ai fait mon devoir partout, en 1830, en 32, en 34, en 39! Aujourd'hui, on se bat! il faut que je me batte. (p. 287)

The wife sees the futility in action. Once again her husband is called to risk his life but for what? Only to have to repeat it again later on. The husband, who wonders out loud if it is "juste," feels he must go for it is his

duty even if he knows it will not really change the final course of events.

Frédéric hears the distant "tambours qui battaient la charge" (p. 288) but is paralyzed into inaction by watching the spectacle around him:

Frédéric, pris entre deux masses profondes, ne bougeait pas, fasciné d'ailleurs et s'amusant extrêmement. Les blessés qui tombaient, les morts étendus n'avaient pas l'air de vrais blessés, de vrais morts. Il lui semblait assister à un spectacle. (p. 288)

The term spectacle suggests entertainment, a show that one does not participate in but rather watches from a distance for amusement purposes. Typical of his inertia, Frédéric witnesses the action around him as if watching a play. The people around him who fight and die attempting to make a difference are only actors in the spectacle of life for their dreams are all illusions that will become worn by time. As actors in a play they repeat the role that has already been written and played out by others who had come before him.

Frédéric and Rosanette's affair lasts as long as the Republic, but its honeymoon period ends when Frédéric and Rosanette go to Fontainebleau on June 25th coinciding with the June Insurrection. While resting in the countryside he hears the distant sounds of the drums calling forth those to defend Paris. Instead of joining the others he calmly says: "Ah! tiens! l'émeute!" (p. 328) To stress Frédéric's disinterest Flaubert describes Frédéric as

talking "avec une pitié dédaigneuse," for "toute cette agitation lui apparaissant misérable à côté de leur amour et de la nature éternelle." (p. 328)

In these pages describing Frédéric and Rosanette's visit to Fontainebleau Flaubert explores the possibilities of revisiting history, of the continual presence of the past in the now. When they walk through the Palace, hearing stories of the past, gazing at the remnants of a rich and wonderful past, Frédéric hears the echoes of time past:

...il semblait venir un écho des hallalis poussés dans les trompes d'ivoire, et des ballets mythologiques, rassemblant sous le feuillage des princesses et des seigneurs travestis en nymphes et en sylvains, - époque de science ingénue, de passions violentes et d'art somptueux, quand l'idéal était d'emporter le monde dans un rêve des Hespérides, et que les maîtresses des rois se confondaient avec les astres. (p. 322)

All these echoes Frédéric hears from ages gone by are not coming from the "trompes d'ivoire," but rather from the stirrings of his own imagination inspired by memories of the past. Likewise, Flaubert, inspired by his memories, is able to write "l'histoire de ma génération." Frédéric feels the past so strongly in the Palace that he even believes he hears Diane de Poitiers' voice in its halls: "Et il reste là quelque chose d'elle, une voix indistincte, un rayonnement qui se prolonge." (p. 322) There is unavoidably this "reste" of the past in the present that cannot be erased.

While Rosanette indifferently feeds the fish, Frédéric continues to dream about the people who had lived within those same walls. He feels surrounded by their presence and this pleases him:

Il songeait à tous les personnages qui avaient hanté ces murs...il se sentait environné, coudoyé par ces morts tumultueux; une telle confusion d'images l'étourdissait, bien qu'il y trouvât du charme pourtant. (p. 323)

In presenting his memories in an organized manner Flaubert attempts to make some sense out of "une telle confusion d'images" that is the past. There is an important contrast here to be made between the past and the present. The past lives on as memory, monument and story whereas present history is unassimilable. In considering this phenomenon the historian Barbara Tuchman expresses it in this manner:

The contemporary has no perspective; everything is in the foreground and appears the same size. Little matters loom big, and great matters are sometimes missed because their outlines cannot be seen...The contemporary, especially if he is a participant, is inside his events, which is not entirely an unmixed advantage. What he gains in intimacy through personal acquaintance - which we can never achieve - he sacrifices in detachment.<sup>68</sup>

Although in Frédéric's case he is not an active participant in the historical events going on around him, he is, because of his indifference, detached and unconcerned to their significance.

Frédéric is totally absorbed by the past within these walls but Rosanette is bored and apathetic. When asked if

she would have liked to have been Diane de Poitiers she asks: "Quelle femme?" (p. 322) She goes through the halls fixing her hair at every mirror and yawning "démesurément." (p. 323) Out of her ignorance of the past she is unable to think of nothing but the present moment. Without knowledge of the past she cannot even imagine or construct a future.

In contemplating on things past Frédéric becomes aware that all things and people come and go, that all things are doomed to misery: "l'éternelle misère de tout." (p. 323)

After reading in the newspaper Dussardier's name among those wounded in Paris insurrection, Frédéric decides he must immediately go back home to help his friends. When Rosanette declares "Chacun pour soi!" (p. 332) Frédéric becomes irritated at her insensitivity:

Il fut indigné de cet égoïsme; et il se reprocha de n'être pas là-bas avec les autres. Tant d'indifférence aux malheurs de la patrie avait quelque chose de mesquin et de bourgeois. Son amour lui pesa tout à coup comme un crime. Ils se boudèrent pendant une heure. (p. 332)

What Frédéric finds reprehensible in Rosanette are the very traits that he possesses for he has never shown anything but "égoïsme" et "indifférence." All his actions are self-centered and apathetic to the rest of the world.

Upon his return to Paris Frédéric shows nothing but indifference to the "real" around him. He sees the barricades going up around Paris but fails to see the significance of what is happening around him. On the day of his arrival he buys twelve bottles of wine for those at

the City Hall to drink in order to "hâter sa délivrance." (p. 335) The only part that Frédéric will play in the insurrection is to visit Dussardier everyday for the next two weeks. While his friends risk their lives by being very much involved in the political and actual physical conflicts of the insurrection, caring for his wounded friend is about as active as he will ever become in public affairs. The historical events recounted in the novel by Flaubert are highly interpretive. Through Frédéric's failure to become involved we feel Flaubert's conviction of the general senselessness of involvement.

Immediately before Napoleon's coup d'état in 1851 Frédéric ends his affair with Rosanette admitting that he had never loved her because he had not been able to forget. Mme Arnoux. Demonstrating the corrosive circularity of time Flaubert ends their relationship just as it had begun. After their first sexual encounter, Frédéric, feigning happiness, cries because he has made love to Rosanette and not to Mme Arnoux.

Vers une heure, elle fut réveillée par des roulements lointains; et elle le vit qui songlotait, la tête enfoncée dans l'oreiller.

"Qu'as-tu donc, cher amour?"

"C'est excès de bonheur," dit Frédéric.  
 "Il y avait trop longtemps que je te désirais!"  
 (p. 285)

His past is never far from his present, haunting him as the voices of yesteryears heard in the halls of Fontainebleau.



When their relationship comes to an end he breaks down sobbing in her arms. She too is crying but they cry for different reasons. He is crying because Mme Arnoux is not with him, having left Paris with her husband. Rosanette, believing that Frédéric's pain is the same as hers, cries mourning for their dead child.

After the June Insurrection Frédéric becomes Mme Dambreuse's lover. This relationship is purely a political decision on his part for through her Frédéric believes that could be accepted into the social world he so desperately envied and longed for. While trying to impress her he says:

Enfin, la République me paraît vieille.  
Qui sait? Le Progrès, peut-être, n'est  
réalisable que par une aristocratie ou par un  
homme? L'initiative vient toujours d'en haut!  
Le peuple est mineur, quoi qu'on prétende! (p.  
370)

Through his relationship to Mme Dambreuse Frédéric is welcomed into a world that would otherwise be closed to him. The political clubs that Frédéric begins frequenting during this period are, while at the same time a valid historical representation, also a sustained critique of what Flaubert deemed useless and futile demagoguery. Politics had become idle chit-chat, equal to common street talk with not much substance. In 1868 Flaubert writes: "Je ne me permets jamais de parler politique, parce que c'est trop commun, trop bête; ou trop impertinent." (Correspondance, V, 401)

His relationship with Mme Dambreuse does not last very long, however. The shadow of Mme Arnoux again comes between Frédéric and the other woman in his life. His marriage to Mme Dambreuse is called off because, in order to collect on a debt, she forces the auctioning off of Mme Arnoux's possessions. Mme Dambreuse realizes that Frédéric has never been able to free himself of Mme Arnoux's presence and in a revengeful act causes her personal items to be sold publicly. While watching people handle her personal items he is overcome by sadness. It is as if:

...des parties de son coeur qui s'en allaient avec ces choses: et la monotonie des mêmes voix, des mêmes gestes l'engourdissait de fatigue, lui causait une torpeur funèbre, une dissolution. (p. 414)

This is an unbearable degradation of his dreams and he walks away from the future that he so carefully had mapped out. After a while the monotony of life, the same cycles being repeated over and over again, finally causes total disenchantment and forces Frédéric to abandon all dreams. When Frédéric leaves Mme Dambreuse for the last time he: "éprouva d'abord un sentiment de joie et d'indépendance reconquise." (p. 416) He is proud to have sacrificed a fortune for Mme Arnoux.

Having been so involved in his own private troubles, Frédéric is as usual unaware of what is going on in the public arena. The next morning he is awakened by his servant telling him that the city of Paris has been

declared to be in a state of emergency. Once again, as in Fontainebleau with Rosanette, Frédéric only hears the drums off in the distance but does not heed to their calling. He can now only stand idly by as others take an active part in the world around them.

The last part of the novel happens sixteen years after the coup d'état. Much has happened during this time for Frédéric has traveled and has had other loves but all of which were meaningless compared to what he had experienced for Mme Arnoux:

Il fréquenta le monde, et il eut d'autres amours encore. Mais le souvenir continuel du premier les lui rendait insipides; et puis la véhémence du désir, la fleur même de la sensation était perdue. Ses ambitions d'esprit avaient également diminué. Des années passèrent; et il supportait le désœuvrement de son intelligence et l'inertie de son coeur. (p. 419)

Over the years he becomes accustomed to the inactivity of his life by learning to tolerate and accept it for, echoing Flaubert, things are what they are and there is nothing you can do about it but sit idly by and watch the time go by.

One night, while alone at home, a white-haired Mme Arnoux comes to see him. They walk arm-in-arm reminiscing about the past. Surprised at his memory she says:

Quelquefois, vos paroles me reviennent comme un écho lointain, comme le son d'une cloche apporté par le vent; et il me semble que vous êtes là, quand je lis des passages d'amour dans les livres. (p. 421)

Like Frédéric (and unlike Rosanette), Mme Arnoux hears echoes of the past from which she builds her dreams for the future. These dreams, however, are never realized. At the end of the novel when she appears before Frédéric as an old, white-haired lady, Frédéric is unable to consummate their love for now even as a dream it is no longer possible.

By not acting on his love, which at that moment felt more like incest, he is able to keep from totally destroying their love:

Une crainte l'arrêta, celle d'en avoir dégoût plus tard. D'ailleurs, quel embarras ce serait! - et tout à la fois par prudence et pour ne pas dégrader son idéal. (p. 423)

As long as it remained in the form of a dream it could not be contaminated by the degradation rampant in the world around him.

The novel, like the cycles of history, is once again back at the beginning, but with everything having suffered the erosion of time. The epilogue returns Frédéric and Mme Arnoux to the recollected and not to the possible. Therefore Frédéric and Mme Arnoux's last meeting shows all too pathetically how all dreams are destroyed by time, for no matter how much one may try for it to be otherwise "il y a un moment, dans les séparations, où la personne aimée n'est déjà plus avec nous." (p. 423)

The last chapter of the novel, that can be called the epilogue of L'Education sentimentale, is a conversation

between Frédéric and his long-time friend Deslauriers. Their friendship is based on their commonness as failed individuals. It is not a friendship based on real communication, since they never share their deepest feelings but rather on the "fatalité de leur nature." (p. 424). Flaubert's choice of the word "fatalité" indicates that their destinies irrevocably rule the events of their lives. The phrase "faisait toujours se rejoindre et s'aimer" (p. 424) suggests again the condition of their friendship. There is no present in Frédéric and Deslauriers words, there is only nostalgia, souvenirs. Their words are infinite echoes, they only communicate through their common past: "Te rappelles-tu?" (p. 426)

The past is important for it is what brings them together. But if there is no present or no view for the future there is paralysis. Both Frédéric and Deslauriers dream their existence instead of acting and accomplishing it.

The whole novel begins and closes with a conversation between Frédéric and Deslauriers on which projects and reminiscences take priority over action. Frédéric and Deslauriers' "fatalité de nature" not only coincides with the general theme of the whole novel, but also will be justified a little further on by Deslauriers when he says: "J'avais trop de logique, et toi de sentiment." (p. 426) In fact both of them dream their existence instead of

accomplishing it. Flaubert loves to describe this drab atmosphere of everyday reality and the bitterness of a wasted life. This degradation of things, of people, of life is depicted through images, portraits and decors, thus Mme Arnoux's husband is dead, the Maréchale, once very beautiful and "bien faite," has become fat and ugly. Flaubert is sensitive to this degradation but he remains objective in that it is Deslauriers who announces: "Quelle décadence!" (p. 425)

In the first part of this chapter we are told about Frédéric and Deslauriers' professional failures. Underlying the instability and progressive downfall of his place in the social hierarchy Deslauriers, after having had various professions, goes from chef to employé. Frédéric, not as ambitious as Deslauriers, limited himself to a parasitical life of a "petit bourgeois" (p. 424). He had failures in his love life, in his career and with his inheritance. He did not succeed with Mme Arnoux, nor did he succeed in becoming a great novelist and he squandered most of his fortune. He finds himself at the end of the novel reduced to a common level of life because of his weakness and circumstances. In the end, after all the years that have gone by, he has failed at everything in life.

Evoking their friends' successes only serves to underline even more the failure of Frédéric and

Deslauriers' lives. Martinon and Hussonet's success, career and action are thus opposed to Frédéric and Deslauriers' mediocrity, failure, inaction and life of dreams.

As if afraid to remain silent they speak in telegraphic, short phrases. They constantly change subjects talking about one person and soon another quickly changing when the subject might touch on their present feelings. An example of this can be found in the passage where they are talking about Mme Arnoux and quickly change themes resurrecting the memory of the "bonne Maréchale," (p. 425) or also when they talk about the "spectre de Regimbart" (p. 425) and then quickly change to the subject of the mystery of the calf's head. (p. 425)

They have nothing to say in the present, trying to be happy, funny, to escape reality, the reality of their empty lives. Their passtime is to relive stories of their youth; to dream. Their lives have become awakened dreams and one souvenir leads to another.

When Frédéric asks the "ex-délégué du gouvernement" (p. 425) about the "mystère de la tête de veau" (p. 425) the "ex" once again underlines Deslauriers' failure. The story about the calf's head serves to demonstrate the bêtise existent throughout and to show that age, therefore time, had at least appeased Deslauriers' political views and aspirations.

What is the reason for their failure? The narrator seems to be asking the question simultaneously with the two protagonists. The words "amour" and "pouvoir" ("...celui qui avait rêvé l'amour,... celui qui avait rêvé le pouvoir." p. 425) do not seem to have been pronounced by the two friends themselves. Deslauriers evokes laurels, therefore glory and ambition. He is "celui qui avait rêvé le pouvoir." (p. 425). Moreau suggests the idea of love (amoureux) and he is "celui qui avait rêvé l'amour." (p. 425)

Frédéric and Deslauriers reject the responsibility of their failures. Frédéric finally reconciles himself to the fact of his incapability to clearly define himself and of his inability to stand firm in reality when he avows that it is perhaps "le défaut de la ligne droite." (p. 426) He refuses to take the blame for his failures and blames it on his nature, his destiny ("la ligne droite"). He was destined to end up as he did (a petit bourgeois never succeeding in love or in life) and there was nothing he could have done to have his life end up any differently.

The whole tone of the narrative is truly that of failure. One feels the fatality of their position and the impossibility of succeeding. They are condemned to dream and not to live their present.

Frédéric seems to be criticizing himself when he says that he had "péché par excès" (p. 426) when in effect the



two only justify themselves by attributing themselves with such positive traits as "rectitude," "sentiment," and in the end they feel good because they have not changed in nature.

It is at this moment that they begin to dream, with open eyes, their childhood memories. They see their school, their teachers, their first pipes, their vacations. At first it is the images of their dreams and ambitions that appear and then later it is of their first attempt at the Turque's in 1837.

Their youth is exhumed with the phrase "Te rapelles-tu?" (p. 426) The thought movement is constantly projected back to their childhood, never to the present or towards the future. Present life is not lived, there is no looking forward to the future and all they do is "contempler les souvenirs de l'autre." (p. 427)

Their youth is their golden years, it was a dream and becomes once again a dream. All their attempts in life - that of writing, of succeeding in politics, of attaining power, of sexual relationships - they all failed. Their dreams are never realized, are never transformed into action. Thus, this double dream, that of dreaming about yesteryear dreams, creates an effect of emptiness, of nothing.

The last four pages of the novel, as with almost the entire novel, are written in the imperfect. Only the

dialogue, that slows down to some extent the haste of this narrative which is accelerated, is in the present or the perfect. According to Proust the use of the imperfect, something new to literature during Flaubert's time, serves to underline in L'Education sentimentale the continuous inactivity of the characters.<sup>69</sup> The imperfect is an iterative tense, a tense of repetition, of continuation but not change. Flaubert's intense use of the imperfect in the last pages of the novel was a conscientious choice on his part to further underscore his belief that the nineteenth century was a time of stasis in that there was no progressive movement, no promise of a better future.

Frédéric seems to derive pleasure from inactivity. Even as a young man when near to all the pleasures offered at the Turque's he describes his pleasure in "voir, d'un seul coup d'oeil, tant de femmes à sa disposition." (p. 427) The pleasure he feels in watching keeps him from acting until he finally runs away. Flaubert carries this theme of inactivity as far as even making their look into the past an inactive look. Not only are they "au coin du feu" (p. 424) therefore inactive, but they idealize their past impotence by continuing to dream. All they are able to do now is to leaf through their memories, revealing the theme of the whole novel - that of disillusionment, that of the deception of life: "C'est là ce que nous avons eu du meilleur!" says Frédéric. (p. 427)

Even the title L'Education sentimentale underlines the reality of their failure. In the tradition of the Bildungsroman the word "education" indicates a progressive movement, a changing in character, a development of the character. But with Frédéric, the example par excellence of the anti-hero, this education fails and goes nowhere. Thus his idleness of mind and inertia of heart are all that remains for him. He will live and die a petit bourgeois. The years of expectation and hope end in contentment with mismanaged and failed dreams.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER II

<sup>61</sup> Edmond Wilson, "The Politics of Flaubert," The Triple Thinkers: Twelve Essays on Literary Subjects (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1976) 78.

<sup>62</sup> Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (New York, International Publishers, 1979) 15.

<sup>63</sup> Gustave Flaubert, Correspondance (Paris: Conard, 1926-1933) I, 51. All subsequent references to Flaubert's correspondence will be found within the text.

<sup>64</sup> André Malraux, "Laclos," Tableau de la littérature française XVIIe - XVIIIe siècles (Paris: Gallimard, 1938) 421.

<sup>65</sup> Marcel Proust, "Ce que signifie le style de Flaubert," Nouvelle Revue Française (janvier 1920): 32.

<sup>66</sup> Gustave Flaubert, L'Education sentimentale, ed. Edouard Maynial (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1964) 263. All subsequent references to L'Education sentimentale will be taken from this edition and will be found within the text.

<sup>67</sup> Victor Brombert, The Novels of Flaubert: A Study of Themes and Techniques (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960) 125-138.

<sup>68</sup> Barbara W. Tuchman, Practicing History: Selected Essays (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982) 28.

<sup>69</sup> Marcel Proust, "Ce que signifie le style de Flaubert," Nouvelle Revue Française (1920) 32.

### CHAPTER III

#### BOUVARD ET PECUCHET: THE GATHERERS OF WISDOM

Is there anything of which one might say,  
'See this, it is new?'  
Already it has existed for ages  
Which were before us.<sup>70</sup>

And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning  
all that has been done under heaven.

Ecclesiastes I, 13

All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,  
All our ignorance brings us nearer to our death,  
But nearness to death no nearer to God.  
Where is the Life we have lost in living?  
Where is the Wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
Where is the Knowledge we have lost in information?  
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust.

Thomas Stearns Eliot, "The Rock" I

The themes of the cyclical nature of history and man's quest for perfect knowledge which run through Flaubert's last novel, are not new to literature. As far back as 300 B.C., when the book of Ecclesiastes is believed to have been written, we find these same themes expressed: "There is nothing new under the sun." (Chapter I, 9) Marcus Aurelius says that if any man believes that he has discovered a new phenomenon, any natural fact which has not been repeating itself from the beginning, it is only because he is ignorant of that which has come before him: "They that come after us will see nothing new; and they who went before saw nothing more than we have seen."<sup>71</sup> Although the book of Ecclesiastes is mentioned once in Flaubert's novel Bouvard et Pécuchet ("Ils abordèrent l'Ecclésiaste, Isaïe, Jérémie."<sup>72</sup> Flaubert does not indicate in his correspondence or elsewhere that he had used this small book found in the middle of the Bible as a model or inspiration for his last novel. It is, however, remarkable how closely they parallel one another for upon examining the two works it can be concluded that the import of Bouvard et Pécuchet is comprehended in a verse from Ecclesiastes which Flaubert might well have used as an epigraph: "And I set my mind to search and to investigate through wisdom everything that is done beneath the heavens. It is an evil task that God has given the sons of men with

which to occupy themselves." (Chapter I, 13) As the unknown author of Ecclesiastes had done before him, Flaubert sets his protagonists Bouvard et Pécuchet to skim the surface of the world's knowledge.

Whereas in the Greek and Latin Versions it is entitled Ecclesiastes, in Hebrew it is called Kohелеth from a root kahol (whence the Greek  $\kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ , Latin "calo," and English "call") which means "to call, to assemble." "Kohелеth" has been translated by linguists as "Gatherer of Wisdom," "Collector of Maxims," and "Debater." "Kohелеth" is the personification of Wisdom, whose business is to gather.

Although in the past many attributed the book to Solomon who, after having learned the vanity of all that he had once valued, dictated it at the close of his life, most modern scholars are not in agreement with this assessment. They believe the ascription of the authorship to Solomon in the opening sentence was probably meant as a literary device and that the writer assumed the persona of Solomon in order to emphasize and add weight to the lessons which he desired to teach. In examining the social and political circumstances revealed in the book and the language used in it they believe that it was written some seven hundred years after Solomon.

The story told in the book is quite simple. In the prologue the author forms the subject of his treatise: "Vanity of vanity; all is vanity," (chapter I, 2) that

man's labor is profitless, that nature and human life repeat themselves in a monotonous succession and that all must fall ere long into oblivion for nothing is new, nothing is lasting. (Chapter I, 1-11). The rest of the book is taken up with the writer's various experiences and deductions therefrom.

The author describes how he tried to find some satisfaction in many pursuits and under various circumstances, but in vain. He states that there are anomalies in nature and in human affairs that men are powerless to comprehend and to rectify; and that sorrow grows with increasing knowledge (Chapter I, 12-18). He takes up a new quest; he tries pleasure, turns to art, to architecture, horticulture, magnificence, luxury, and the amassing of wealth; only to find that there was no profit in any of them (Chapter II, 1-11). He studied human nature in its manifold phases of wisdom and folly, and he learned that the former excels the latter as light excels darkness; yet with this came the thought that death leveled all distinctions, placed wise men and fools in the same category.

The general spirit of the work is despondent, even pessimistic. It insists on the fidelity of human endeavor, proclaiming the vanity of man's attempt to dignify his existence. The book is one of the great utterances of despair which the perplexities and unfairness of life along



with the weariness of the struggle, cause to descend at times upon the human spirit in all epochs and in all civilizations.

Bouvard et Pécuchet's plot in many ways follows the same simple circular trajectory. Here two instead of one, lonely middle-aged copyists, after a chance meeting in the park, strike up a friendship. When Bouvard receives an unexpected inheritance from his natural father they decide to move away from Paris and retire to the country and to indulge in a life of leisure. There they at first revel in the simple and harmless pleasure of gardening but then become more ambitious, more curious and begin experimenting with agriculture and arboriculture. All these experimentations end up in costly and humiliating fiascos. This does not slow down their quest however for as their curiosity intensifies they explore the more abstract subjects of history, literature, aesthetics, philosophy and religion. As the one before them described in Ecclesiastes, they search for a Truth, an unmediated Knowledge that will allow them to answer life's questions, to reach conclusions. Thus they survey all areas of knowledge, hopelessly confused by these failures and contradictions.

Flaubert was obviously influenced by the eighteenth century Encyclopédie when he conceived of the idea of writing Bouvard et Pécuchet which is in effect a farcical

encyclopedia. It is a comic encyclopedic novel on the degradation of knowledge and the insanity of the human effort. The eighteenth century Encyclopédie, under the direction of Diderot, like our modern encyclopedias, was projected as a compendium of knowledge. Edited by a number of respected specialists reviewing such fields as literature and philosophy, science and arts, its goal was not only to inform but also to serve as an instrument of propaganda.

Both Ecclesiastes and Bouvard et Pécuchet return the protagonists, after a series of repetitious searches, to their starting point. In Ecclesiastes the conclusion of the whole is the echo of the beginning: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." (Chapter XII, 8) In the end he has not learned anything that he had not known in the beginning. If desires were always accomplished, he might have a different tale to tell; but they are never satisfied:

All a man's labor is for the mouth and yet the appetite is not satisfied.

For what advantage does the wise man have over the fool? What advantage does the poor man have, knowing how to walk before the living?

What the eyes see is better than what the soul desires. This too is futility and a striving after the wind.  
Ecclesiastes VI, 7-9.

Aided by Wisdom he desires to solve deeper and more mysterious questions, but is wholly baffled:

I tested all this with wisdom, and I said,  
'I will be wise,' but it was far from me.

What has been is remote and exceedingly  
mysterious. Who can discover it?

I directed my mind to know, to investigate,  
and to seek wisdom and an explanation.  
Ecclesiastes VIII, 23-25.

Bouvard and Pécuchet also go through an obstacle course where the purpose is to cover the whole ground. At the end they have not become savants because of what they have accumulated but what matters is that going from one experience to another, registering what is happening to them, feeling excitement and wonder, frustration and disappointment they have sampled what human life has to offer and at the end return once more to their beginning - that of copyists.

Flaubert's use of this circularity is an excellent technique to discredit their symbolic voyage. Theirs is not a forward motion, but one that is destined to return to the very place from which it had set out. The entire novel, just as in Ecclesiastes, is a "return" following a perhaps pointless odyssey. Very typical of a cyclical development, Flaubert, in his last and unfinished novel, carries the two clerks through absurd experiences only to return to the point of departure. Although Flaubert died before finishing his novel we see that the end sketched in his notes refuses to conclude. The last words of Flaubert's outline for the ending are: "Ils s'y mettent (à copier)"

(II, 987). Thus the story ends undoing its own closure returning the two protagonists to their starting point as copistes. The book not only stresses an unending quest but also the eternal dissatisfaction that comes with the quest making them yearn for new experiences. The novel does not describe a progression but rather with the cyclical movement Flaubert suggests fixity and death.

In both works a strong case could be produced to show echoes of Stoical teaching, the Greek philosophy that speaks of the endless recurrence of the same phenomenon in the life of man, paralleling the theory of the cycles of events presented by history. Marcus Aurelius says that:

There will be nothing new for posterity to gaze at, and our ancestors stood upon the same level of observation. All ages are uniform and of a colour, insomuch that in 40 years time a tolerable genius for sense and inquiry may acquaint himself with all that is past and all that is to come.<sup>73</sup>

In a letter to Louise Colet (Correspondance, II, 47) Flaubert complained that life was an indigestion with too many love-dreams, too many religions, too many fields of knowledge, too many truths. We see this evidenced in his protagonists whether it be Emma Bovary, Salammbô or his two quixotic clerks who are all victims of this boundless quest in life.

Another remarkable similarity between Ecclesiastes and Bouvard et Pécuchet is that in both books we find that this limitless and futile quest is perhaps man's only claim to

grandeur. In Ecclesiastes from the very onset (Chapter I, 13) the author refers to this eternal quest of a wisdom which will solve the problems and remove the inequities of human life, "this sore task," as God's "gift" to the children of men, and their reason for being. Age after age, unwarned by the failure of those who took this road before them, they renew the hopeless quest -- this search for a solution they never reach. In Bouvard et Pécuchet the two heroes who in the beginning of the story are virtually sub-human are propelled by a curiosity that seems at times to be uncontrollable through a barrage of experiences representative of all life has to offer.

When they first meet they are struck by a coup de foudre and are drawn together with inexplicable force. They talk for hours on end about everything from "anedoctes" to "le commerce" to "tout le genre humain." (II, 715) The narrator describes their conversations as:

Chacun en écoutant l'autre retrouvait des parties de lui-même oubliées. Et bien qu'ils eussent passé l'âge des émotions naïves, ils éprouvaient un plaisir nouveau, une sorte d'épanouissement, le charme des tendresses à leur début. (II, 715)

Flaubert plays on the ironic implications of this sterile couple for they will never be able to produce and will always be reduced to copying. The move to the country marks the beginning of their quest for knowledge. In this sense it is a "gift" we human beings are given for even

though it may at times cause pain and disappointment, only man can experience the search for truth in life. This flirtation with the limitless may therefore be man's only claim to greatness setting him apart from the rest.

Victor Brombert compares Bouvard et Pécuchet to Goëthe's Faust for like the author of Ecclesiastes, and Flaubert, Faust was also aware that we can know nothing and was driven to nausea by the thought of further inquiry into knowledge.<sup>74</sup> It is Brombert's opinion that only someone like Flaubert who was at the same time suspicious of ideas while also attracted to them could write such a book as Bouvard et Pécuchet. He explains it in the following manner:

Much of the Romantic and post-Romantic vision is summed up by these Faustian dialectics. The voice of the Devil, the corrosive voice of doubt and pessimism, proclaims that the Dreamer or Thinker (the "Kerl, der spekuliert") is the fool. But another voice, no less insistent, somehow manages to affirm that the pursuit of "Vernunft" and "Wissenschaft" - even the parody-form of two mediocre clerks' fruitless Odyssey - remains man's highest virtue."<sup>75</sup>

Both the author of Ecclesiastes and Flaubert seem to be saying that labor, or this quest for wisdom, is an essential element in life. Although there will never be answers to all of life's mysteries we are bound to seek for this is life. Their advice to the reader is to seek with enthusiasm and persistence for only the fool sinks into apathy and indolence. Ecclesiastes teaches that the wisest course for man is to use his earthly life to the best

advantage, without being greatly disturbed by the impasses in life and continue the quest with caution and diligence for this is the first remedy for impatience and discontent (Chapter XI, 1-6).

After all the failed experiments and the disappointments the author of Ecclesiastes and the copyists Bouvard and Pécuchet find religion. In Ecclesiastes he turns to popular religion in hopes of finding satisfaction and comfort only to find it hollow and unreal. He found that the house of God was entered into thoughtlessly and irreverently; the verbose prayers were uttered with no feelings of the heart; that vows were made only to be broken or evaded; and that superstition stood for religion (Chapter V, 1-7). It is only in looking away from this false religion and turning to the personal God of the heavens that peace can be found.

Chapter IX of Bouvard et Pécuchet is often referred to as the Religion chapter of the novel. Driven by disillusionment to the point of considering suicide they are "rescued" by religion. After seeing the decaying corpse of a dead dog and realizing that one day they would be like that they decide to go ahead and end it all. As they are about to hang themselves they see the lights of a procession on its way to celebrate midnight mass:

Cette foi des autres touchait Bouvard en dépit de sa raison, et Pécuchet malgré la dureté de son coeur.

Il y eut un silence; tous les dos se courbèrent, et, au tintement d'une clochette, le petit agneau bêla.

L'hostie fut montrée par le prêtre, au bout de ses deux bras, le plus haut possible. Alors éclata un chant d'allégresse qui conviait le monde aux pieds du Roi des Anges. Bouvard et Pécuchet, involontairement, s'y mêlèrent, et ils sentaient comme une aurore se lever dans leur âme. (II, 919)

A force greater than themselves has pushed them towards religion in the search for the peace that it promises to provide its faithful followers. This chapter follows the whole novel's cyclical movement. In the beginning of their religious experience they are driven by curiosity to a will to believe then to disillusion and finally to disgust.

At first they are elated by the beauty of the Gospels: "L'Evangile dilata leur âme, les éblouit comme un soleil." (II, 920) But soon the texts in the Old Testament bring stories of harshness and terror that frighten them:

Mais la Bible les effrayait avec ses prophètes à voix de lion, le fracas du tonnerre dans les nues, tous les sanglots de la Géhenne, et son Dieu dispersant les empires, comme le vent fait des nuages.  
(II, 921)

The next stage of their religious experience tends to the excesses and fanaticism that often accompanies religion. Pécuchet insists on the importance of dogma and devotional practices. He decides he will no longer eat red meat on Fridays and becomes physically ill at the prospect of it:



Bouvard restait la fourchette d'une main, le couteau de l'autre. Enfin, se décidant, il monta une bouchée à ses lèvres. Tout à coup ses mains tremblèrent, sa grosse mine pâlit, sa tête se renversait.

- Tu te trouves mal?

- Non! Mais!...

Et il fit un aveu. Par suite de son éducation (c'était plus fort que lui), il ne pouvait manger du gras ce jour-là, dans la crainte de mourir. (II, 921-922)

He does everything to repress his sensual thoughts, punishes himself when he cannot repress them, figures out penitences and even tries flagellation.

Soon disappointments begin to set in:

On lui avait répété que le sacrement le transformerait: durant plusieurs jours, il guetta des floraisons dans sa conscience. Il était toujours le même, et un étonnement douloureux le saisit.

Comment! la chair de Dieu se mêle à notre chair et elle n'y cause rien! (II, 932)

This passage is reminiscent of Flaubert's short story "Un Coeur Simple" where he describes Félicité's disappointment in receiving her first communion after having vicariously experienced Virginie's first communion the day before:

Le lendemain, de bonne heure, elle se présenta dans la sacristie, pour que M. le curé lui donnât la communion. Elle la reçut dévotement, mais n'y goûta pas les mêmes délices.<sup>76</sup>

Doubts inevitably make their appearance: "Expliquez-moi la Trinité," (II, 934) Bouvard flatly demands of the

priest. When Bouvard does not understand the explanation given him, the curé's advice to Bouvard is: "Adorons sans comprendre." (II, 934) Pécuchet also begins to feel confused:

Et Pécuchet en arriva à ne plus savoir que penser de Jésus. Trois Evangiles en font un homme. Dans un passage de saint Jean, il paraît s'égaliser à Dieu; dans un autre, du même, se reconnaître son inférieur. (II, 937)

The clergy's alliance with the forces of political reaction and the Church's bloody record of persecution finally bring the two back to where they had begun: "Quand on songe que le christianisme a pour base une pomme!" (II, 948) Yet, if they are skeptics once more, their voyage has not been totally in vain. For they have experienced religion and all it has to offer from utter despair to faith, from reverence to disgust, from aesthetic delight to boredom. Their religious experience is full of contrasts. Only moments after having had one of his most moving religious experiences, Bouvard is insulted by a group of ecclesiastical hucksters as he emerges from the church. As the protagonist in Ecclesiastes they are shocked and disappointed by the profanation of religion. A pilgrimage brings out the more sordid side of the commercialization of religion when they witness the merchandizing of religious relics such as coconut Christs, images and hideous religious paintings and a variety of other sordid religious artifacts.

Finally, to the scandal of the local bourgeois, Pécuchet reveals that he is converting to Buddhism. The last lines of the chapter are a total rejection of what they had experienced. Upon returning home and finding:

au bas de l'escalier, sous la Madone, Marcel à genoux, et qui priait avec ferveur. La tête renversée, les yeux mi-clos, et dilatant son bec-de-lièvre, il avait l'air d'un fakir en extase," they exclaim: "Quelle brute!" (II, 953)

Of course one cannot ignore the comic aspect of this chapter, or the whole novel for that matter. The novel can be said to be a comedy of Bouvard and Pécuchet's trials and failures.

Of all the books of the Bible, Ecclesiastes' plan, design, and arrangement are the most disputed. While some enthusiastic admirers such as Robert Gordis and Peter F. Ellis have found therein an elaborate artistical structure, a formal division into section rhythmically distributed,<sup>77</sup> others such as Mary Ellen Chase have deemed it a mass of loose thoughts heaped together without any attempt at coherence or logical system.<sup>78</sup> Others, again, give the work a colloquial character, hearing in it the language of two voices - that of the weary and exhausted seeker, and that of the warning and correcting teacher. Tennyson's poem "The Two Voices" is often used to compare with this view of Ecclesiastes.

Bouvard et Pécuchet is a strongly repelling and alluring novel that may bring about quite opposing

interpretations. One could view it as unorganized and without method just as the protagonists themselves who go through life going from one experience to another with supreme lack of method. On the other hand it could be viewed as autobiographical of Flaubert's search for knowledge and his exhaustion from all the unanswered questions. While some could view Flaubert's last novel as that of a teacher who at the end of his life is asserting the possibility of hope, (almost as if the two copyists were older versions of Frédéric and Deslauriers), most would contend that there is a rather brutal irony in this novel.<sup>79</sup>

With both works the reader wonders if the author of Ecclesiastes and Flaubert see no hope of happiness for man. Do they believe that man's labor, aims, ambitions, and search for knowledge always will end in disappointment, that the pursuit of wisdom, or art, or wealth, or pleasure is alike unsatisfying? In Ecclesiastes the sentence, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" with which the book opened, is found again at its close. One could view this return to the pessimistic opinion as precluding any interpretation other than that of a man who was disillusioned with life and found no hope for a better future, no closure to the mysteries of life. These words could be interpreted as an affirmation of the hope for a better future which is found a few verses before: "then

the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes XII, 7) Here after all discussion, after expressing the course of his perplexities, and the various phases of his experiences and thoughts, the author comes to the conclusion that there is a future for man - not one found here on earth but rather when he is brought into immediate connection with a personal God.

Flaubert's untimely death left Bouvard et Pécuchet unfinished making it hard to say how he would have finished the novel. What we can say is that hope and extreme sadness are interwoven throughout the book. In its great despair it is his most desperate work. With it Flaubert wanted to vomit his bile on his contemporaries.<sup>80</sup> In the book we feel his permanent indignation in the face of the scandal of existence. It is Victor Brombert's opinion that it is the product of a lifelong of reflecting on attitudes and preoccupations and most surely one of his most personal works.<sup>81</sup> In his book the vanity of all ambition that is at the heart of the novel is a tragedy for all is doomed to failure and disappointment. The hope that is expressed at the end of Ecclesiastes is not present in Bouvard et Pécuchet for in the end we remain prisoners and victims of this boundless quest that is life.

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Mais le goût de l'histoire leur était  
 venu, le besoin de la vérité pour  
 elle-même. Bouvard et Pécuchet  
 (II, 817)

In Bouvard et Pécuchet history, although different in nature from that of L'Education sentimentale, holds a very important place for even though we are led across the same stretch of history as before, this time the point of view is changed. In L'Education sentimentale the setting is in Paris where the brunt of the revolution of 1848 was felt. Although Frédéric does not take an active part in the revolution he is surrounded by friends who indeed are very much involved in its political and actual physical conflicts. In Bouvard et Pécuchet the two clerks are also mere onlookers of the revolution even in regard to their own little village of Chavignolles. In L'Education sentimentale the Second Empire was like the final curtain of a melodrama, with the calvary charging through the streets and Dussardier cut down as he invoked the lost republic. In Bouvard et Pécuchet the revolution does not have the same effect. The revolution and its effects on Chavignolles takes up the whole chapter VI which is placed in the exact middle of the book. It is as if the revolutionary period is the turning point for the heroes, dividing their lives in two. Reflecting perhaps Flaubert's own life if one believes as Sartre did that the Revolution of 1848 divided Flaubert's life in two.<sup>82</sup> Flaubert died at the age of fifty-nine and was twenty-seven when Louis-

Philippe fled from Paris in 1848 and only thirty when Louis Napoleon was crowned emperor in 1852. History therefore had a great influence on how Flaubert's outlook on life was formed. For the optimism that belongs to everyone's youth, together with the modifications that come with age, is matched in his life by the unfolding of public reality. In Bouvard et Pécuchet Flaubert's final word on the expanse of time through which he lived is that the pre-1848 stands in relation to the post-1848 as summer does to winter, or youth to age. Each is necessary to the complete experience, the experience he thought of as the deranged nineteenth century. So, with his final novel Flaubert decided to transform disaster into comedy in order to better express the hatred he felt about the stupidity of his age. In a letter to Mme Roger des Genettes about his plans for his new novel he writes: "Je me débarrasserai enfin de tout ce qui m'étouffe. Je vomirai sur mes contemporains le dégoût qu'ils m'inspirent..." (Correspondance, IV, 96)

In the first five chapters of the novel, the pre-revolutionary chapters, Flaubert depicts the protagonists' progress of intellectual culture from its beginnings to the state of highest aspiration. Where at times Bouvard and Pécuchet appear to be imbeciles at other times they seem highly intelligent. Although it is naïve to wonder about the being of an "être en papier" if we examine closely both the novel and Flaubert's own correspondence we may be able

to arrive at some conclusions about this question. The first observation that must be made is that during the course of the novel the two "bonshommes" evolve. Flaubert first presents them as rather grotesque, pitiful figures. They are two inept individuals who approach life with naïve self-confidence and with great lack of method. It is in this pre-1848 section, however, that Flaubert presents his theory of learning whose principle is the desire for enjoyment and pleasure. Learning is not a matter of decision but a matter of life itself for without this quest for knowledge, one may ask, what really is the purpose of life.

Once Bouvard and Pécuchet meet for the first time it is as if this is the beginning of their life. This chance meeting is a parody of a romantic coup de foudre or "love at first sight." They become like babies born into a new world that is opening up to them. When they arrive in Chavignolles we sense the wonder with which they step into their new world of unknown experiences and like Adam and Eve begin to name its parts: "Tiens, des carottes! Ah! des choux!" (II, 729)

Their curiosity drives them to want to know more. Knowledge in turn leads only to more and more questions and finally they express that classic student cry of despair: "Combien de questions autrement considérables, et encore plus difficiles!" (II, 826)



As early as 1853 Flaubert writes to Louise Colet describing his hatred for his fellow men and how he felt as if he were not their semblable. At the end of chapter VI the comte de Faverges gives an expensive banquet to local dignitaries during which everyone confirmed each other's authoritarian prejudices -- everyone, that is, except the two new-made dissenters, Bouvard and Pécuchet:

--Il faut rétablir l'obéissance. L'autorité se meurt si on la discute! Le droit divin, il n'y a que ça!

--Parfaitement, Monsieur le comte!

Les pâles rayons d'un soleil d'octobre s'allongeaient derrière les bois, un vent humide soufflait; et en marchant sur les feuilles mortes, ils respiraient comme délivrés. (II, 864)

There is an undeniable parallel between the political reception at the Dambreuse's in L'Education Sentimentale and the one at the Faverges in Bouvard et Pécuchet. Both provoke the same reflections:

Bouvard était surpris par le contraste des choses qui l'entouraient avec celles que l'ondisait - car il semble toujours que les paroles doivent correspondre aux milieux, et que les hauts plafonds soient faits pour les hautes pensées. (II, 863)

The dinner at the Faverges' happens between May 31, 1850, when the right to vote was taken away from three million voters, and December 2, 1851. The Dambreuse's dinner took place in 1847. Both provide what Antoine Compagnon calls "la sensibilisation à la bêtise."<sup>83</sup> These banquets, which were organized as a way of evading the law

that denied the right to hold public political meetings, also parallel the "banquets réformistes" that Frédéric and Maxime Du Camp attended in Rouen on December 25, 1847. Du Camp remembers the dinner saying: "Jamais pareille avalanche de lieux communs enlaidis de phrases toutes faites et de cacophonies d'images n'avaient roulé sur nous."<sup>84</sup> Flaubert describes the same dinner when he writes to Louise Colet:

Quelle triste opinion que l'on ait des hommes, l'amertume vous vient au coeur quand s'étalent devant vous des bêtises aussi délirantes, des stupidités aussi échevelées. (Correspondance I, 491)

Thus in comparing these three dinners that become turning points in the lives of Maxime Du Camp and Flaubert as well as his protagonists in both L'Education sentimentale and Bouvard et Pécuchet, Compagnon concludes:

Voici le trajet même que parcourront Bouvard et Pécuchet depuis le déjeuner chez le comte jusqu'à la fin du chapitre: de la sensibilité à la bêtise vers l'amertume et la lamentation.<sup>85</sup>

Bouvard and Pécuchet's encounter at the Faverges' forces them into the study of politics from whence they deduct politic's non-scientific character, resulting in their sensibility to stupidity:

--Quels idiots! quelle bassesse!  
Comment imaginer tant d'entêtement? D'abord  
quesignifie le droit divin? (II, 864)

This notion of bêtise was an important issue for Flaubert. Essentially for Flaubert bêtise is a way of defining what he considers to be the basic relation between language and society and the location of the individual subject within that relation.<sup>86</sup> It is the process by which cultural meanings are converted into "natural" ones. Flaubert is perhaps the first writer to understand that the novel illustrates a manner of viewing the world.

According to Prendergast Flaubert knew that:

the insertion of the novel into the circuit of communication forming the 'natural attitude' of society is one of the major facts of modern cultural history...the novel (of the nineteenth century) soon becomes the Novel, a literary institution congealing into a fixed system of conventions and expectations, which by virtue of their special mimetic claims, are actively involved in both reproducing and reinforcing standardized ways of seeing the world.<sup>87</sup>

It is Prendergast's conclusion that through this progressive assimilation of the novel into the forms of 'doxal' knowledge the Novel becomes the manifestation of bêtise:

From the perspective of bêtise we can read the adventures of Flaubert's heroes and heroines as tragi-comic adventure of language. The journey they make is primarily a textual journey through the 'doxal' mausoleum of the nineteenth century, whose exhibits include the discourses of Art, Love, Science, Progress and Revolution....in brief, through its progressive absorption into the form of 'doxal' knowledge, the Novel becomes a capital manifestation of bêtise.<sup>88</sup>

As a result of their evolution from bêtise to intelligence the two protagonists become allergic to those

around them for they do not demonstrate the same desire to learn:

...l'évidence de leur supériorité blessait la population de Chavignolles....alors une faculté pitoyable se développa dans leur esprit, celle de voir la bêtise et de ne plus la tolérer. (II, 869)

From 1851 onwards Bouvard and Pécuchet feel repelled by other people: "Les habitants de Chavignolles s'écartaient d'eux." (II, 870)) and because of their new-found sensitivity to stupidity remain in isolation: "Ils ne sortaient plus, ne recevaient personne." (II, 872)

Françoise Gaillard states that Bouvard and Pécuchet are quarantined because they sing out of key in a chorus where everyone in Chavignolles sings. They do not sing in harmony with the ears of the other citizens and are resented by the false note.<sup>89</sup> This disharmony causes them to be ostracized from the community which by its own definition is inclusive of those that are in union, those that hold common values. They no longer speak the common language of France - the unifying voice of the country. This is the language that the novel undermines.

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Chapter VI begins with:

Dans la matinée du 25 février 1848, on apprit à Chavignolles, par un individu venant de Falaise, que Paris était couvert de barricades,

et, le lendemain, la proclamation de la République fut affichée sur la mairie. (II, 845)

The chapter ends four years later with:

C'était le 3 décembre 1851. Elle (Mme Bordin) apportait le journal.

Ils lurent bien vite, et côte à côte, l'appel au peuple, la dissolution de la Chambre, l'emprisonnement des députés.  
(II, 868)

It is the only chapter in the book that is so precisely dated. This whole chapter, placed in the exact middle of the book, deals with the effect of the Second Republic and the Second Empire on Chavignolles. While the first chapters of the book are of hope, expectancy, and excitement, it is with this chapter, beginning the day after Louis-Philippe flees Paris and ending the day after the coup d'Etat of the prince-president, that we begin to see these feelings decline.

This chapter is not only important in that it mirrors the impact the revolution had on Flaubert but also because of how it so closely follows what was happening in France at the time. It is interesting to note that not only does the revolution divide the book in half, providing for the downward turn of events in Bouvard and Pécuchet's lives but it also comes between Bouvard and Pécuchet themselves. Before 1848 they were inseparable, always in agreement as if they were one. As has already been quoted on page 84, Flaubert describes their budding friendship in the following manner:

Chacun en écoutant l'autre retrouvait des parties de lui-même oubliées; et bien qu'ils eussent passé l'âge des émotions naïves, ils éprouvaient un plaisir nouveau, une sorte d'épanouissement, le charme des tendresses à leur début. (II, 715)

Only at the end of chapter VI do we see the beginning of differences, of disharmony between the two twin souls: "--Tu es absurde!" "--Toi, tu me révoltes!" (II, 866)

Including interruptions it took Flaubert sixteen to eighteen years to write Bouvard et Pécuchet. After finishing La Tentation de saint Antoine on July 1st, 1872, Flaubert begins once more to work on a project for his "roman moderne." Because of its encyclopedic nature this novel required even more reading, research, interviews and note-taking than most of his novels. Each of the subjects he deals with in his novel, geology, archeology, literature, religion, history, etc., requires of him much reading, traveling, and notebooks full of notes. All this research makes reference to Flaubert's Dictionnaire des idées reçues, his lifelong compilation of clichés which nourish many of his novels. Flaubert refers to his Dictionnaire as an ironic indictment of human turpitude, filled from beginning to end with quotations and proofs which "prouveront l'opposé." (Correspondance, III, 66)

He writes that he has read so much that he was losing his eyesight. Once a chapter was finished he corrects it and recopies it until he feels that it has reached perfection:

Mon chapitre est fini (...) Aujourd'hui je le re-corrige et je le re-recopie (...) Il faut que ce soit parfait. C'est la seule

manière de faire passer le fond.  
(Correspondance, VIII, 335.)

If one takes a closer look at Bouvard et Pécuchet much of Flaubert's philosophy about writing and life itself can be found within its lines. From the very beginning of the novel it is obvious to any student of Flaubert's that in this last novel, as he had in others before it, he wants to express his utter disgust for the time in history in which he finds himself. This idea is expressed from the very beginning of the book when the narrator reflects on the two copyists lives with: "Quelle situation abominable! Et nul moyen d'en sortir! Pas même d'espérance!" (II, 722) Flaubert's concerns about his age were not uncommon. This anxiety of the times was first of all fostered by the weakened international position France held at the time. Napoleon's fall and the peace treaties that ensued deprived France of the prominent position that it had held for many years. For many years to come many Frenchmen felt hurt and shamed by the treaties of 1814 and 1815. This frustration of nationalistic dreams was only part of the source for the pessimistic mood of the period. Koenraad Swart in his book The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France states:

A more important reason perhaps for the widespread despondency was the realization that the period of crisis that had been opened by the Revolution of 1789 had not yet come to a close. The compromise of the Constitutional Monarchy

between the principles of innovation and conservatism satisfied neither the traditionalists on the one hand nor the liberals and the radicals on the other. Each of these political groups watched the contemporary scene with a sense of crisis and anxiety, agreeing only on deploring the division of the French people in diametrically opposed camps.<sup>90</sup>

The beginning of the Industrial Revolution also added to the tensions and unhappiness in the French society. Swart names several factors for the rising opposition to the new industrial order. The artisans were not able to compete with the mechanized and more efficient methods of production; the farmers were frightened by the control the industrialists and financiers had of the government; and the landed aristocracy resented the fact that they were losing their position of leadership and authority in society.<sup>91</sup> The industrial revolution brought with it terrible working and living conditions for the assembly line workers causing much pain and sorrow. Another factor was the Romantic mal du siècle, the Romantic despondency and pessimistic response to the political and economic problems of the period. In the 1840's Chateaubriand concludes his lamentations with: "Nous, l'Etat le plus mûr et le plus avancé, nous montrons de nombreux symptômes de décadence."<sup>92</sup> These pessimistic views of Flaubert's are representative of a pessimistic strain in the French thought in the nineteenth century. Although not all held this idea of decadence to be true words like crisis, decadence, degeneration, catastrophe and corruption were



common for the commentators of the period.<sup>93</sup> They felt caught up in a situation that they abhorred but by which they felt imprisoned. Flaubert also feels a prisoner of his times and chooses to show his disdain and hatred for it through his novels.

The two copyists also reenact Flaubert's own efforts in all their reading, studying, traveling to the places about which they were researching. Flaubert is said to have consulted more than 1,500 volumes and to have taken assiduous notes on each before beginning to write Bouvard et Pécuchet. Bouvard and Pécuchet realize that way too much research would be needed in order to come to a correct and impartial conclusion about the revolution:

Pour la juger impartialement, il faudrait avoir lu toutes les histoires, tous les mémoires, tous les journaux et toutes les pièces manuscrites, car de la moindre omission une erreur peut dépendre qui en amènera d'autres à l'infini. (II, 817)

Flaubert's love for history is well documented for it is evidenced in his correspondence and in his novels. He urges us to read history and to learn from it: "Lisez de l'histoire, intéressez-vous aux générations mortes, c'est le moyen d'être indulgent pour les vivants et de moins souffrir." (Correspondance, IV, 413) and "...lisez de l'histoire - pour elle-même -- et comme on va au spectacle." (Correspondance, IV, 437) He holds that history cannot be painted "directly" but that in representing it one is able to come closer to the truth.

That is to say that in creating ways to reflect on history, to have history seen indirectly through meaningful substitutes it is possible to shed light on it, to make it come alive.

Bouvard and Pécuchet seem to understand this also for although they deem the historical genre, due to all the research, more difficult, they feel drawn to it because of the truth it portrays: "Mais le goût de l'histoire leur était venu, le besoin de la vérité pour elle-même." (II, 817) Truth would outway the tediousness of all the research.

Echoing Flaubert's journey through the long ago and far away history in Salammbô, Bouvard and Pécuchet consider studying another time in history other than their own:

Peut-être est-elle plus facile à découvrir dans les époques anciennes? Les auteurs, étant loin des choses, doivent en parler sans passion. Et ils commencèrent le bon Rollin. (II, 817)

After reading ancient history they come to the following conclusion (again reflecting Flaubert's own thinking) that: "L'histoire ancienne est obscure par le défaut de documents, ils abondent dans la moderne; et Bouvard et Pécuchet revinrent à la France..." (II, 817-818)

Flaubert's novels had been criticized as being more history than fiction, a fact he strongly resents. He writes Georges Sand expressing his anger at being critiqued for the history instead of the art in his novels:

Est-ce que la critique moderne n'a pas abandonné l'Art pour l'Histoire? La valeur intrinsèque d'un livre n'est rien dans l'école Sainte-Beuve-Taine. On y prend tout en considération sauf le talent. (Correspondance, VI, 295)

Bouvard and Pécuchet speculate on the differences between a historian and a novelist and their conclusions again echo Flaubert's. Bouvard and Pécuchet wonder how fables hold more truth than the truths historians write about. They come to the conclusion that historians always have a special cause, a religion, a nation, a system or people that they must please. On the other hand historians who pretend to be only narrating what they see are not able to do so either for: "...on ne peut tout dire, il faut un choix." (II, 820) History, they decide, can never be truly portrayed. "C'est triste," they thought. (II, 820) Six pages later they discover that history alone cannot reflect life as it is - that imagination is the key ingredient that needs to be added to it:

D'où ils conclurent que les faits extérieurs ne sont pas tout. Il faut les compléter par la psychologie. Sans l'imagination, l'histoire est défectueuse.

--Faisons venir quelques romans historiques! (II, 826)

Roland Barthes comes to about the same conclusion when he says that: "historical discourse is essentially a product of ideology, or rather of imagination."<sup>94</sup>

The following statement made by Collingwood on the role that imagination plays on a historian's account of the

past is also evidence of history's "contamination" by fiction:

Freed from its dependence, on fixed points supplied from without, the historian's picture of the past is thus in every detail an imaginary picture, and its necessity is at every point the necessity of the a priori imagination. Whatever goes into it, goes into it not because his imagination passively accepts it, but because it actively demands it...The novel and history must both of them make sense; nothing is admissible in either except what is necessary, and the judge of this necessity is in both cases the imagination. Both the novel and the history are self-explanatory, self-justifying, the product of an autonomous, self-authorizing activity; and in both cases this activity is the a priori imagination.<sup>95</sup>

George Macaulay Trevelyan, the late professor of modern history at Cambridge and the great champion of literary as opposed to scientific history, wrote that the best historian was he who combined knowledge of the evidence with "the largest intellect, the warmest human sympathy and the highest imaginative powers."<sup>96</sup>

After reading Walter Scott, George Sand, Racine, Benjamin Constant, Balzac and pondering on "le Vrai" and "la Beauté," and the "but de la littérature" Bouvard et Pécuchet come to the bitter conclusion that: "On n'aime pas la littérature," (II, 844) and they abandon the subject. It would be safe to assume that literature for Flaubert is the peak of intellectual endeavor, this loss of heart signals that whatever had begun with great enthusiasm and curiosity is now over. Half-a-dozen lines after "On n'aime pas la littérature" the chapter ends. The opening of

the next chapter (chapter VI) brings the news that a republic has been proclaimed in Paris.

Chapter VI is not only central to the novel in that it is located right in the middle of it but according to Antoine Compagnon it is also central in the structure of the novel. It is his supposition that it is at this point that the book becomes a novel for the encyclopedic form of the preceeding chapters now becomes action.<sup>97</sup> It is history's irruption that marks the book's change of course.

The revolution and the question of universal suffrage are the main focus of chapter VI. Here again Flaubert returns to the idea of the cyclical nature of life in that one generation does not learn from the one that preceeded it and is doomed to repeat the same mistakes over and over again. Echoing Karl Marx, Gustave Flaubert believes history to be a copy for in 1848 he sees a copy of 1789, in Chavignolles a provincial copy of Paris.

"--Ah! la Révolution, voilà le malheur!" says the priest at the Faverges' dinner. (II, 862) Therefore there is only one revolution for they (1830, 1848, 1871) are all remakes of the one before - that is 1789.

Antoine Compagnon says that Bouvard et Pécuchet is:

...le tableau d'un village de province, c'est l'illustration de l'état d'esprit, de l'intelligence politique des électeurs, c'est la démonstration de l'impuissance, de la malfaisance du suffrage universel.

Bouvard et Pécuchet est la France contemporaine de Flaubert, où il se lança après

la Commune et qu'il laissera inachevée: la France contemporaine, c'est-à-dire une charge contre la Révolution française et ses retours.<sup>98</sup>

In pondering on man's stupidity, his inability to learn from the revolution of 1789 Flaubert writes:

Il faut que la Révolution française cesse d'être un dogme...<sup>89</sup> a démoli la royauté et la noblesse, 48 la bourgeoisie et 51 le peuple. Il n'y a plus rien, qu'une tourbe canaille et imbécile. Nous sommes tous enfoncés au même niveau dans une médiocrité commune. L'égalité sociale a passé dans l'Esprit. (Correspondance, III, 349)

It is after the dinner at the Faverges' that Bouvard and Pécuchet become interested in studying about "le droit divin." They go all the way back to its beginnings when the theory was formulated under Charles II by an Englishman named Filmer through Rousseau's Le Contrat social. After Bonaparte's victory on December 10, 1848 they want to study the question of universal suffrage: "Les six millions de voix refroidirent Pécuchet à l'encontre du peuple; - et Bouvard et lui étudièrent la question du suffrage universel." (II, 857) From their studies they come to the same conclusions about universal suffrage as Flaubert. The masses are always stupid:

Appartenant à tout le monde, il ne peut avoir d'intelligence. Un ambitieux le mènera toujours, les autres obéiront comme un troupeau, les électeurs n'étant pas même contraints de savoir lire:... (II, 857)

Reflecting Flaubert's own political views they are not in favor of a traditional aristocracy either: "Bouvard et Pécuchet furent dégoutés du petit nombre comme du grand.

La plèbe, en somme, valait l'aristocratie." (II, 859)

At the end of the chapter they come to the conclusion:

--Hein, le Progrès, quelle blague!

--Et la Politique, une belle saleté!

--Ce n'est pas une science, reprit Pécuchet. L'art militaire vaut mieux, on prévoit ce qui arrive... (II, 869)

In the end they come to the conclusion that there can be no progress when no lessons are learned from the past, when the future is doomed to be a copy of past mistakes.

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Flaubert believed that all truly great literature is encyclopedic in nature: Homer and Rabelais, he observes, are "encyclopédies de leur temps." (Correspondance, IV, 52) Flaubert had always had an encyclopedic turn of mind. Salammbô gives the impression of exhausting every antiquarian source; L'Education sentimentale seems to represent every opinion in the gamut from the Left to Right. But Bouvard et Pécuchet evokes the full range of modern knowledge -- without leaving the boundaries of a contemporary provincial parish.

Through his protagonists Bouvard and Pécuchet he takes us on a journey, an intellectual flight through a troubled century. In his desire for totalization, to conclude he writes: "Oui, je me débarrasserai enfin de tout ce qui m'étouffe. Je vomirai sur mes contemporains le dégoût

qu'ils m'inspirent, dusse-m'en casser la poitrine. Ce sera large et violent." (Correspondance, IV, 167) Through this journey he wants to purge himself of his feelings and "émettre quelques vérités." Whether or not he succeeds proves to be a difficult question to answer.

Is it all "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity?" Can it be said that the vanity and tragedy of all ambitions are at the heart of the book? The desperate irony of the book is that even if Bouvard and Pécuchet have acquired wisdom from their "journey" this knowledge does not implement any kind of personal or social change. Bouvard and Pécuchet move through fields of learning like travelers in time and knowledge, experiencing the disappointments and the letdowns of what was for Flaubert and others like him the whole disillusioning experience of the nineteenth-century.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER III

<sup>70</sup> "Ecclesiastes," The New American Standard Bible (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973) I, 10. All subsequent references to "Ecclesiastes" will be taken from this edition and the chapter and verse numbers will be found in the text.

<sup>71</sup> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations ix, I.

<sup>72</sup> Gustave Flaubert, Bouvard et Pécuchet, in Flaubert Oeuvres, ed. A. Thibaudet and R. Dumesnil, Volume 2 (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, 1951) 921. All subsequent references to this novel will be taken from this edition and will be found with in the text.

<sup>73</sup> Marcus Aurelius xi, I

<sup>74</sup> Victor Brombert, The Novels of Flaubert (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966) 280.

<sup>75</sup> Brombert 281.

<sup>76</sup> Gustave Flaubert, "Un Coeur Simple," Flaubert Oeuvres, ed. A. Thibaudet and R. Dumesnil (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, 1952) 602.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Gordis, "Koheleth - The Man and His World," Vol XIX, Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (New York: Block Publishing Co., 1955) 75-86. Peter F. Ellis The Men of the Old Testament (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1963) 487-490.

<sup>78</sup> Mary Ellen Chase, The Bible and the Common Reader (The Macmillan Company, 1952).

<sup>79</sup> Jefferson Humphries, "Bouvard et Pécuchet and the Fable of the Stable Irony," French Forum (1985): 145-162.

<sup>80</sup> Gustave Flaubert, Correspondance (Paris: Conard, 1926-1933) VI, 460. All subsequent references to Flaubert's correspondence will be found within the text.

<sup>81</sup> Brombert 264.

<sup>82</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Idiot de la famille (Paris: Gallimard, 1971-1972) Vol. 3, 448.

<sup>83</sup> Antoine Compagnon, La Troisième République des Lettres (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1983) 260.

<sup>84</sup> As quoted by A. François, "Gustave Flaubert, Maxime du Camp et la révolution de 1848," Revue littéraire de la France 53 (1953).

<sup>85</sup> Compagnon 261.

<sup>86</sup> Christopher Prendergast, The Order of Mimesis (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986) 185.

<sup>87</sup> Prendergast 186.

<sup>88</sup> Prendergast 186.

<sup>89</sup> Françoise Gaillard, "A Little Story about the bras de fer," Flaubert and Postmodernism, ed. Naomi Schor and Henry F. Majowski (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) 91-92.

<sup>90</sup> Koenraad W. Swart, The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964) 48.

<sup>91</sup> Swart 48.

<sup>92</sup> René de Chateaubriand, Mémoires d'outre tombe (Paris: Centenaire, 1949) II, 579.

<sup>93</sup> Swart 46.

<sup>94</sup> Roland Barthes, "Historical Discourse," Introduction to Structuralism, ed. Michael Lane (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1970) 158.

<sup>95</sup> R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956) 245-46.

<sup>96</sup> George Macaulay Trevelyan as quoted by Barbara W. Tuchman in Practicing History (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981) 47.

<sup>97</sup> Compagnon 269.

<sup>98</sup> Compagnon 281.

## CHAPTER IV

### SALAMMBO - THE PAST REVISITED

There is this moral of all human tales;  
'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past,  
First freedom, and then glory and when that fails,  
Wealth, vice, corruption and barbarism at last.

Byron, "Childe Harold" IV.cvii

When I want to understand what is happening today  
or try to decide what will happen tomorrow,  
I look back.

Oliver Windell Holmes, Jr.

All these tidal, growth and decay,  
Shining and darkening, are forever  
Renewed; and the whole cycle impenitently  
Revolves, and all the past is future.

Robinson Jeffers, "Practical People"

The Elephant is the wisest of all the animals,  
the only one who remembers his former lives;  
and he remains motionless for long periods of time,  
meditating thereon.

Budhist Text

In February of 1857, only one month after Madame Bovary's acquittal, Flaubert writes Marie-Sophie Leroyer de Chantepie describing his new novel:

Je m'occupe...d'un travail achéologique, sur une des époques les plus inconnues de l'antiquité, travail qui est la préparation d'un autre. Je vais écrire un roman dont l'action se passera trois siècles avant Jésus-Christ, car j'éprouve le besoin de sortir du monde moderne où ma plume s'est trop trempée et qui d'ailleurs me fatigue autant à reproduire qu'il me dégoûte à voir.<sup>99</sup>

Although what might appear at first glance as a desire for otherness, for difference, it soon becomes the necessity to find sameness in the form of otherness.<sup>100</sup>

In reading Salammbô it becomes evident that Flaubert's contention that his novel was a means of escape from what was for him the horror of the present he so despised is not the whole truth for those things that he found most repulsive about his times can be found in Salammbô. These are present in his novel as reflections of his own concerns about present-day France.

The same feelings of frustration, sadness and despair that were prevalent in Flaubert's generation are found in Salammbô. Perhaps to his dismay Flaubert found that Carthage two thousand years before him was much like the France he lived in.

This idea was not new to Flaubert for even as far back as ancient civilizations it has been believed by many that after an initial period of relative calm and happiness a

sudden fall or a process of gradual degradation becomes unavoidable. Such presuppositions were, and still are, part of the cyclical philosophy of history that Flaubert ascribed to that holds that the world is doomed to endless repetitions of the same patterns of degeneration.<sup>101</sup>

Thus Lukács contends that Flaubert chose to reawaken a vanished world we are not concerned with because:

of his deep hatred for modern society that he sought...a world which would in no way resemble it, which would have no connection with it, direct or indirect. Of course, this lack of connection - or rather the illusion of such - is at the same time the subjective factor which connects Flaubert's exotic historical subject matter with every day life of the present.<sup>102</sup>

In this chapter several important aspects about Flaubert's novel Salammbô will be examined. The first part of the chapter will look at Flaubert's interest in history, his reasons for deciding to write a novel set in Carthage in the year 300 B.C. and his design and expectations for the novel. The second part of the chapter will be a review of the controversy that Salammbô has elicited from critics during Flaubert's lifetime continuing through contemporary literary critics. A third section of the chapter will deal with how Flaubert's views on the periodicity of history and the disillusionment of his generation are again revisited in this novel. Finally the problem of language which is at the core of all of Flaubert's novels is examined.

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Flaubert had a great love for the past. During a trip to Italy in 1845 he wrote a letter to Alfred de Poittevin stating: "Je porte l'amour de l'antiquité dans mes entrailles, je suis touché jusqu'au plus profond de mon être quand je songe aux carènes romaines qui fendaient les vagues." (Correspondance, I, 171) Therefore his choice of a historical subject should come to no surprise. His interest in history began when he was a small boy. Pierre-Adolphe Cheruel, one of Michelet's former students, was the one who first interested Flaubert in history. He was so infatuated with ancient history that he even believed that he had preexisted in Egypt and Rome: "l'antiquité me donne le vertige. J'ai vécu à Rome, c'est certain." (Correspondance, I, 206)

Flaubert's interest in history was typical of the times. Edward Said in his book Orientalism discusses this profound interest in and mastery of the Orient in nineteenth-century France.<sup>103</sup> The Napoleonic campaigns on the Continent had given the French a broader perspective of the world and their place in the European scene. From Napoleon's expeditions many novels were born including Chateaubriand's Itinéraire, Lamartine's Voyage en Orient and Flaubert's Salammbô. The French admired the Greek and Roman art and used it to decorate their capital as well as displaying it in the Louvre. The Near East had shed some of its mystery with the discovery of the Rosetta stone in

1799 and Champollion's decipherment in 1822. Egyptology made news, and historical societies were founded promoting their findings and interests in scholarly journals. History figured as never before in the realm of higher education. Oriental studies became a fully developed curriculum in every major European university. In 1836, the Obelisk of Luxor, a gift from Egypt to the French Government, was erected in the Place de la Concorde.

During this same time Flaubert annotated Jules Michelet's Histoire de Rome (1831) and became acquainted with the savage and cruel war between Carthage and its Mercenaries in 241 B.C., the subject matter of the eventual Salammbo. There is no doubt that Michelet impressed him a great deal: "Que d'idées, que d'aperçus! Il (Michelet) a monté l'histoire à la hauteur de la poésie." (Correspondance, SII, 20) He writes Michelet telling him that: "Vous êtes certainement l'auteur français que j'aie le plus lu, relu." (Correspondance, V, 336) In Michelet's accounts Flaubert found the solid scholarship he needed to combine with his imaginative grasp of this period he wished to resurrect.

Flaubert dreamed of the ancient world and yearned to visit it: "Quand j'irai, je veux connaître cette vieille antiquité dans la moëlle...je m'incrusterai dans la couleur de l'objectif et je m'absorberai en lui avec un amour sans partage." (Correspondance, I, 168) His first trip there

was from 1849 to 1851. His travels to the Mediterranean and Near East were more than just confirmations of a schoolboy's imaginations, they were part of a living, concrete, sensual experience, that would nourish his future writings. Even while writing Madame Bovary in 1853, he wished he were a scholar so that he could write a beautiful book like De l'Interprétation de l'Antiquité, knowing that he would hit the right mark while adding a modern touch: "Je voudrais être savant...je ferais un beau livre: De l'Interprétation de l'Antiquité car je suis sûr d'être dans la tradition; ce que j'y mets de plus, c'est le sentiment moderne." (Correspondance, III, 137)

Later on in commenting to Sainte-Beuve about his method in writing Salammbô he states that he was able to do just that: "J'ai voulu fixer un mirage (emphasis mine) appliquant à l'antiquité les procédés (emphasis mine) du roman moderne." (Correspondance, V, 56) In closely examining this statement it becomes evident through Flaubert's usage of the word mirage that Flaubert knew from the very beginning that what he proposed to do was indeed impossible. What may appear as different in Flaubert's choice of Carthage is in reality an illusion, a mirage. Writing from his position in time and space means to write from a position of mediocrity in that representation does not have a direct unmediated relation to the object represented. Since the function of art is to create an



"illusion" that the language of fiction is the language of its object then, according to Donato, what determines the writing of fiction is not the quest for the lost object or for exoticism but rather: "well-constructed fiction is an optical machine that produces the exotic, the distant, and the different as illusion or mirage."<sup>104</sup>

Flaubert's use of the word procédés underlines the fact that Flaubert's intent and procedures as a novelist were not the same as Michelet's. He understood this and had no other pretense. As a romantic historian, Michelet's analysis of Carthage is quite different from Flaubert's representation of Carthage in the novel. The techniques of the novel necessarily produce a representation and a narrative at odds with the historical description, given the rhetorical ambiguities of description, plot and character that Flaubert is inventing. For Flaubert the "vérité matérielle" that he talks about is quite separate and distinct from the "procédés" of the modern novel. The coming together of these two elements produces not "reality" but rather the transcription of a mirage.<sup>105</sup>

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After much waiting, artistic torture and frustration Flaubert began writing Salammbô in 1857. In 1862 he writes explaining why he chose such a subject for his novel:

J'avais pris un sujet antique pour me faire passer le dégoût qui m'avait inspiré la *Bovary*.

Pas du tout! Les choses modernes me répugnent autant! L'idée de peindre des bourgeois me fait d'avance mal au coeur. (Correspondance, V, 32)

After he began writing his novel, which he had at first entitled Carthage, he realized he needed to return to Africa and especially to visit Tunisia. He found it difficult to embrace his characters and the setting of his novel. His trip lasted six weeks after which he realized he needed to completely start over his novel. Facing such a difficult task he writes:

Que toutes les énergies de la nature que j'ai aspirées me pénètrent et qu'elles s'exhalent dans mon livre! A moi, puissances de l'émotion plastique! Résurrection du passé, à moi, à moi! Il faut faire à travers le Beau, vivant et vrai quand même. Pitié pour ma volonté, Dieu des âmes! Donnez-moi la Force -- et l'Espoir!<sup>106</sup>

He knew this task was very difficult and his pretensions high. Nonetheless, he felt the subject was too beautiful to give up. Meanwhile, he repeated his hostility towards the age, noted the ill effects of Madame Bovary upon his personality, and the change he looked forward to:

Je suis las des choses laides et des vilains milieux. La Bovary m'a dégouté pour longtemps des moeurs bourgeoises. Je vais, pendant quelques années peut-être, vivre dans un sujet splendide et loin du monde dont j'ai plein le dos. Ce que j'entreprends est insensé (emphasis mine) et n'aura aucun succès dans le public. N'importe! Il faut écrire pour soi, avant tout. C'est la seule chance de faire beau. (Correspondance, IV, 272)

Insensé may be defined among other things as "impossible," "forcené," "très bizarre." Flaubert admits

that his project is impossible even before it is begun. The nature of representation in the novel is such that it is no longer a problem of presence and identity but rather, to once again quote Donato, "what shimmers behind the mirage...escapes the possibility of being simply identified with either Carthage or nineteenth-century France as epistemological objects."<sup>107</sup> Flaubert realized that the realist project is also an impossible endeavor and a negative production undoing the doxa, undermining history.

Polipius' General History that Flaubert used as his primary source for Salammbô and Michelet's account of the First Punic War being "history" did not have this problem to the extent that Flaubert realized his novel would have. Since "history" was valorized over fiction as being the truth, most historians' concerns with language extended only to their effort to write plainly, to avoid figures of speech, and to make sure the author was not identifiable in the text.<sup>108</sup> Not realizing that even in history the facts do not speak for themselves, that the historian speaks for them (this is especially true with the romantic historian of the nineteenth century who projected his own desires and opinions into his writings), and that what he does is to produce a purely discursive re-presentation. Although novelists may be dealing with imaginary events and historians with real ones, the process of bringing the two together is for both a poetic process. Michelet, himself,

did not even pretend to be impartial. He was always emotionally involved with his subject believing that the historian must get to the heart of the matter to achieve the "résurrection de la vie intégrale, non pas dans ses surfaces, mais dans ses organismes intérieurs et profonds."<sup>109</sup>

Although he spent much time traveling, reading and taking notes to assure authenticity to his novel, it is certain that Flaubert did not believe that recreation of the past was totally possible. In 1880 he writes Léon Hennique stating what he had set out to do with Salammbô:

Dieu sait à quel point je pousse le scrupule en fait de documents, livres, informations, voyages, etc...Eh bien, je regarde, tout cela comme très secondaire et inférieur. La vérité matérielle (ou ce qu'on appelle ainsi) ne doit être qu'un tremplin (emphasis mine) pour s'élever plus haut. Me croyez-vous assez godiche pour être convaincu que j'aie fait dans Salammbô une vraie reproduction de Carthage...? Ah! non! mais je suis sûr d'avoir exprimé l'idéal qu'on en a aujourd'hui. (Correspondance, VIII, 374)

Clearly, "la vérité matérielle" was secondary. Moreover, Flaubert had mentioned from the start: "l'archéologie, elle sera probable. Voilà tout. Pourvu que l'on ne puisse pas me prouver que j'ai dit des absurdités." (Correspondance, IV, 202) Jean-Pierre Duquette believes that all Flaubert is concerned with is: "l'effet de l'histoire qu'il recherche."<sup>110</sup> In fact, "faire vrai ne me paraît pas la première condition de l'art." (Correspondance, VII, 351) Rather, it is to

"viser au beau," which is one of the possible meanings of tremplin. (Correspondance, VII, 359) Another is the idea of transmutation, for:

Je voudrais écrire tout ce que je vois, non tel qu'il est, mais transfiguré. La narration exacte du fait réel le plus magnifique me serait impossible. Il me faudrait le broder encore... avec la poésie et le style. (Correspondance III, 322 and VII, 369)

The paradox of the realist project is that the realist project must produce a discussion that is citational in a common discourse that is not critical. Flaubert, seeing the stupidity of the project, chooses his writing to be "transfiguré."

Brombert believes that Flaubert intended to change reality in order to dominate it, to in a sense deny it. Such could be the basic significance of the word tremplin to which one associates the idea of liberation and reverie. Flaubert chose to deny reality so that he could free himself from the world he hated.<sup>11</sup> Broder implies to enrich, embellish, amplify or exaggerate at will through the imagination, essentially, to invent a vision of one's own, to dream. Flaubert aimed at the highest goal in art, "d'agir à la façon de la nature, c'est-à-dire de faire rêver." (Correspondance, III, 322)

The way in which Flaubert changes "reality" puts into question the very way in which reality is constructed. The novel, being a fabrication, an alteration of "reality" leads to the interpretation, by some at least, that reality

is provisional and conjectural. Is "reality" knowable? Flaubert would not think so. The ultimate truth cannot be found in either history or fiction, and as Flaubert found out, the knowledge of either or both does not lead to a metaphysical conclusion.

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Whatever Flaubert's intentions were in writing Salammbô, it sparked a great literary controversy that remains to this day. What follows is a summary of past and contemporary criticism not as a means of reproducing what has already been said but as a means of showing the controversy it has elicited.

The greatest critics of Salammbô when the novel first appeared were namely the literary critic Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve and Wilhelm Froehner, Director of the Museum of Antiquities at the Louvre. They were both suprised at the subject Flaubert chose and instead of judging Salammbô as a work of fiction, they criticized it in terms of historical research and accuracy.

Sainte-Beuve stated that although he could not judge the archeological authenticity of the novel he felt that the political and moral side of it was implausible.<sup>112</sup> He criticized the descriptions for being too monotonous and unrealistic and for occupying too much of the book: "les monuments et les édifices sont plus que douteux."<sup>113</sup> He

also accused Flaubert of being a sadist for his unrelenting stress on violence, the erotic, the bloody and portrayal of monstrous behavior by the characters (such as sacrificing children, cannibalism and torture).<sup>114</sup> As a whole he contended that Salammbô suffered from too much invention and effort and that Flaubert had failed because he had not been able to communicate "la vie et l'intérêt" to his creation. "Il y a d'elle (l'Antiquité) à nous...un abîme. L'érudition, qui peut y jeter un pont, nous refroidit en même temps et nous glace...On la restitue, l'Antiquité, on ne la ressuscite pas."<sup>115</sup>

Flaubert answered each of Sainte-Beuve's criticisms. Although he admitted that he may have failed in appropriating the practices of the historical novel to Antiquity he felt that he had been able to create something similar to Carthage: "Je crois avoir fait quelque chose qui ressemble à Carthage."<sup>116</sup> Flaubert contended that all the archeological description was important and that the color, manners and customs, events and passions harmonized to perfection with the milieu and practices of the day. Believing that he had been successful, he writes Sainte-Beuve saying:

...d'après toutes les vraisemblances et mes impressions, à moi, je crois avoir fait quelque chose qui ressemble à Carthage...Je me moque de l'archéologie! Si la couleur n'est pas une, si les détails détonnent, si les mœurs ne dérivent pas de la religion et les faits des passions, si les caractères ne sont pas suivis, si les costumes ne sont pas appropriés aux usages et

les architectures au climat, s'il n'y a pas, en un mot, harmonie, je suis dans le faux. Sinon, non. Tout se tient."<sup>117</sup>

As for the descriptions he stated that even if some of the descriptions burdened the text, it could not be avoided. He believed that there was no gratuitous description for they all served a purpose: "il n'y a point dans mon livre une description isolée, gratuite; toutes servent à mes personnages et ont une influence lointaine ou immédiate sur l'action."<sup>118</sup> Answering to Sainte-Beuve's criticism of the cruel and barbaric side of his novel Flaubert advised Sainte-Beuve to accept the truth that mankind is and will always be evil and cruel. He assured Sainte-Beuve that he had not created a "Carthage fantastique."<sup>119</sup>

As far as Sainte-Beuve's criticism of the character Salammbô herself, Flaubert justifies his portrayal of her by saying no one could truly possess knowledge about the oriental woman anyway:

Je ne suis pas sûr de sa réalité; car ni moi, ni vous, ni personne, aucun ancien et aucun moderne, ne peut connaître la femme orientale, par la raison qu'il est impossible de la fréquenter."<sup>120</sup>

He agrees, however, with Sainte-Beuve that he should have developed Salammbô's character more than he did: "Le piédestal est trop grand pour la statue...il aurait fallu cent pages de plus relatives à Salammbô seulement."<sup>121</sup> Flaubert also realizes that Carthage of 300 B.C. was



impossible to "connaître" and "fréquenter" just as was the Oriental woman. Even after much historical and archeological research the Carthage that Flaubert describes becomes "contaminated" by contemporary France.

Froehner's criticism was from a scientific point of view. He judged the novel as a document of archeological research and challenged Flaubert's scholarship and authenticity of reproduction. Flaubert rebutted Froehner by reminding him that: "Je n'ai, monsieur, nulles prétentions à l'archéologie. J'ai donné mon livre pour un roman...sans préface et sans notes." As Edward Said notes in Orientalism in the middle of nineteenth-century France research and the study of the Orient was very much a part of the scene.<sup>122</sup> Because of all the research and scientific studies dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge of the Orient, Flaubert, as a "layman," was finding it difficult to gain credibility. Moreover, even though he did not purport to try to capture and present Carthage as a historian might have, he was being judged and criticized as one.

Not all of Flaubert's contemporaries criticized his new novel. George Sand stated that: "la vérification de l'exactitude archéologique n'avait rien à faire avec la question d'art, et que si la peinture était belle et bonne, cela suffisait."<sup>123</sup> Baudelaire felt that "ce que Flaubert a fait, lui seul pouvait le faire. Trop de bric-à-brac,

mais beaucoup de grandeurs, épiques, historiques, politiques, animales même."<sup>124</sup> Fromentin hailed Flaubert as "un grand peintre, mieux que cela, un grand visionnaire, car comment appeler celui qui crée des réalités si vives avec ses rêves et qui vous y fait croire?"<sup>125</sup> Gautier considered Salammbô an epic poem: "ce n'est pas un livre d'histoire, ce n'est pas un roman, c'est un poème épique!"<sup>126</sup>

Modern critics tend to look more favorably on Salammbô than did Flaubert's contemporaries. René Dumesnil hails the novel for:

Peu important les querelles de spécialistes. Ce qui compte, ce qui est la qualité maîtresse du roman carthaginois, c'est que personne n'a jamais fixé comme Flaubert les aspects éternels du pays d'Afrique.<sup>127</sup>

Albert Thibaudet believes that Flaubert was able to capture Carthage in all of its grandeur and weaknesses:

Flaubert a saisi avec exactitude les causes de sa grandeur et de sa faiblesse. Il les a exprimées dans un style historique d'une solidité, d'une netteté et d'une autorité parfaites.<sup>128</sup>

Georg Lukács is perhaps the most negative modern critic of the novel. In his The Historical Novel Lukács condemns Flaubert for not having a socio-historical development in the novel, therefore reducing history to Flaubert's own private concerns. He believes that there is no connection between the outside world and the psychology of the characters thus in degrading:

the archaeological exactness of the outer world: it becomes a world of historically exact costumes and decorations, no more than a pictorial frame within which a purely modern story is unfolded...History simply provided a decorative, monumental setting for this hysteria, which in the present spends itself in petty and ugly scenes and which thus acquired a tragic aura quite out of keeping with its real character.<sup>129</sup>

Maurice Nadeau compliments Flaubert for his methodology and for the results of his hard work:

Il s'était si bien 'fait sentir les choses' à propos de Carthage et de la guerre des Mercenaires, il s'est si complètement transplanté dans une autre humanité, avec ses moeurs, ses croyances, ses manières de vivre, que la science, par ses découvertes récentes, a illustré ses intuitions: elle a mis au jour des stèles portant le signe de Tanit tel qu'il l'avait décrit, le 'trophet' où gisaient les squelettes d'enfants sacrifiés à Moloch.<sup>130</sup>

A minority opinion since the 1970's has challenged the historicity of Salammbô by claiming history as absent and Flaubert's method as anti-historical. According to Annie Goldman history is absent in Salammbô. She adopts Lukács' point of view that the principal characters are privately motivated and do not act as historical figures identified with a collectivity.<sup>131</sup>

Denis Porter suggests that Flaubert wrote Salammbô for aesthetic purposes using history solely as subject matter. Thus Salammbô is a sort of pure novel devoid of meaning, unconcerned with man and contrary to the traditional development of the novel:

...the novel makes no attempt to increase our understanding of the world, performs no service in the present and, far more than seeking to

illuminate the past, it uses history to an aesthetic end...The result is a work that comes closer than any other to the fiction Flaubert dreamed of as a livre sur rien.<sup>132</sup>

This assessment of the novel sparked a debate when Marilyn Rose challenged such a conclusion. It is her opinion that Salammbô fulfills the credo of Parnassian as well as Realistic aesthetics and that Flaubert presented an anti-war theme in his novel by showing that all wars are cruel and abominable.<sup>133</sup>

Victor Brombert argues that despite the action of war in the novel "the overall impression is one of stasis and futility."<sup>134</sup> Sartre believes that his escape into the past is characteristic of Flaubert's flight from the real world and its troubles.<sup>135</sup>

What at first may have begun as a project to liberate himself from his troubling times in Christa Bevernis' opinion soon becomes a literary expression of his own understanding of the world:

Conçu, à l'origine, comme un roman d'amour anodin défilant devant un panorama historique susceptible d'apporter à son auteur la considération littéraire, sans suites judiciaires, il devint l'expression littéraire de sa propre compréhension du monde.<sup>136</sup>

One of the most complete studies of Salammbô is Anne Green's Flaubert and the Historical Novel: 'Salammbô' reassessed. It is Green's premise that Flaubert's recourse to history was not to provide a setting for the novel but as a vehicle to understand the present, that in trying to

recreate the past he is actually creating an illusion of such:

For him, history does not merely provide the novel with settings and subjects rich in excitement and intrigue, or give respectability to a fictional narrative. Rather, it offers a means of understanding the present. Recognizing that it is impossible truly to recreate the past, he knows that a historical perspective is firmly rooted in the present, that in a sense a historical 'recreation' is an illusion created by the present.<sup>137</sup>

Jean Rousset believes that Salammbô is a mere repetition of old ideas:

Il s'agit là d'un fait de répétition; les mêmes éléments sont repris, disjoints, redistribués pour former les nouvelles figures. Identité mais aussi renouvellement.<sup>138</sup>

The most convincing argument is given by Anne Green who asserts that although Flaubert's initial intent may have been to write a novel set in Carthage three centuries before Jesus Christ as an escape from his troubling times, the novel soon becomes, much like l'Education sentimentale and Bouvard et Pécuchet, a vehicle to express his feelings about contemporary concerns and to demonstrate his philosophy of life. Salammbô embodies Flaubert's belief that there is nothing new for we are always turning the same old stones, always going in the same endless circles. The novel goes on to illustrate that because man's nature never changes and because man never seems to learn from past mistakes he is doomed to repeat the same mistakes over and over again: "Notre ignorance de l'histoire nous fait

calomnier notre temps," he writes to George Sand. Justifying man's inability to learn from the past he continues: "On a toujours été comme ça. Quelques années de calme nous ont trompés." (Correspondance, VI, 283)

Although in writing his novel Flaubert used authentic sources from historians such as Polybius and Michelet, it soon becomes obvious that he also selected from this material details that fit into his own notion of a revolutionary situation envisioned from what he had witnessed in 1848.

Flaubert's return to Carthage and the revolt of the mercenaries engenders a story that is remarkably similar to Flaubert's historical reality. As has already been examined in the preceeding chapters, history, for Flaubert, is cyclical, periodical, and it is this periodicity that makes it possible for periods that are distant in time and space to become similar to each other:

Nous avons peut-être besoin des barbares.  
L'humanité, vieillard perpétuel, prend à ses  
agonies périodiques des infusions de sang.  
Comme nous sommes bas! et quelle décrépitude  
universelle! (Correspondance, V, 3)

It is thus, through the knowledge of history, that we find a way of knowing ourselves and our fellow men. According to Flaubert history is thus a perpetual reproduction of itself, always going around in circles. Contrary to those who persisted in the belief in progress, Flaubert believed that this straight line theory of

progress was nothing but an illusion: "Quel avenir! quelle immense bêtise!... O le Progrès! Et on nous accusait d'être pessimistes! (Correspondance, VI, 155) For Flaubert 1848 and 1851 were dramatic counter examples of the optimistic myth of progress. The French revolution showed that the attempt to remodel society according to abstract principles of justice, through half-hearted efforts to renovate an antiquated system of administration, could lead more easily to a reign of terror than to a reign of universal love and brotherhood. The problems may seem solved only to reappear a few years later.

Under the guise of distance and difference in this wonderfully exotic novel Flaubert challenges the way in which we see our own "reality," offering new perspectives and insights into our prejudiced and sordid world. Flaubert choses to describe and examine a distant place, in both time and space, a distant world where his own feelings and anxieties about his contemporary France could be felt.

Jean-Pierre Duquette asserts that Flaubert's choice of Carthage as the setting for one of his novels is not surprising for:

C'est qu'il s'agit pour lui d'une civilisation fascinante: après une ère de puissance et de richesse inouïe, Carthage s'est abîmée dans le néant de l'Histoire, elle a complètement disparu pour des siècles. Cet anéantissement total passionne Flaubert; c'est la reproduction idéale, pour lui, du mouvement universel: tout passe, tout disparaît.<sup>139</sup>

It could be added, however, that Flaubert felt that all disappeared only to reappear in some other time and place.

It has already been established that Flaubert felt he lived in the most decadent of times. Even a people as barbaric as the ones depicted in Salammbô did not seem so different from the ones Flaubert saw around him. He referred to his generation as "époque de transition, de décadence." (Correspondance, II, 308)

This imagery of France being compared to ancient times was not unique to Flaubert. It was common during this time to evoke Carthage and the fate of the Roman Empire as a warning to France that unless it changed from its moral and spiritual decline it was in danger of being destroyed. Even the word barbare was frequently used to describe different factions of the population.<sup>140</sup> Michelet, the historian Flaubert so greatly admired compared the rise of the working classes with a barbarian invasion: "Barbares! Oui, c'est-à-dire pleins d'une sève nouvelle, vivante et rajeunissante, Barbares, c'est-à-dire voyageurs en marche vers la Rome de l'avenir."<sup>141</sup>

Although Flaubert worried about France remaining in this constant state of lack of order he also thought that it could prove to be what shook the country out of its state of stasis and into action: "Nous avons peut-être besoin des barbares (emphasis mine). L'humanité...prend à ses agonies périodiques des infusions de sang."



(Correspondance, III, 10-11) Eventhough this imagery between ancient Carthage and France was common, Flaubert was the first person to explore it to such a great extent and with such emotion.

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The similarities between Carthage 300 B.C. and France in the mid 1800's are quite evident in Salammbô for Flaubert transposed many of the preoccupations of his era into his novel. When the novel first opens we witness the great banquet given to the Barbarians by the Grand Council of Carthage. The men gorge on all sorts of meats, fruits and delicacies as never been seen before. They eat lying face downwards, drink all the Greek wines and crash the vases and china. Soon panic strikes as rumors spread that they have been poisoned by the Grand Council. Although this incident related in Salammbô has no source in history, in 1848 France evidenced one of the worst cholera epidemics ever. Twenty thousand people in Paris alone died from the outbreak. The French were angry at the way that the government handled the situation and there were even rumors that the government had deliberately poisoned the water in order to reduce the population.

As a result of this cholera outbreak, blamed on a poor water and sewage system, Haussman was directed to redesign a water system to provide pure drinking water to the

public. Flaubert's aqueduct in Salammbô (having no historical source) is reminiscent of the aqueduct built to carry water from the Somme-Soude springs to Paris.

Echoing other contemporary preoccupations Flaubert continues to bring up situations in Carthage that are strikingly similar to those France found herself in in 1848. From the very beginning of the novel (during the banquet scene) we become aware of Carthage's political and economic situation. After a long war with Rome it has signed treaties that many in Carthage feel to be humiliating. They long for the old great city of Carthage. When Salammbô appears before the rowdy Barbarians she cries out in despair for the Carthage she once knew:

---Ah! pauvre Carthage! lamentable ville!  
 Tu n'as plus pour te défendre les hommes forts  
 d'autrefois, qui allaient au delà des océans  
 bâtir des temples sur les rivages. Tous les  
 pays travaillaient autour de toi, et les plaines  
 de la mer, labourées par tes rames, balançaient  
 tes moissons.<sup>142</sup>

No longer is this the strong Carthage, admired and respected by all other nations. France in 1848 found herself in precisely the same position. Many thought that under Louis-Napoleon they had lost their grandeur and place of honor in the world of nations. France found itself isolated and a source of suspicion and mistrust by the countries around it.

In his correspondence Flaubert expresses his feelings that although France had great riches and potential it was

unable to become a world power because of the destructive policies by its leaders:

Voilà deux siècles que la France marche dans cette voie de négation ascendante;...dans les mœurs on a pourchassé...les genres de vie libres, lesquelles sont les fécondes.  
(Correspondance, IV, 15)

Si on avait continué par la grande route de M. de Voltaire, au lieu de prendre par Jean-Jacques, le néo-catholicisme, le gothique et la fraternité, nous n'en serions pas là.  
(Correspondance, V, 344)

On n'est entouré que de canailles ou d'imbéciles dans ce bas monde (il y en a qui cumulent)  
(Correspondance, SI, 168)

In Salammbô we are aware of the fragmentation existing in the Carthaginian Council. The Ancients struggle to keep Hamilcar from becoming too powerful while Hannon, fueled by his jealousy, does everything in his power to keep Hamilcar in check. This non-cooperation almost loses the war for the Carthaginians. After Louis-Philippe was removed from power a similar troubled balance of power existed in France. The French Assembly, afraid that the President may try to change his position into a monarchy, determined that the presidency should be a non-renewable four-year term. The Assembly was divided each having their own personal aspirations and agendas. This tension between the Assembly and the President characterized the short life of the Republic until the coup d'état finally resolved the issue.

Although the siege of Carthage and the siege of Paris in 1848 were very different in both duration and force, one

similarity existing between the two is in that in both the entire population was directly involved in the crisis transpiring around them. In Carthage everyone including the women, children and slaves were called upon to fight and protect their city. In Paris in 1848 the rebel forces included people of all professions, economic and social positions. In l'Education sentimentale and Bouvard et Pécuchet Flaubert, in describing scenes during the Revolution of 1848, makes this quite clear. Young and old, rich and poor build the barricades, fight and fall dead alongside each other.

For Flaubert his age was in a state of decline no different, relatively speaking, than the decline and degradation of the Carthaginians: "La France s'enfonce doucement, comme un vaisseau pourri." (Correspondance, VII, 224)

To illustrate this idea of "vaisseau pourri" Flaubert uses the metaphor of putrefaction and decomposition. This slow rotting process can easily be identified in the character of Hannon for, for Flaubert, and not much unlike history, an individual's existence is a continuous process of decay. From birth to death the process is linear and irreversible:

Comme le néant nous envahit! A peine nés, la pourriture commence sur vous, de sorte que toute la vie n'est qu'un long combat qu'elle nous livre, et toujours de plus en plus triomphant de sa part jusqu'à la conclusion, la mort. Là, elle règne exclusive. (Correspondance, V, III)

In Salammbô Hannon's decaying body is carefully clothed and perfumed to conceal the rotting underneath it all. Flaubert's description of Hannon is that of a hideous, revolting figure that no amount of clothing or perfume could hide:

L'abondance de ses vêtements, son grand collier de pierres bleues, ses agrafes d'or et ses lourds pendants d'oreilles ne rendaient que plus hideuse sa difformité. On aurait dit quelque grosse idole ébauchée dans un bloc de pierre; car une lèpre pâle, étendue sur tout son corps, lui donnait l'apparence d'une chose inerte.  
(I, 773)

Each time he reappears further decaying of his body is evident. Thus when he is sitting with the Council we see that he is having to take more precautions to hide his disease:

Il avait peint avec du fard les ulcères de sa figure...Des linges imbibés d'un parfum gras qui dégouttelaient sur les dalles, enveloppaient ses mains, et sa maladie sans doute avait considérablement augmenté, car ses yeux disparaissaient sous les plis de ses paupières.  
(I, 846)

Finally there is the scene where Hannon is captured by the mercenaries. By this time his body is reduced to a hideous lump of rotting flesh. Upon raising him on the cross they have erected for him the barbarians are shocked at the sight of the body before them:

Ils arrachèrent ce qui lui restait de vêtements, et l'horreur de sa personne apparut. Des ulcères couvraient cette masse sans nom; la graisse de ses jambes lui cachait les ongles des pieds; il pendait à ses doigts comme des lambeaux verdâtres; et les larmes qui ruisselaient entre les tubercules de ses joues

donnaient à son visage quelque chose d'effroyablement triste, ayant l'air d'occuper plus de place que sur un autre visage humain.

Much like the disease that was rapidly consuming Hannon's body, Flaubert believed that there was a corrupting, decaying disease spreading throughout nineteenth-century France.

Flaubert's own state of melancholy is reflected in both *Mátho* and *Salammbô*. In 1859 he writes: "Peu de gens devineront combien il a fallu être triste pour entreprendre de ressusciter Carthage." (Correspondance, IV, 328) From the first time *Mátho* and *Salammbô* meet each other until their death they are overcome with a sense of sadness and despondency they cannot escape. Throughout the novel we read that "*Mátho* était retombé dans sa tristesse." (I, 764) He begs Spendius to tell him what to do saying: "Parle-moi! je suis malade! je veux guérir! j'ai tout essayé!" (I, 769) *Salammbô* echoes his same feelings telling her slave that "mon coeur est triste" (I, 782) and that "quelque fois, Taanach, il s'exhale du fond de mon être comme de chaudes bouffées, plus lourdes que les vapeurs d'un volcan...il m'étouffe, je vais mourir..." (I, 783)

*Mátho* is aware of the reason for his melancholy. He is consumed by thoughts of *Salammbô* and feels as if he is attached to her by a chain and that all his moves are ordained by her. (I, 769) Her eyes burn him, her voice

always present. She envelops him and penetrates his whole being and has become his soul. (I, 769) He also realizes (as Flaubert does of Carthage) that she is "lointaine et tout inaccessible!" (I, 769) Even so he cries out: "Mais je la veux! il me la faut! j'en meurs! A l'idée de l'étreindre dans mes bras, une fureur de joie m'emporte, et cependant je la hais! (I, 770) This crying out by Mâtho can also be seen as Flaubert's critique of the realist project for it is likewise "inaccessible" even if "je la veux."

Once again Flaubert brings in his nostalgia for the unattainable. Mâtho and Salammbô who are separated both politically and socially are inexorably drawn to each other until their death. Mâtho's death at the foot of the terrace with Salammbô looking down on him from the balustrade serves to underline this theme of the inaccessible.

Although inexplicably drawn to Mâtho, Salammbô, on the other hand, does not realize the reason for her anxiety. Instead she is consumed by her curiosity to see the zaimph: "Depuis longtemps j'hésitais; la curiosité de sa forme me dévore." (I, 786) Salammbô is driven by her desire to see, to possess the sacred veil. This yearning is so great that she agrees to travel to the Barbarian camp and gives herself to Mâtho in order to return the veil to Carthage. Overcome by a feeling more powerful than herself, she is

convinced that she is doing the will of the gods and surrenders herself to Mâtho:

Salammbô était envahie par une mollesse où elle perdait toute conscience d'elle-même. Quelque chose à la fois d'intime et de supérieur, un ordre des Dieux la forçait à s'y abandonner; des nuages la soulevaient, et, en défaillant, elle se renversa sur le lit dans les poils du lion. (I, 924)

One of the most beautiful and powerful passages of the novel is the tent scene where Flaubert captures the power of passion and desire to reduce a man such as Mâtho into a fragile, powerless creature. Salammbô is disillusioned that this man prostrate on his knees, crying and babbling like a child is the same man who has caused Carthage so much fear: "C'est donc là, songeait-elle, cet homme formidable qui fait trempler Carthage!" (I, 925) This is only the first of her disillusionments for soon afterwards when Mâtho falls asleep thus allowing her to take the veil, she does not feel the happiness she had anticipated:

Alors elle examina le zaïmph; et quand elle l'eut bien contemplé, elle fut surprise de ne pas avoir ce bonheur qu'elle s'imaginait autrefois. Elle restait mélancolique devant son rêve accompli. (I, 927)

One can compare these sentiments with those of other Flaubert characters. Emma Bovary cannot believe that she is living the life she had so long dreamed about: "--et elle ne pouvait s'imaginer à présent que ce calme où elle vivait fut le bonheur qu'elle avait rêvé."<sup>143</sup> In l'Education sentimentale Frédéric dreams about being with



different women only to find himself disillusioned at the accomplishment of his dream:

Alors Frédéric se rappela les jours déjà loin ou il enviait l'inexprimable bonheur de se trouver dans une de ces voitures, à côté d'une de ces femmes. Il le possédait, ce bonheur-là, et il n'en était pas plus joyeux.<sup>144</sup>

This disillusionment is, however, what brings about Salammbô's understanding of her unconscious desires for, as even Scharabarim knows, it is not her desire to discover the secret of Tanit that drives her. In the tent she finds not the knowledge she thinks she is seeking ("le secret de l'existence universelle") but sexual knowledge. After having met him in his tent she rejects the powers of both Mâtho and the veil and as a result: "...elle n'éprouvait pour lui aucune terreur. Les angoisses dont elle souffrait autrefois l'avaient abandonnée. Une tranquillité singulière l'occupait." (I, 959) Rejecting her old preoccupations with Tanit and Moloch she now, instead of fasting and taking care of the python and listening to the priest, spends her time looking across at the Barbarian camp hoping to see Mâtho: "Elle aurait voulu, malgré sa haine, revoir Mâtho. De tous les Carthaginois, elle était la seule personne, peut-être, qui lui eut parlé sans peur." (I, 960) Her feelings towards him are slowly revealed even to herself for even though she is constantly asking that he be killed "son horreur pour le Libyen diminuait." (I, 1004) Her obsession for Tanit is replaced by her obsession for

Mâtho: "Le souvenir de Mâtho la saisit; et elle ne résista pas au désir de savoir ce qu'il devenait." (I, 1004) It is only at his death that her 'education' comes to an end. As she looks onto his tortured body her real feelings for him come to life:

...et la conscience lui surgit de tout ce qu'il avait souffert pour elle. Bien qu'il agonisât, elle le revoyait dans sa tente, à genoux, lui entourant la taille de ses bras, balbutiant des paroles douces; elle avait soif de les sentir encore, de les entendre; elle allait crier. Il s'abattit à la renverse et ne bougea plus. (I, 1027)

As with Emma Bovary and Frédéric Moreau realization comes too late - at a point from where there is no turning back. Flaubert strongly believed that there is no way of escaping, we are destined to live and die and there is no way out. We are constantly frustrated in our attempts to know. Bouvard and Pécuchet finally decide to give up their quest for knowledge and return to copying in a feeling of despair when faced with the impossibility of ever truly understanding and knowing anything with any degree of certainty. Frédéric gives up his quest and becomes conformed with living a life of a 'petit bourgeois.' Emma Bovary commits suicide and Salammbô dies for "avoir touché au manteau de Tanit." (I, 1028)

The veil as a metaphor is quite important in Flaubert's project. The veil, much like language, is that which reveals and hides at the same time. It reveals through a distortion, always concealing and suppressing.

Salammbô's desire for the revelation of the ultimate truth, Flaubert's desire for the possibility of textually unmediated representation are both linked to the fundamental impotence of all desire. There is always this frustration between desire and reality, between the hoped for and the possible.

When Flaubert labeled his project "insensé" he must have had this in mind. The hoped for revelation that would come about with the coming together of history and fiction in more of a blinding rather than revealing project. The nostalgia for antiquity veils the true desire which is that of an unmediated form of writing. Donato explains Flaubert's desires as: "a language and a mode of representation that would have an original and linguistically unmediated relation to its objects. Nevertheless, Flaubert also knows such a language to be unobtainable."<sup>145</sup> As Flaubert reminds us: "Triste misère du langage! comparer des étoiles à des diamants."<sup>146</sup>

## NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

<sup>99</sup> Gustave Flaubert, Correspondence (Paris: Conard, 1926-1933) IV, 164. All subsequent references to Flaubert's correspondence will be found within the text.

<sup>100</sup> Eugenio Donato, "Flaubert and the Question of History: Notes for a Critical Anthology,": Modern Language Notes 91.4-5 (1976): 869.

<sup>101</sup> Koenraad W. Swart, The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964) 2.

<sup>102</sup> Georg Lukács, "Salammbô," Flaubert: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Raymond Giraud (Englewood Cliffs, New York: Prentice-Hall, 1964) 147.

<sup>103</sup> Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>104</sup> Donato 869.

<sup>105</sup> Donato 854.

<sup>106</sup> Gustave Flaubert, Carnets de voyage, le 12 au 13 juin 1858, II, 209, in Oeuvres complètes: Voyages et Carnets de voyage, Oeuvres de jeunesse, ed. Société des Etudes Littéraires Françaises (Paris: Club de l'Honnête Homme, 1973) 2 vols.

<sup>107</sup> Donato 855.

<sup>108</sup> Hayden White, Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) 124.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted by Anne Green, Flaubert and the Historical Novel: Salammbô reassessed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 23.

<sup>110</sup> Jean-Pierre Duquette, "Flaubert, l'Histoire et l'histoire," Langages de Flaubert, ed. Michel Issacharoff (Paris: Lettres Modernes Minard, 1973), 205.

<sup>111</sup> Victor Brombert, The Novels of Flaubert: A Study of Themes and Techniques (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) 7.

<sup>112</sup> Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve: Nouveaux Lundis (Paris: Michel Levy Frères, 1865) IV, 89.

<sup>113</sup> Sainte-Beuve 49, 88, 65.

<sup>114</sup> Sainte-Beuve 40-41, 89, 79.

<sup>115</sup> Sainte-Beuve 80, 82, 93.

<sup>116</sup> "A Sainte-Beuve," le 23-24 décembre 1862, in Flaubert Oeuvres (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, 1952) Appendice, I, 1031.

<sup>117</sup> Flaubert, Flaubert Oeuvres I, 1037.

<sup>118</sup> Flaubert, Flaubert Oeuvres I, 1034.

<sup>119</sup> Flaubert, Flaubert Oeuvres I, 1039.

<sup>120</sup> Flaubert, Flaubert Oeuvres I, 1032.

<sup>121</sup> Flaubert, Flaubert Oeuvres I, 1038.

<sup>122</sup> Said 190-91.

<sup>123</sup> George Sand, Quoted by Edouard Maynial, Flaubert (Paris: Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1943) 121.

<sup>124</sup> "A Poulet-Malassis," le 13 décembre 1862, Lettre 743, IV, 129, Correspondance générale, Oeuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire, ed. Jacques Crepet (Paris: Editions Louis Conard et Jacques Lambert (1923-1953) 19 vols.

<sup>125</sup> Quoted by René Dumesnil, "Introduction," Salammbô, in Flaubert Oeuvres I, 737.

<sup>126</sup> Quoted by Dumesnil, "Introduction," Salammbô, I, 737.

<sup>127</sup> Dumesnil I, 731.

<sup>128</sup> Albert Thibaudet, Gustave Flaubert (Paris: Gallimard, 1935) 417.

<sup>129</sup> Lukács 147.

<sup>130</sup> Maurice Nadeau, Gustave Flaubert écrivain (Paris: Denoel, 1969) 225-26.

<sup>131</sup> Annie Goldmann, "Salammbô ou l'histoire absente," Revue de L'Institut de Sociologie (1973): 613-24.

<sup>132</sup> Denis Porter, "Aestheticism versus the Novel: The Example of Salammbô," Novel: A Forum on Fiction 4.2 (Winter 1971): 102-103.

<sup>133</sup> Marilyn Gaddis Rose, "Salammbô: A Meaningful Novel," Novel: A Forum on Fiction 6.1 (Fall 1972): 66-69.

<sup>134</sup> Victor Brombert, The Novels of Flaubert: A Study of Themes and Techniques (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) 92.

<sup>135</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Idiot de la famille: Gustave Flaubert de 1821 à 1857 vol. III (Paris, 1971-2) 450.

<sup>136</sup> Christa Bevernis, "Historicité et actualité dans le roman de Flaubert Salammbô," Flaubert et Maupassant: Ecrivains normands (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981) 257.

<sup>137</sup> Green 16.

<sup>138</sup> Jean Rousset, "Positions, distances, perspectives dans Salammbô," Travail de Flaubert (Paris: Seuil, 1983) 79.

<sup>139</sup> Duquette 204.

<sup>140</sup> Green 60.

<sup>141</sup> As quoted by Green 61.

<sup>142</sup> Gustave Flaubert, Salammbô, Flaubert Oeuvres (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, 1952) I, 752. All subsequent references to Salammbô will be taken from this edition and will be found within the text.

<sup>143</sup> Gustave Flaubert, Flaubert Oeuvres, Albert Thibaudet and René Dumesnil, ed. (Paris: La Pléiade, 1951) I, 361.

<sup>144</sup> Gustave Flaubert, l'Education sentimentale, ed. Edouard Maynial (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1964) 299.

<sup>145</sup> Donato 870.

<sup>146</sup> As quoted by Donato 870.

## CONCLUSION

Blow, bugle, blow set the wild ECHOES flying  
Blow, bugle, answer ECHOES, dying, dying, dying.

Tennyson, "The Princess III"

As we have already established, history and literature have shared a unique relationship through the years. Both history and literature are indebted to each other for this association has been mutually enriching. Their relationship comes from the fact that they both use language as a form of expression and in so doing are confronted with the impossibility of words to express what is really felt or intended. Both the historian and the novelist are involved in the creative arts in that they both begin with knowledge of the outside world and then, to different degrees, fuse fact and the familiar with imagination, to strive to arrive at conclusions. It is both the historian and the novelist's ultimate aim to provide, in Russel Nye's words: "man with knowledge of himself by knowing what men have been and done, -- and, hopefully, perhaps why."<sup>147</sup> Both history and literature are records of our external and internal experiences in life. Within their own expectations and limitations they attempt to rediscover, to grasp life that was before us. In other words, the historian and the novelist dip the madeleine into the "cup of life" to recapture and to feel that which once was.

In Flaubert's novels the process of mimesis becomes a discovery procedure, or as Christopher Prendergast defines it, a "mechanism for representing the movements of



Nature."<sup>148</sup> Paul Ricoeur claims that mimesis is a form of our "being-with-others," thus stressing the public character of mimesis.<sup>149</sup> Believing that the present is but an echo of the past, Flaubert attempts to comprehend the struggles of life by "being-with-others" who walked the same paths before him. This act of reliving is important as a means of coming to terms with who we are -as a means of identity. This is especially true for the nineteenth century.

Although a conclusive definition of history is impossible, one that comes closest to the way I would define it is given by Linda Orr in Headless History. In her conclusion she gives the following definition:

History is not only the culture's way of making and remaking sense of itself, but an investigation into the mechanisms, the seductions of a specific logic or reasoning. It is also the challenge of unthinking the presuppositions upon which the acceptable explanations and interpretations of our culture are formed -- "counterintuitive knowledge" or the historical imagination open to the possibility of difference and change.<sup>150</sup>

This manner of looking at history as a way of understanding oneself is quite evident in Flaubert's novels which are like a mirror placed before his generation. His writings are a critique of present thought, of social and historical practices. His is the ultimate of self-reflecting, self-conscious narrative that looks at his period in history with disgust, disdain and total disillusionment. The reasons for this disillusionment may

be, in Flaubert's case, very personal stemming from the economic conditions in which he constantly found himself, his persistent bad health or as Koenraad Swart argues in The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France a mood in France that began to gain ground at the end of the eighteenth century and remained through most of the nineteenth century.<sup>151</sup>

Flaubert's views are not only evident from a close reading of his novels but also through his abundant correspondence in which he expresses his innermost feelings. Venting his hatred for his generation he writes:

Ah!, quelles canailleries s'étaient sur le monde! Quand donc cela finira-t-il? Quand donc viendra l'ouragan pour nous soulager de ce fardeau?<sup>152</sup>

For Flaubert the world around him is hostile and despised. The Revolution of 1848, which at one time had represented a hopeful possibility, in retrospect is seen by him as totally stupid and irrelevant.

Flaubert will rely on his novels to try to understand his world around him. The characters in his novels all represent an individual trying to understand himself, his world and his dreams within a definite historical situation. They all reach, however, the same pessimistic conclusion - true knowledge is not attainable, there are no answers to life's problems pressed upon us. In his correspondence Flaubert justifies his refusal to reach conclusions: "Je vois...que les plus grands génies et les

plus grandes oeuvres n'ont jamais conclu."  
(Correspondances, V, 111)

In all three novels L'Education sentimentale, Bouvard et Pécuchet, and Salammbô Flaubert demonstrates the cyclical characteristic of history. This is in direct opposition to the straight-line progressive theory of history that postulates that every generation, every epoch in history progresses toward an ultimate perfection that is denied to the present generation.

The French Revolution of 1848, that espoused as its ideals liberté, égalité, et fraternité established the nineteenth-century bourgeois society in its place. Flaubert, like many of his countrymen, realized the contradictions in the Revolution and decried it as totally false, ineffective and regressive. Living in the shadow of what was in his opinion one failed revolution after another his outlook on life became more and more disillusioned. Thus in L'Education sentimentale Flaubert shows the French Revolution as a pathetic idealism of a lost generation where ideals struggle with the givens of nature and human limitations only to end up in disillusionment. The novel is not just the story of Frédéric Moreau's failures but more importantly society's failure as well. Through Frédéric's inaction Flaubert shows how inaction and indifference do not affect the process of destruction. Whether one avoids confrontation and involvement like

Frédéric or whether one attempts to triumph through action like Dussardier the end result is the same. Flaubert believed that there is no possibility of finding real solutions, of possessing self-realization, of finding happiness. The author of L'Education sentimentale will write that: "Le bonheur n'est qu'une illusion," (Correspondances, I, 201) and that: "Je hais cette recherche de béatitude terrestre...manie médiocre et dangereuse;...le bonheur est un mythe inventé par le diable pour nous désespérer." (Correspondances, III, 403)

At the end of the novel Frédéric is reduced to memories of his past of the days where if there had been any happiness at all: "C'est là ce que nous avons eu de meilleur!" (p. 427)

By using the imperfect tense almost exclusively in these last four pages of the novel Flaubert highlights the stasis, the exhaustion of Frédéric Moreau's story. Richard Terdiman describes the French imperfect tense as the: "narrative mode of choice for writers who no longer believe that their characters' hopes can be realized in the world of concrete social activity."<sup>153</sup> In L'Education sentimentale there is the complete closing down of all human possibilities.

In Bouvard et Pécuchet we are once again confronted with Flaubert's indignation in the face of what he considered the scandal of existence. This time, however,

Flaubert will turn to comedy in order to better express his hatred for the stupidity of his age. While preparing to write his last novel Flaubert writes George Sand stating the role comedy will play in his novel:

Mais le comique est la seule consolation de la vertu! Il y a d'ailleurs une manière de la prendre qui est haute: c'est ce que je vais tâcher de faire dans mes deux bonshommes. Ne craignez pas que ce soit trop réaliste!...je pousserai l'idée à outrance.  
(Correspondances, VII, 132)

Bouvard and Pécuchet are perpetual victims who go from one failure to another in their boundless quest of life. Just as Faust, Flaubert is driven to nausea by this limitless and futile quest for further knowledge.

Like the author of Ecclesiastes, Flaubert believes that "there is nothing new under the sun." All is "Vanity, vanity" -- all is futile. The cycles of history, from which we have no way to escape, will eventually bring us, through death, back to our place of beginning. Bouvard and Pécuchet go through all their experience, their failures and misfortunes to end up just as they had begun - as copistes. Having suffered from the erosion of time in the end they are worse off than when they began. In the end their innocence is gone for there is no longer the illusion, or hope for a better future.

Once again we are confronted with this idea of stasis, of inactivity. In their impassioned effort to conclude, to reach conclusions in their search for knowledge, they find

themselves unable to do so. Jefferson Humphries defines Bouvard and Pécuchet as: "...tropes of it themselves. They are for him (Flaubert) epitomes of bourgeois sensibility, the stupidity of wishing to know, to conclude, to totalize."<sup>154</sup>

In his novel Salammbô Flaubert sets his novel distant in time and space from nineteenth-century France. In Salammbô we find repeated the same things Flaubert was trying so desperately to flee in the age he loathed. Flaubert attempts to distance himself from the present, by treating it as a past, in order to acquire some understanding of the problems of his age. Once again he is confronted with the inability to comprehend the mystery that is life.

Returning to his theory of historical periodicity he finds that the Carthage of two thousand years before him was the same as France of the nineteenth century. The masses have been and will always be a stupid herd and that man has always been and will forever be cruel and inhumane.

As evidenced in the leprous body of Hannon, Flaubert believed that the nineteenth-century was succumbing to a rapidly spreading disease that would not end until it had brought about death and destruction.

Even though L'Education sentimentale, Bouvard et Pécuchet and Salammbô are quite different in nature they all are reflections of Flaubert's bitter views on life.

Through these novels he demonstrates how in looking at history we may come to a greater sense of self, of identity but we will not like what we see.

The common theme that runs through Flaubert's novels is that we find ourselves subject to history and deadly time with no way out. For Flaubert to dream about the possibility of a better society is to be naïve for no one can get out from under the grasps of history. His own deterministic view of life leads him to believe that we all must function within our own limitations within which we must live and finally die.

We began our "odyssey" quoting Tennyson:

O love, they die in yon rich sky,  
     They faint on hill or field or river  
 Our ECHOES roll from soul to soul,  
     And grow for ever and for ever.

This is an optimistic plea that history be passed on progressing from "soul to soul." But at the end of our "journey" we hear the final words of the same poem:

Blow, bugle, blow set the wild ECHOES flying,  
 Blow, bugle, answer ECHOES, dying, dying,  
     dying.

Our hopes and aspirations ascending to the sky end up dying, dying, dying.

In an interview for the "New York Times" in 1978 Roland Barthes said that Literature is the Question without the Answer. Flaubert would agree with Barthes while adding that History is no Answer but an ECHO.

## NOTES TO CONCLUSION

<sup>147</sup> Russell B. Nye, "History and Literature: Branches of the Same Tree," Essays on History and Literature, Ed. Robert H. Bremner (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1966) 153.

<sup>148</sup> Christopher Prendergast, The Order of Mimesis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 21.

<sup>149</sup> Prendergast 20.

<sup>150</sup> Linda Orr, Headless History: Nineteenth-Century French Historiography of the Revolution (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) 159.

<sup>151</sup> Koenraad W. Swart, The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964).

<sup>152</sup> Gustave Flaubert, Correspondance (Paris: Conard, 1926-1933) III, 349. All subsequent references to Flaubert's correspondence will be found within the text.

<sup>153</sup> Richard Terdiman, The Dialectics of Isolation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) 71.

<sup>154</sup> Jefferson Humphries, "Bouvard et Pécuchet and the Fable of the Stable Irony," French Forum 10 (1985): 154.



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## VITA

Deborah Lee Trott Pierce was born in Meridian, Mississippi on June 27, 1955. At the age of two she moved with her family to Brazil where she attended Brazilian schools and took her English courses by correspondence from the University of Nebraska. After graduating from Brazilian high school she attended the American School of Recife where she graduated Valedictorian of her class in 1973. She attended Mississippi College majoring with High Honors in Modern Languages in 1977. While at Mississippi College she spent her Junior year with The Experiment for International Living in Toulouse, France. In 1981 she received her M.A. from Mississippi State University graduating Summa Cum Laude. She has received two French Government scholarships to study in Annecy and Tours.

Married to Philip Pierce, they have two sons. James Edward, six and Patrick, two. They reside in Clinton, MS, where Debbie has been teaching French at Mississippi College since 1979. Her interests include promoting international awareness and understanding through professional and student exchanges, playing the piano and guitar, taking groups to South America and Europe but most of all just having time to be with her family.

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

**Candidate:** Deborah Lee Trott Pierce

**Major Field:** French

**Title of Dissertation:** Echoes of the Past in Flaubert's L'Education Sentimentale, Bouvard et Pecuchet and Salammbô

**Approved:**

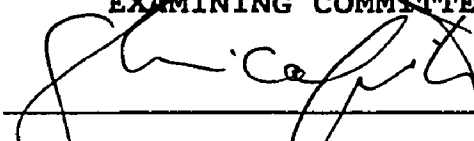


Major Professor and Chairman

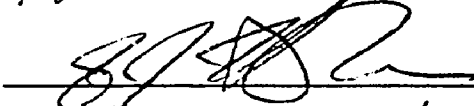


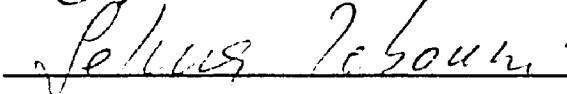
Dean of the Graduate School

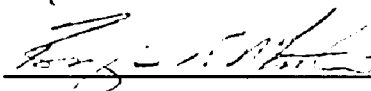
**EXAMINING COMMITTEE:**











**Date of Examination:**

5 November 1991