A STUDY OF FLAUBERT'S ROMANTIC AFFINITIES AS REVEALED IN HIS LETTERS AND WORKS

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Ruth H. Skwarek

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By

Ruth H. Skwarek

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INTRODUCTION

Although Gustave Flaubert wrote several novels and short stories, he is remembered chiefly for Madame Bovary, his first novel. In it, he depicted the character of Emma Bovary with such photographic realism that critics have called Madame Bovary the perfect realistic novel and Flaubert the father of realism. So great has been the subsequent influence of this novel on other writers that Somerset Maugham has said of Flaubert: "He created the modern realistic novel and directly or indirectly influenced all the writers of fiction since his day." Not only did his novel influence writers, but he wrote what he observed with such dispassionately careful and scholarly detail that psychiatry has coined the word bovaryism.

In spite of the fact that Flaubert's name is synonymous with realism because of his novel Madame Bovary, his works do contain both realistic and romantic elements. Critics generally agree that his collected works contain two romantic novels and two romantic short stories: Salammbô, La Tentation de Saint Antoine, Hérodias, and La Légende de Saint Julien L'Hospitalier. Not one of these achieved the

renown of Madame Bovary, although each one, when it appeared, was almost as controversial as Madame Bovary. La Tentation de Saint Antoine was rejected by both the public and the critics. Critics generally agree that the story of Saint Antoine is buried amid verbosity, wild visions, and a kind of cumulative display of all his erudition. Salammbô was rejected by the critics, but sold well. St. Beuve said that, when reading Salammbô, one needed a lexicon to decipher the mass of exotic words and archeological terms. These two novels are, in short, the very antithesis of Madame Bovary. They are different, too, from each other. Each story utilizes a different approach, even if there are certain techniques that are similar, and they are classed as either romantic or realistic.

How, then, does it happen that Flaubert, who achieved an enviable classical style of writing in Madame Bovary through restraint and simplicity, plunges into the colossal splendor of oriental pomp, exotic religion, savage wars, and barbaric characters all worthy of a Hollywood epic in his Salammbô and Hérodias? How could he lose himself in the intricacies of Saint Anthony's visions so that they become a blurred mass to the average reader? Why should Salammbô and Saint Antoine be heavy reading

when Madame Bovary, the very essence of middle class stupidity and monotony, moves quickly and smoothly and holds the interest of the reader? The answer lies in the duality of the man's character, the age in which he lived, his own environment, and his theory of writing. This is revealed in his nine volumes of Correspondance, and, in turn, reflects itself in his fiction.

It is the thesis of this paper that Flaubert was basically a romantic. He repeatedly said so in his Correspondance. He He was raised during the height of the period of romanticism. His works, both romantic and realistic, contain elements of realism and romanticism. He believed in an impersonal and accurate depiction of his subject. Flaubert never wrote anything that had not been carefully researched before he began to write. His romantic works are romantic because they are remote in time and place; however, they do contain elements of realism because Flaubert's approach to these historical settings was scholarly and as accurate as could be. Conversely, the realistic novels have romantic characters, and these characters are placed in a hard, realistic world. The realistic novels were also carefully researched before Flaubert began to write. Especially in Madame Bovary does one find dialogue that is superbly real;

yet, it is the romantic conversation of pseudo-romantic people in an ironic criss-crossing of trite dialogue.

The purpose of this paper is to study Flaubert's romantic affinities as revealed in his Correspondance, La Tentation de Saint Antoine, Salammbô, Hérodias, La Légende de Saint Julien L'Hospitalier, Madame Bovary, and L'Éducation sentimentale. This will be done by analyzing and comparing his letters with each of the aforementioned works and by comparing certain characters and scenes in the romantic works with those in the realistic works.

I INFLUENCING FACTORS

Although Flaubert left a voluminous collection of his correspondence, one does not find a detailed explanation in his letters as to how and why he decided to write Madame Bovary; however, it is known that just before he left for North Africa, Flaubert did complete a novel about Saint Anthony, an early Egyptian Christian. This novel, the reader is given to understand from a few meager gleanings in the Correspondance, was a failure. Unfortunately, Flaubert makes only a few vague references to the first version of La Tentation de Saint Antoine, as in the following letter to his mother:

> Lorsque je pense cependant à mon avenir (cela m'arrive rarement, car je ne pense à rien du tout, contrairement aux grandes pensées que l'on doit avoir devant les ruines), bref, lorsque je me demande: Que ferai-je au retour? Qu'écrirai-Je? Que vaudrai-je alors? Où faudra-t-il vivre? Quelle ligne suivre, etc., etc., je suis plein de doutes et d'irrésolutions. D'âge en âge j'ai toujours ainsi reculé à me poser vis-à-vis de moi-même, et je crèverai à soixante ans avant d'avoir une opinion sur mon compte, ni peut-être fait une oeuvre qui m'ait donné ma mesure. Saint Antoine est-il bon ou mauvais? Voilà par exemple ce que je me demande souvent. Lequel de moi ou des autres s'est trompé? Au reste, je ne m'inquiète guère de tout cela; je vis comme une plante, je me pénètre de soleil, de lumière, de couleurs et de

grand air, je mange; voilà tout.[1]

The letter was written to his mother while Flaubert was in North Africa. It is obvious from this letter that he had been badly disappointed. His faith in his own literary talents had also been badly shaken. Yet, immediately after his return to France, he began his Madame Bovary and left no explanation as to why he chose such a subject for his new novel.

If, however, Flaubert gives the reader no inkling for his change from a romantic, historical novel to a contemporary realistic novel, Maxime du Camp gives his own version of what transpired in his Souvenirs Littéraires. It is from du Camp's account of this episode in his memoirs that critics and biographers have gotten their source material on how Flaubert came to write Madame Bovary, albeit each writer emphasizes the fact that du Camp's accounts were not always reliable.

René Dusmenil, in his Flaubert et Madame Bovary, quoted Maxime du Camp at great length. Du Camp maintained, according to Dumesnil, that Flaubert invited du Camp and Louis Bouilhet to his home after he had completed La Ten-

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1. Oeuvres complètes de Gustave Flaubert, Paris: Louis Conard; Correspondance, nouvelle édition augmentée, 1926-1933, II, 146.

tation de Saint Antoine. There, Flaubert read his manuscript to Bouilhet and du Camp and asked them for a criticism of the work. Bouilhet and du Camp privately agreed the novel was a romantic exaggeration and should be burned. Bouilhet was the spokesman and told Flaubert that he, Flaubert, had become enchanted with lyricism to the extent that his novel was bombastic and absurd. In order to eradicate these faults, Flaubert should write a book like Balzac's Le Cousin Pons. Bouilhet further suggested that Flaubert use for his subject the story of Madame "Delauney," the wife of a local doctor, as a subject for his book. It should be added that the lady's mother-in-law, again according to du Camp, was a friend of Flaubert's mother.[2]

In the meantime, Flaubert left for North Africa. The letters of this period contained no information about Madame Bovary. During his travels he wrote his impressions of the places and people he had seen. In his letters of this period and also in his Notes de Voyages, it is possible to discern the style he was to develop in Madame Bovary. Here, as in Madame Bovary, Flaubert uses contrast to the fullest.

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2. Dusmenil, René, Madame Bovary de Gustave Flaubert, Paris, Hachette, 1958, 44-50.

One is especially struck by his feeling for the ironic, the ugly, and the absurd, in contrast to superb description of the color and beauty of the Middle East. This is especially true in his accounts of the Egyptian dancers[3] and his account of a night with Hichiouk Hanem, the Egyptian courtesan.[4]

During the almost five years it took to write Madame Bovary (September 1851 - April 30, 1856), Flaubert shut himself off from his social world and maintained a life of ascetic discipline in order to concentrate wholly on this new novel. His friends became concerned about him. Maxime du Camp suggested that Flaubert come to Paris and join the literary circles of Paris. Flaubert, who, at heart, preferred the provinces, refused du Camp's invitation with some asperity:

> Mais pourquoi aussi recommences-tu ta rengaine et viens-tu toujours prêcher le régime à un homme qui a la prétention de se croire en bonne santé? Je trouve ton affliction à mon endroit comique, voilà tout. Est-ce je te blâme, moi, de vivre à Paris, et d'avoir publié, etc.? Lorsque tu voulais même, dans un temps, venir habiter une maison voisine de la mienne, à la campagne, ai-je applaudi à ce projet? T'ai-je jamais conseillé de mener ma vie, et voulu mener ton ingénieuse à la lisière, lui disant: "Mon petit ami, il ne faut pas manger de cela, s'habiller de cette mannière, venir ici, etc.?" À chacun donc ce qui lui convient. Toutes les plantes ne veulent pas la même culture. Et, d'ailleurs toi à Paris, moi ici, nous aurons

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3. Oeuvres Completes, Notes de voyage, I, 156-160.
4. Ibid., I, 137-139.

> beau faire; si nous n'avons pas l'étoile, si la vocation nous manque, rien ne viendra; et si au contraire elle existe, à quoi bon se tourmenter du reste?[5]

Tou Louise Colet he later defended his way of life with some advice for artists who wish to be both creative and happy at the same time:

> Oui, je soutiens (et ceci pour moi, doit d'être un dogme pratique dans la vie d'artiste) qu' il faut faire dans son existence deux parts: vivre en bourgeois et penser en demi-dieu.[6]

If Flaubert's friends thought he was wrong to shut himself off from the social whirl around him, Flaubert himself was sure in his own mind that this was what he needed in order to concentrate on his new work. It was a most severe discipline he forced himself to follow and an essential one, as Dumesnil explains:

> Mais, pour la rigueur de la discipline sévères: le travail en est le fondement essentiel, et non point un travail laissant à l'esprit quelque liberté, mais la tâche journalière, délimitée, tracée, d'avance comme un sillon qu'il faut creuser, sans foie et sans que cesse l'effort.[7]

Only one person seems to have visited Flaubert during this time, and that one person is Louis Bouilhet. He came almost every weekend to Croisset to read and to criticize

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5. Ibid., Correspondance, II, 451-52 (Italics Author's Own).
6. Ibid., III, 305.
7. Madame Bovary de Gustave Flaubert, 36.

what Flaubert had written during the week. Flaubert seems to have leaned heavily upon Bouilhet for advice during this period, for when he rejected du Camp's offer to publish parts of La Tentation de Saint Antoine, he discussed the matter first with Bouilhet and accepted Bouilhet's advice not to publish any of it:

> L'objection de Bouilhet à la publication est que j'ai mis là tous mes défauts et quelques-unes de mes qualités. Selon lui, ça me calomnie. Dimanche prochain nous lirons tous les dieux; peut-être est-ce qui ferait le mieux un ensemble. Pas plus là-dessus que sur la question principale, je n'ai d'opinion à moi. Je ne sais que penser. Je suis comme l'âne de Buridan.[8]

Again and again, one finds throughout the letters of this period Flaubert's constant reference to Bouilhet's weekly visits to Croisset and Bouilhet's criticism of his work as it progressed. Although he may have complained and agonized when Bouilhet didn't like what he had written, it is obvious that he felt a need for and respected Bouilhet's advice and criticism. There is a steady flow of such references throughout the Correspondance:

> Bouilhet, qui est venu dimanche dernier à 3 h. comme je venais de t'écrire ma lettre, trouve que je suis dans le ton et espère que ce sera bon. Dieu l'entende! Mais ça prend des proportions formidables comme temps. À coup sûr, je n'aurai point fini à l'entrée de l'hiver prochain.[9]

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8. Oeuvres complete, Correspondance, II, 320.
9. Ibid., II, 361.

> J'ai fait, depuis que tu m'as vu 25 pages net (25 pages en six semaines.) Elles ont été dures à rouler, je les lirai ce soir à Bouilhet.[10]

When Flaubert had almost completed his Madame Bovary, he wrote again to Louise Colet somewhat sadly, as follows, that Bouilhet's visits would soon end:

> J'ai fait ce matin mes adieux à Bouilhet; le voilà parti pour moi; il reviendra samedi, je le reverrai peut-être encore deux autres fois; mais c'est fini, les vieux dimanches sont rompus.[11]

Whether or not it was Louis Bouilhet who suggested Madame Bovary as a subject for a novel, it is apparent thoughout Flaubert's letters that Flaubert respected Bouilhet's literary opinion and his ability as a writer. Certainly he paid Bouilhet the finest accolade possible in the following letter to Louise Colet:

> Voilà un homme, ce Bouilhet. Quelle nature complète! Si j'étais capable d'être jaloux de quelqu'un, je le serais du lui; avec la vie abrutissante qu'il a menée et les bouillons qu'il a bus, je serais certainement un imbécile maintenant ou bien au bagne, ou pendu par mes propres mains les souffrances du dehors l'ont rendu meilleur, cela est fait des bois de haute futaie, ils grandissent dans la vent et poussent à travers le silex et le granit, tandis que les espaliers, avec tout leur fumier et leurs paillassons, crèvent alignés sur un mur et en plein soleil. Enfin aime-le bien,[12] voilà tout ce que je peux t'en dire et ne doute jamais de lui.

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10. Ibid., II, 344.
11. Flaubert, Gustave, Correspondance, Paris, G. Charpentier et Cie, Editeurs, 1889, II, 339.
12. Ibid., II, 339.

Caroline Commanville, Flaubert's niece, was a child during the time Flaubert worked on Madame Bovary. She, too, recalled the regular visits of Bouilhet and made special mention of the fact that the two men spent the weekends discussing the manuscript in her preface to the Correspondance:

> Il restait ainsi plusiers mois de suite ne voyant personne que Louis Bouilhet, son intime ami, qui, chaque dimanche, venait jusqu'au lundi matin. Une partie de la nuit se passait à lire le travail de la semaine. Quelles bonnes heures d'expansion! C'étaient de grands cris, des exclamations sans fin, des controverses pour le rejet ou le maintien d'une épithète, des enthousiasmes réciproques![13]

From the above quoted letters and preface by Caroline Commanville, it is certain there is more than a germ of truth in what du Camp had written about Louis Bouilhet's suggestion that Flaubert write a contemporary novel about someone they were both acquainted with. That it happened exactly as du Camp has written in his memoirs has, as yet, been neither substantiated nor proven incorrect.

Critics have usually pointed out the fact that Flaubert was both a romantic and a realist and have seldom emphasized his awareness, indeed his penetrating self-analysis,

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13. Ibid., I, xvi-xvii.

of this conflict. As this insight deepened, he developed his unique style, wrote his rules for writing, and described the literary trends of the future in his letters. He wrote as he did because he understood his own temperament and prejudices, learned to discipline his writing, and consciously tried to create the modern literary masterpiece.

To neglect Flaubert's insight into such a fundamental inner conflict is to underestimate the greatness of Madame Bovary as a great feat of literary craftsmanship. For Madame Bovary's strength and beauty lie, not in a sublimation of romanticism, but in the style and technique he used to portray pseudo-romantic middle-class characters in a contemporary setting.

When Flaubert decided to write Madame Bovary, he was well aware of a duality in his make-up: the romantic versus the analyst. He loved romanticism, and, as he put it, he was infatuated with lyricism, eagle flights of imagination, sonorities of phrase, and the exotic. On the other hand, he was a seeker of truth, of the hard facts. He clearly and concisely sums up this ambivalence in the following letter to Louise Colet:

> Il y a en moi, littérairement parlant, deux bonshommes distincts: un qui est épris de gueulades, de lyrisme, de grands vols d'aigle, de toutes les sonorités de la

> phrase et des sommets de l'idée; un autre qui creuse et qui fouille le vrai tant qu'il peut, qui aime à accuser le petit fait aussi puissamment que le grand, qui voudrait vous faire sentir presque matériellement les choses qu'il reproduit. Celui-là aime à rire et se plaît dans les animalités de l'homme.[14]

To du Camp he confessed to a love of the vague and misty. His youth had been steeped in an opiate of boredom:

> Si tu savais tous les invisibles filets d'inaction qui entourent mon corps et tous les brouillards qui me flottent dans la cervelle! J'éprouve souvent une fatigue à périr d'ennui lorsqu'il faut faire n'importe quoi, et c'est à travers de grands efforts que je finis par saisir l'idée la plus nette. Ma jeunesse m'a trempé dans je ne sais quel opium d'embêtement pour le reste de mes jours. J'ai la vie en haine. Le mot est parti, qu'il reste! Oui, la vie, et tout ce qui me rappelle qu'il la faut subir.[15]

Not only did Flaubert recognize his love of the exotic, not only did he understand this ambivalence in his personality, he was perfectly well aware of how this duality reflected itself in his writing. He well knew that his sensitivity, depth of feeling, flights of imagination, love of the exotic and the grotesque, all his romantic inclination and passions, weakened whatever talent he had for writing. He knew now that he wrote badly what he loved best: the colossal, the epic, and antiquity. Again, it is to Louise

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14. Oeuvres complètes, Correspondance, II, 343-4.
15. Ibid., II, 321.

Colet that he wrote all this and explained that Bovary will be completely impersonal:

> Oui, c'est une étrange chose que la plume d'un coté et l'individu de l'autre. Y a-t-il quelqu'un qui aime mieux l'antiquité que moi, qui l'ait plus rêvée, et fait tout ce qu'il a pu pour la connaître? Et je suis pourtant un des hommes (en mes livres) les moins antiques qu'il y ait. À me voir d'aspect, on croirait que je dois faire de l'épique, du drame, de la brutalité de faits, et je ne me plais au contraire que dans les sujets d'analyse, d'anatomie, si je peux dire. Au fond, je suis l'homme des brouillards, et c'est à force de patience et d'étude que je me suis débarrassé de toute la graisse blanchâtre que noyait mes muscles. Les livres que j'ambitionne le plus de faire sont justement ceux pour lesquels j'ai le moins de moyens. Bovary, en ce sens, aura été un tour de force inouï et dont moi seul jamais aurai conscience: sujet, personnage, effect, etc., tout est hors de moi. Cela devra me faire un grand pas par la suite.[16]

If this ambivalence tended to distort his perspective, Flaubert was sensitive to the form and balance of art. He devoted his life to art. It was his cult of the "plastic art" which drove him to live as he did:

> C'est la punition de cette beauté plastique qu'admire Theo, et si je reste inédit, ce sera le châtiment de toutes les couronne que je me suis tressées dans ma primevère.[17]

From the above quotation, it is obvious that Flaubert did not write merely to be published. He desired to create a

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16. Ibid., III, 3.
17. Ibid., II, 322.

great work of art, an enduring masterpiece. He would reiterate this desire on other occasions as in the following:

> Être connu n'est pas ma principale affaire, cela ne satisfait entièrement que les très médiocres vanités. D'ailleurs, sur ce chapitre même, sait-on jamais à quoi s'en tenir? La célébrité la plus complète ne vous assouvit point et l'on meurt presque toujours dans l'incertitude de son propre nom à moins d'être un sot.[18]

It was perhaps his love of art and his obsession to create, not merely a novel to be published, but one that would raise him up with the immortals, that helped him to develop a critical attitude toward his La Tentation de Saint Antoine. As he learned to criticize his first novel dispassionately, he also harnessed his passion for self-expression to serve objective goals: a compressed style, objectivity, le mot juste, and to evolve poetic assonance and rhythm in prose. It is in these criticisms of Saint Antoine and his comparison of Saint Antoine with Madame Bovary that his rules for writing unfold.

His yardstick for literary criticism was objectivity. It was almost an obsession. The failure of his "mythological and theological fireworks" of Saint Antoine had influenced his thinking. He would return to this dogma again and

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18. Ibid., II, 442.

again. He warned Louise Colet to be cold. She should not mistake emotion for inspiration:

> Pour un autre travail, ce procédé de composition ne serait pas bon. If faut écrire plus froidement. Méfions-nous de cette espece d'échauffement, qu'on appelle l'inspiration, et où il entre souvent plus d'emotion nerveuse que de force musculaire.[19]

This mistrust and fear he had of putting himself into his writing seems to have plagued him constantly. His love of the distantly vague and exotic plagued him all his life. His love of opulent lyricism needed to be dampened from time to time:

> Dans ce moment-ci, par exemple, je me sens fort en train, mon front brûle, les phrases m'arrivent, voilà deux heures que je voulais t'écrire et que de moment en moment le travail me reprend. Au lieu d'une idée, j'en ai six et, où il faudrait l'exposition la plus simple, il me surgit une comparaison. J'irais, je suis sûr, jusqu'à demain midi sans fatigue. Mais je connais ces bals masqués de l'imagination d'où l'on revient avec la mort au coeur, épuisé, n'ayant vu que du faux et débité des sottises. Tout doit se faire à froid, posément.[20]

At the same time Flaubert wrote La Tentation de Saint Antoine, he could not see the need to be less personal; however, time and distant places helped him to gain a perspective. He could now see the puerile fault of his

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19. Ibid., III, 104.
20. Ibid., III, 104-5.

Saint Antoine. The fault of his Saint Antoine was the fault of almost every aspiring novice: emotional self-indulgence. The professional actor and model call this "mirror blindness," and it is a truism that every great artist, whatever the media he works in, must learn to analyze his faults as objectively as is humanly possible. Flaubert, having acquired this skill, could now write objectively about his failure:

> Tout dépend du plan. Saint Antoine en manque; la déduction des idées sévèrement suivie n'a point son parallélisme dans l'enchaînement des faits. Avec beaucoup d'échafaudages dramatiques, le dramatique manque.[2]

Madame Bovary was to be the antithesis of La Tentation de Saint Antoine. If Saint Antoine was to have been color, fire, and lyricism, Madame Bovary was to be a mousy monotone, accurate and precise in every detail:

> Je suis dans un tout autre monde maintenant, celui de l'observation attentive des détails les plus plats. J'ai le regard penché sur les mousses de moisissure de l'âme. Il y a loin de là aux flamboiements mythologiques et théologiques de Saint Antoine. Et, de même que le sujet est différent, j'écris dans un tout autre procédé. Je veux qu'il n'y ait pas dans mon livre un seul mouvement, ni une seule réflexion de l'auteur.[22]

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21. Ibid., II, 362.
22. Ibid., II, 365.

If Flaubert could write about the lack of objectivity in Saint Antoine, it is easy to understand why he disliked the posturings of those pseudo-romantics suffering from angoisse, frustrations, and misunderstanding. This is why he also wrote as follows about poetic language:

> C'est pourquoi je déteste la poésie parlée, la poésie en phrases. Pour les choses qui n'ont pas de mots, le regard suffit. Les exhalaisons d'âme, le lyrisme, les descriptions, je veux de tout cela en style. Ailleurs, c'est une prostitution de l'art et du sentiment même.[23]

He criticizes Musset for the very reason that he is too personal:

> Musset n'a jamais séparé la poésie des sensations qu'elle complète. La musique, selon lui, a été faite pour les sérénades, la peinture pour le portrait et la poésie pour les consolations du coeur. Quand on veut ainsi mettre le soleil dans sa culotte, on brûle sa culotte et on pisse sur le soleil. C'est ce qui lui est arrivé. Les nerfs, le magnétisme, voilà la poésie. Non, elle a une base plus seraine. S'il suffisait d'avoir les nerfs sensibles pour être poète, je vaudrais vieux que Shakespeare et qu'Homère, lequel je me figure avoir été un homme peu nerveux. Cette confusion est impie.[24]

This inescapable preoccupation with a style that is impersonal led him to evolve the idea that all good writers were objective. Objectivity was what made writing strong. Sensitive nerves and passion were signs of weakness in a

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23. Ibid., II, 462.
24. Ibid., II, 460.

writer's works. He used his own poor health as an example, and perfectly described what today would be called psychosomatic symptoms:

> La poésie n'est point une débilité de l'esprit, et ces susceptibilités nerveuses en sont une. Cette faculté de sentir outre mesure est une faiblesse. Je m'explique.
>
> Si j'avais eu la cerveau plus solide, je n'aurais point été malade de faire mon droit et de m'ennuyer. J'en aurais tiré parti, au lieu d'en tirer du mal. Le chagrin, au lieu de me rester sur le crâne, a coulé dans mes membres et les crispait en convulsions. C'était une déviation.[25]

Not only did he use himself as an example of how extreme hypersensitivity results in debility, he describes these same symptoms in musically talented children who are nervous. They can never be truly successful because they are so sensitive:

> Il se trouve souvent des enfants auxquels la musique fait mal; ils ont de grandes dispositions, retiennent des airs à la première audition, s'exaltent en jouant du piano, le coeur leur bat, ils maigrissent, pâlissent, tombent malades, et leurs pauvres nerfs, comme ceux des chiens, se tordent de souffrance au son des notes. Ce ne sont point là les Mozarts de l'avenir. La vocation a été déplacée; l'idée a passé dans la chair où elle reste stérile, et la chair périt; il n'en résulte ni génie, ni santé.[26]

Passion does not make art. The poet must communicate with the reader. This was his trouble with Saint Antoine:

> Même chose dans l'art. La passion ne fait pas les vers, et plus vous serez personnel, plus vous serez

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25. Ibid., II, 461.
26. Ibid., II, 461.

> faible. J'ai toujours péché par là, moi; c'est que je me suis toujours mis dans tout ce que j'ai fait. À la place de Saint Antoine, par exemple, c'est moi qui y suis; la Tentation a été pour moi et non pour le lecteur. Moins on sent une chose, plus on est apte à l'exprimer comme elle est (comme elle est toujours en elle-même, dans sa généralité et dégagée de tous ses contingents éphémères). Mais il faut avoir la faculté de se la faire sentir. Cette faculté n'est autre que le génie: voir, avoir le modèle devant soi, qui pose.[27]

Flaubert did not mean to photograph verbally what he saw. What he meant to do was to visualize his subject to vividly that he would lift it out of the midstream of life and focus everyone's attention upon it. To see the image clearly in one's mind's eye is an intellectual process and not an emotional one. The technical means (however much he would dwell on the technical aspects of writing) were not the end. He had to clarify his image in his own mind first. Then, he had to make use of imaginative observation. Whether or not his characters were strong and distinctive did not matter; what did matter is that, in spite of what they were, Flaubert meant to so completely engage his readers with his characters that the characters became strong and distinctive.

The writer, submerged in his own passion, lacks the

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27. Ibid., II, 461-2.

control needed to achieve this level of artistry. Passion implies a lack of control, and freedom without self-control is not true art. This is why he would write that style is the most important concern of the writer:

> Il faut chanter dans sa voix; or la mienne ne sera jamais dramatique ni attachante. Je suis convaincu d'ailleurs que tout est affaire de style, ou plutôt de tournure, d'aspect.[28]

When Flaubert decided to write Madame Bovary, he had deliberately chosen a topic that was contemporary. This seemed to fit his theory that subject was not as important as style, and the style was to be bare and taut:

> J'ai commencé hier au soir mon roman. J'entrevois maintenant des difficultés de style qui m'épouvantent. Ce n'est pas une petite affaire que d'être simple. J'ai peur de tomber dans le Paul de Kock ou de faire du Balzac chateaubrianisé.[29]

Flaubert complained many times about the difficulty of writing clearly and simply, and for Flaubert, who loved lush lyricism, it was like peeling off his own skin. He would confess that his Saint Antoine did not cause him the same mental tension that his Madame Bovary did:

> Ce qui m'est naturel à moi, c'est le non-naturel pour les autres, l'extraordinaire, le fantastique, la hurlade métaphysique, mythologique. Saint Antoine ne m'a

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28. Ibid., III, 86.
29. Ibid., II, 316.

> pas demandé la quart de la tension d'esprit que la Bovary me cause. C'était un déversoir; je n'ai eu que plaisir à écrire, et les dix-huit mois que j'ai passés à en écrire les 500 pages on été les plus profondément voluptueux de toute ma vie. Juge donc, il faut que j'entre à toute minute dans des peaux qui me sont antipathiques.[30]

To develop this lean style, Flaubert had to have some rules to guide his progress. A simple style was one in which each sentence must contain the exact expressions of thought, must be crammed full of substance. This is one reason why Flaubert wrote so slowly and would complain about prose:

> Quelle chienne de chose que la prose! Ça n'est jamais fini; il y a toujours à refaire. Je crois pourtant qu'on peut lui donner la consistance du vers. Une bonne phrase de prose doit être comme un bon vers, inchangeable, aussi rythmée, aussi sonore. Voilà du moins mon ambition (il y a une chose dont je suis sûr, c'est que personne n'a jamais eu en tête un type de prose plus parfait que moi; mais quant à l'exécution, que de faiblesses, que de faiblesses mon Dieu!)[31]

Flaubert was much concerned with the rhythm and assonance of his prose. He firmly followed the premise that even the most sordid subject matter should be artistically transformed by style of writing, and one finds in Flaubert's carefully polished sentences a very precise rhythm. He would write to Louise Colet:

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30. Ibid., III, 156, (Italics author's own).
31. Ibid., II, 468-9.

> Je voudrais faire des livres où il n'y eût qu'à écrire des phrases (si l'on peut dire cela), comme pour vivre il n'y a qu'à respirer de l'air.[32]

This concern over style and language led him to advise Louise Colet as follows:

> Je n'ai qu'à te faire deux recommandations: 1° observe de suivre les métaphores, et 2° pas de détails en dehors du sujet, la ligne droite.[33]

His preoccupation with the structure of language in his writing made him turn to great craftsmen like Homer, Shakespeare, and La Fontaine. Of them he wrote:

> Comme ils se sont efforcés de trouver pour leurs pensées les expressions justes! Quel travail! quelles ratures![34]

All this is part of his desire to write a novel that would be lucid and clear and have the form and symetry of an enduring work of art. Again he would write:

> Il faut montrer aux classiques qu'on est plus classique qu'eux, et fair pâlir les romantiques de rage en dépassant leurs intentions.[35]

To this he would add another goal for a writer to strive for:

> Ce qui me semble, à moi, le plus haut dans l'Art (et le plus difficile), ce n'est ni de faire rire, ni de faire pleurer, ni de vous mettre en rut ou en fureur, mais d'agir à la façon de la nature, c'est-à-dire de <u>faire rêver</u>. Aussi les très belles oeuvres ont ce caractère. Elles sont sereines d'aspect et incompréhensibles.[36]

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32. <u>Ibid</u>., III, 248.
33. <u>Ibid</u>., III, 248.
34. <u>Ibid</u>., III, 150.
35. <u>Ibid</u>., III, 249.
36. <u>Ibid</u>., III, 322.

At another time he would write that, while writing Bovary, he had learned two axioms about writing:

> .....d'abord que la poésie est purement subjective, qu'il n'y a pas en littérature de beaux sujets d'art, et qu' Yvetot donc vaut Constantinople; et qu'en conséquence l'on peut écrire n'importe quoi aussi bien que quoi que ce soit. L'artiste doit tout elever.[37]

Although Flaubert's first "axiom" in the above quoted letter appears to be a tenet contrary to previously stated "dogmas" on objectivity, his true attitude toward literature is not as paradoxical as it seems. His obsession with impersonality as a cardinal rule for good writing is, for one, a protest against the maudlin emotionalism into which romanticism had fallen. Secondly, as has been stated before, Flaubert's fixed ideas about the need for objectivity in writing are an expression of his personal battle to overcome his own writing faults. Thirdly, those rules for writing objectively are in reality elementary rules for good writing and not unique.

On the other hand, Flaubert knew that art was no mere mechanical reproduction. No human creation can ever be totally impersonal. There is always some part of the creator's innermost self contained in any work of art. That

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37. Ibid., III, 249.

is why Flaubert could truthfully say that poetry is subjective. This subjectiveness is to be found in the author's conception of the work and the way in which he perceives and identifies his subject. Always, whether it be fantasy or realism, art has for its roots the author's conception, attitude, and imagination. Objectivity, on the other hand, was the artist's craftsmanship.

Although Flaubert treated his subject realistically, he was not content to merely produce a popular realistic novel. He would always maintain that great writing belongs to no literary school. Its very excellence lifts it out of all categories, save that of eminence or greatness:

> Quand un vers est bon, il perd son école. Un bon vers de Boileau est un bon vers d'Hugo. La perfection a partout le même caractère, qui est la précision, la justesse.[38]

Flaubert's literary conflict, which he worked so hard to resolve while writing Madame Bovary, was a natural result of the period in which he lived. He was born in 1821 and grew up with the rising tide of the romantic movement. As a child, he was enchanted with dramatic form. He would perform plays with his friends on his father's unused billiard

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38. Ibid., III, 249.

table. Almost all the boys he went to school with were romantics. At least two of his schoolmates committed suicide in imitation of Werther.[39]

Although nurtured on the romantic literature of intense personal feelings and the yearning of some undefined inner experience, Flaubert, the mature man, discovered that the romantic period of a radical change in the structure of traditional values was past. He was not only keenly aware of a change in the literary, but also the irrevocable changes in economic and social structure, for, at best, the literary change is only a reflection of the change in the economic and social order. In order to understand the one, it is, therefore, necessary to know something about the other.

Each change in literary movements is not so much a reaction to the previous movement as a reflection of the changing economic and social order of that culture. There is, therefore, a logical answer to the changing literary movements from classicism to realism. Classicism reflects the aristocrary; romanticism, the French Revolution and

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39. Steegmuller, Francis, Flaubert and Madame Bovary, New New York, Farrar, Straus and Company, 1950, 28.

the Napoleonic campaigns; realism, the Industrial Revolution.

Several factors were responsible for these literary changes and also the direction these post romantic changes were to follow. Since Flaubert's birth begins with romanticism and Madame Bovary was written when the Industrial Revolution was in full swing, it is with romanticism and realism and the influence of the Industrial Revolution that one must be concerned.

The French Revolution and the economic chaos that followed the Revolution delayed the industrial transformation of France; therefore, the country lagged far behind England in mechanization. By about 1824, however, the French economy had recovered sufficiently to permit considerable industrial expansion. The change, too, from a rural population to an urban population changed almost overnight. Paris jumped from a population of 588,000 in 1801 to 890, in 1826; Lyon, from 109,000 to 170,000; other cities followed much the same pattern.[40]

The new machines revolutionized every phase of the technical crafts, including the art of printing. Printing had not changed much since the days of Gutenberg.

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40. George, Joseph Albert, The Development of French Romanticism, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1955, 17-18.

Until Pierre Lovilleux created a plant for the production of ink in 1808, the manufacture of printers ink had existed on a personal basis. Although this may appear to be a relatively minor item, it was necessary for the large scale operations required to produce a mass literature.[41]

More important even than the manufacture of ink on a large scale, were the changes in paper production. Until the early years of the nineteenth century, paper was handmade by slow, primitive processes. France had no means of making quantities of paper in any format. Especially lacking were the large sizes required to make newspapers.[42]

Although Nicholas-Louis Robert had invented a paper-making machine in 1798, the commercial operation of such a plant in France did not start until 1812. Even then, it was hampered by the attitude of the printers. As late as 1800, they still operated presses essentially in the same way Gutenberg did, and it was not until the Stanhope press from England was introduced in 1818 that the production of paper radically changed. Even though cheaper and faster methods of paper-making continued to appear, these

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41. Ibid., 19.
42. Ibid., 19.

improvements did not result in an immediate and complete technological change. In fact, it was not until 1830 that all the factors necessary for a mass literature had evolved, each one the result of the continued innovations of the Industrial Revolution.[43]

Aside from the fact that France did not have the necessary mechanical features to produce a mass literature until long after 1815, there was also the lack of a large reading audience. The illiteracy rate was very high, and the rural population, in particular, was held back educationally until well into the nineteenth century. Higher education under the old regime was for the privileged few and curricula was rigidly traditional. The Convention (September 1793) decreed the immediate establishment of a common, free public instruction, but then it contradicted itself several months later by voting for the sale of the property of all endowed schools. Napoleon passed a series of laws to correct the appalling illiteracy that existed, but provided no funds to carry it out. Under the Restoration little was done until Charles X established the office of Minister of Public Instruction in 1828 and then (in 1830) ordered the commune

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43. Ibid., 19.

to consider means of raising funds for school support.[44]

With the passage of a new law in 1833, 2, 275 new schools opened their doors within a year. Fifteen normal schools were added to the forty-seven already in existence. Some three and a half million children received a basic education between 1830-1848. One must add to this number the group of adults who reached literacy through the system of mutual education which had continued from the time of the Empire. Now, most people could read and write, but very few were well enough educated to appreciate the subtleties of a refined literature and art.[45]

The writers, too, found themselves placed on the horns of a dilemma and were forced to make literary concessions to this new reading audience. When the old aristocratic patrons disappeared, writers had to woo a buying public. Instead of appealing to the cultured few, the author had to aim at the broad base of society. It is true that some literary salons survived; however, it is doubtful whether a romantic writer would have received support for so revolutionary an art form. Now, with the old sources of protection and income

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44. Ibid., 21-3.
45. Ibid., 23

gone, the writer and poet had to find a new source, and this could only be gotten from the general public.[46]

The classicists were poets, carefully schooled in the unities, and they wrote for readers who had had both the training and leisure to understand and appreciate the subtleties of literary form. This reading audience was now replaced by the middle class, the new proletariat, and the farmer. Watchful writers now began to realize that the literary level of their readers had declined greatly, principally because it had expanded so rapidly. They knew, too, that more people than ever before could read, but these people had, for the most part, only a smattering of teaching and could not have developed the habit for literature. Not only were the education and leisure lacking to appreciate these older, more complex forms of poetry, but the concepts themselves were not in the realm of the new reader's experience.[47]

The romantic, like the classicist before him, was primarily a poet. This was true, at least, until 1830. Until then, the romantic fought to free poetry from Alexandrine verse and drama from the unities. Yet, while

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46. Ibid., 37-38.
47. Ibid., 31.

he objected to the limitations of the old order, he did not lay down firm proposals for what might fill the void his reaction had created. Prose, particularly the novel, had not yet earned his approval, although many a romantic had dabbled with its form from time to time.[48]

Since the writer was now committed to the largest sale possible of his books, he had to adjust to a lowering of standards. The new reader was not interested in form, but in content, particularly if it were prose, and poetry, once the dominant genre, now fell behind prose. Although poetry still held the lead as late as 1827, it did slide into decline after that date. By 1833, prose far outreached verse, and romanticism found itself face to face with the Industrial Revolutions.[49]

Another factor which helped to force the writer to change radically was the advent of the modern newspaper as conceived by Émile de Girardin. This new newspaper based its profits on advertising and offered its subscribers a paper much like that of the English penny press, an inexpensive paper that would reach a far broader, if less

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48. Ibid., 37-39.
49. Ibid., 44.

well educated group. This was to have a major effect on literature, for the editors, in their race for subscribers, allied themselves with the feuilleton. The alliance was profitable to both parties, but the feuilleton became completely dominated by a public given to sudden whimsical shifts in taste.[50]

When this domination became apparent to the romantics, their revolution changed sharply and split into factions. Literature now developed along lines undreamed of by the men of the Restoration. One group, dedicated to art for art's sake, rejected the machine and all it represented. Leftist in politics, they were hostile to bourgeois values and continued experimentation implicit in the preface of Cromwell. The other group, the "utilitarians," decided to become a part of this contemporary civilization of factories, slums, and all its existing social problems. They expected to direct the course of their age. Thus, it happened that this group sponsored a worker's literature: a competing literature aimed at the people. With the first signs of a socialist literature, the utilitarians accepted the prose which the age craved, but new conditions made some of them

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50. Ibid., 91-98.

consider the medium in which they were working. Out of this meditation men like Balzac or Stendhal would see the basis of a new art form, the modern novel.[51]

Balzac had a sense of time and events which led to his conception of a contemporary history that would embrace all phases of French society. This he called The Human Comedy. It was this concept that shifted the focus of the historical romance from the remote and distant to the recently past. Balzac intended to reveal the rhythm of episodes at the moment they were happening, not as something dead and gone. The author thus became a participant in the drama he unveiled.[52]

Stendhal considered his work as "un miroir qui se promène sur une grande route." He recognized the necessity for precise detail and kept a file of newspaper anecdotes for use in his writing. Such detail was necessary, since the reader could be expected to challenge the accuracy of contemporary settings. Since both Balzac and Stendhal used principally contemporary bourgeois characters, their works obviously required a realism of surrounding fact which had meaning and verisimilitude for the largest segment of the French reading public.[53]

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51. Ibid., 160
52. Ibid., 143.
53. Ibid., 144.

Stendhal and Balzac wrote in terms of the total atmosphere of a milieu into which they placed characters who, for the first time in France, perhaps, became the subject of serious literary representation. The ordinary citizen inevitably replaced the more heroic personages of previous ages as authors came to deal with the average and the daily. Balzac and Stendhal now faced the problems of integrating time-perspective, the historical attitude which demanded all the realistic detail, trivia, and petty vulgarity involved in contemporary life, and accounts of the lives of the small people who crowd the earth. Now, they found they had to turn to a study of men and manners, for they manipulated the real and ordinary far more than any writer of romances ever did. They dealt with personalities as manifest in society, and plot became subordinate to behavior as character analysis, or social results became more important than pure action.[54]

The novel began to assume a coherence unknown to the romance. Balzac's characters were plunged into a carefully delineated setting and then permitted to move about under

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54. Ibid., 144-5.

conditions pre-determined by the author as characteristic of contemporary society. Furthermore, authors accepted the scientist's affirmation of the determining action of exterior agents on forms. Stendhal wanted to write a book that was without interminable stories within stories, the characters of which could be remembered, and in this he was successful. His characters, like Balzac's, assume a depth of dimension not found in the old romances.[55]

Stendhal and Balzac are transitional writers who stand between romanticism and realism. In each of these writers there can be found many romantic elements; however, one also finds in their works the first flowering of realism: truth-seeking, materialism, the scientific viewpoint, careful documentation, and the all-pervasive sociological interest. Flaubert enters somewhat later. Using these same realistic elements in his Madame Bovary, Flaubert adds the ingredient which makes his novel the "pièce de résistance": namely, "le culte de la beauté formelle." This cult of beauty culminated in a technical perfection to which the older novelists never aspired.

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55. Ibid., 145.

II MADAME BOVARY

Madame Bovary is a study in contrast: contrast between the real and imagined, between opposing characters, between the aspirations and the true characters of the people in his book, and contrast between scenes. There is a contrast between the simple, rustic wedding of Emma Bovary and the elegant ball she attends at La Vaubyessard. At the ball itself, Emma, who only recently had skimmed milk at her father's farm, sees the peasants stand outside the great house with their noses pressed against the windows. Charles is a devoted husband, but he is dull and mediocre and can never make his wife happy. Emma dreamed of a viscount, but had an affair with Rodolphe, a gentleman farmer with mud on his boots. She imagined herself in love with a renowned singer, but settled for a tawdry involvement with a clerk. Homais and Bournisien are opposites. Homais is the modern lay spirit of the modern nineteenth century, while Bournisien represents church tradition. If, on the one hand, the viscount symbolizes Emma's pursuit of the romantic ideal, he also symbolizes her corruption, degradation,

and suicide. Her heroines had exciting adventures and lived happily ever after. Emma's life is dull and ends in suicide. Instead of a romantic suicide on a plane with Werther, Emma's death is violent and ugly. Moreover, her death is not for a great and beautiful love, but for being in debt.

The nineteenth century produced an astonishing crop of young women who did their best to look pale and interesting. The accepted type had snowy, sloping shoulders, smooth hair draped round the ears, a tiny limp hand, and a pale oval, melancholy face.[56] This kind of young woman typified the fashion trend of the period, a fashion influenced by the romantic literature and was, perhaps, an anachronism of the Ancien Régime.

Except for some symbolic differences, Flaubert's description of Emma is an almost perfect reproduction of the popular mode of the period:

> Son cou sortait d'un col blanc, rabattu. Ses cheveux dont les deux bandeux noirs semblaient chacun d'un seul morceau, tant ils étaient lisses, étaient séparés sur le milieu de la tête par une raie fine, qui s'enfoncait légèrment selon la courbe du crâne; et, laissant voir à peine le bout de l'oreille, ils allaient se confondre par-derrière en un chignon

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56. Laver, James, A Short History of the Female Figure, "This Week Magazine, May 31, 1964, 12-14.

abondant, avec un mouvement ondé vers les tempes....[57]

It should, then, be obvious that Flaubert was not describing an unusual woman, but a rather chic young woman who sheep-like followed the fashion dictates of the day. Yet, for all of that, she becomes unique, because she madly pursues a will-of-the-wisp. She is representative of a new social class, but the traditions and myths of the old society still weave an influence. In spite of the mediocrity, Emma does have a kind of glamor. The falseness of this glamor is subtly conveyed to the reader through Flaubert's description of Emma's hands, something the men in her life never seem to notice.[58]

Although Emma is a farmer's daughter, she goes to convent school. There she acquires the polish and finish requisite for a gentlewoman of high social position; she should, therefore, have been the ideal romantic stereotype, vying with such heroines as Lélia and Delphine.

Yet, in spite of the romantic accoutrements, the romantic character is a veneer, for Flaubert, through subtle insinuation, places his mid-nineteenth century heroine in the

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57. Flaubert, Gustave, Madame Bovary, Paris, Librairie Générale Française, 1961, p. 30.
58. Ibid., 29.

glaring light of realism. Her name, her character, her background, environment, the supporting characters--all are exposed as fraudulent romanticism through the technique of insinuation.

Insinuation was a technique Flaubert had already used in his Notes de voyages. In Madame Bovary he hones this technique very fine through the use of banal, but exact dialogue, precise, pertinent, detailed description, image, and sensuous language. He used the aforementioned as weapons to puncture Emma's pursuit of false ideals and passion. The results are an ironical inconsistency throughout which runs a thread of parody.

Flaubert created a richly detailed description with sensuous language and vivid image to evoke a network of poetic symbolism that carries out this theme of contrast between romanticism and realism. Throughout the story the description is photographically realistic, but, through this description and because of it, a deeper introspective meaning of the story is conveyed to the reader.

An example of Flaubert's use of description to convey a deeper meaning to the character is his description of Emma's hands in contrast to her nails. The hand is not beautiful, somewhat coarse for a lady, but she has the

nails beautifully manicured. Emma's hands betray her for what she is, a farmer's daughter, and her nail's expose her aspirations for finer things.

Another example of Emma's pretentions is the secondhand dogcart Charles has bought for her. He had it completely renovated until it "resembla presqu'un tilbury."[59] Though seemingly simple and objective, Flaubert imparts a deeper psychological significance to this detail, for the dogcart is symbolic of the mediocrity of Charles and Emma. The cart is a symbol of the actual social status of the Bovarys and is also a symbol of Charles' inadequacy to provide his wife with the finer things she craves. It symbolizes Emma's aspirations and, in a sense, Charles' too. The "tilbury" gives them both status, and Charles can make Emma happy. This attempt to unquestioningly fulfill Emma's wants is portentous of how he will imitate her extravagances after she dies.

The scene in the dining room at Vaubyessard is replete with detailed and provocative sense impressions, and each suggests and reveals something about the human mind. Here, in the dining room, there is a blending of sense impressions

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59. Ibid., p. 50.

which only serves to heighten the frustration and boredom Emma suffers from. The people in this room are representative of the changing times: a mixture of social classes from the Ancien Régime to the nineteenth century bourgeoisie. Everyone in the room blends with the beautiful setting, even awkward Charles. There is, however, one glaring contrast. All the men are seated at one table, and the women are served at another. At the upper end of the women's table, almost childishly helpless, sits the old Duke de Laverdière. He dribbles gravy as he eats, but Emma sees nothing grotesque in this senile old man. This anachronistic symbol of the Ancien Régime is, to her, fascinating. His reputation for debauchery and extravagance mean nothing to her. To her, he is a relic of the romantic past, for it was rumored that he had slept with the queen. The reader sees this scene through Emma's eyes, and, through this artful technique Flaubert lets the reader, as it were, perceive the shallow character of Emma. In a different way, the reader again sees how Emma can never lock horns with reality; everything is tinted with romanticism.[60]

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60. Ibid., 67-68.

Often Flaubert uses image to puncture his characters. To show what kind of man Charles is and how he blindly adores Emma in every way, Flaubert sums up this blind devotion with the following:

> L'univers, pour lui, n'excédait pas le tour soyeux de son jupon; et il se reprochait de ne pas l'aime.....[61]

Again, he compares Charles to the blinkered horse. He, like the horse, patiently plods about his routine.[62] Emma's dreams are the delicate feet of white pigeons that dabble in the mud.[63]

Flaubert assiduously practiced his theory of le mot juste and used it effectively to provoke a startling contrast between the deeper reality and superficial appearances. One word should have the effect of a quick punch, and he would write that this is how great writers achieve such power in their writing:

> Quoi de plus mal bâti que bien des choses de Rabelais, Cervantès, Molière et d'Hugo? Mais quels coups de poing subits! Quelle puissance dans un seul mot![64]

Flaubert had become a master in this technique and was especially adept in expanding an expectant mood of beauty and harmony within the reader. When he would reach the

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61. Ibid., 51.
62. Ibid., 51.
63. Ibid., 135.
64. Oeuvres completes, Correspondance, III, 143.

climax of such a setting, he would suddenly deflate both character and reader with a stingingly crude and almost disgusting observation. He could do this with only a sentence or even a mere word.

An example of how Flaubert punctures his character with one biting word is in his description of Charles' expansive, pervading happiness in the early days of his marriage to Emma. As Charles rides through the countryside in the early morning, Flaubert skillfully weaves a mood of tenderness, warmth, and peace through his description of the country. Charles happiness and the description of the countryside, as he rides "avec le soleil sur les épaules et l'air du matin à ses narines,"[65] involve the reader in a fine balance and blending of Charles' happiness and the lovely countryside; however, just as soon as the reader finds himself warming to the delights of the countryside and Charles' happiness, he is shocked by Flaubert's comparison of Charles to that of a cow chewing its cud:

> .....le coeur plein des félicités de la nuit, l'esprit tranquille, la chair contente, il s'en allait ruminant

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65. Madame Bovary, 51.

> son bonheur, comme ceux qui mâchent encore, après dîner, le goût des truffes qu'ils digèrent.[66]

It is, of course, the word ruminant which disgusts the reader and not that comparison of someone who enjoys his meal.

The old blind beggar has often been pointed out as a true romantic symbol. He enters the story when Emma's house of cards is about to come down around her. His loathsome disease and blindness are a reflection of the indifference and cruelty of the fortunate to those who are unfortunate. At first, his bawdy song seems a gay tune that reflects Emma's new happiness. When Hivert whips him, Emma cannot bear to face this cruelty.[67] He becomes a symbol of her future. On her last ride back to Yonville, she cannot bear to see him again and throws her last coins to him. This is perhaps a gesture of her proud disdain for money and also a symbol of her inability to cope with finances.[68]

Windy Homais, riding home with Emma, reveals again what a charlatan he is when he condescendingly gives the

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66. Ibid., 51.
67. Ibid., 317.
68. Ibid., 353.

beggar a few pennies and offers to cure him. Homais, with his fraudulent promises, becomes the unwitting instrument that brings the blind man to Yonville at the moment of Emma's death.[69]

The melodramatic touch to the appearance of the blind man in Yonville, and certainly from Emma's reaction to his song, with its bawdy sensuality, is a fitting irony to Emma's tragic death. The once gay tune now haunted her like the ghost of her own foolish and ugly past.[70]

Charles' first ride to Les Bertaux is also replete with meaning for the reader. The ride itself, with Charles in that state of consciousness between waking and sleeping, is symbolic of his past and future. The rain, the flat countryside, etc., each stands for the discomfort of his past. The substantial-looking farm, the detailed description of prosperity, the warmth of the kitchen--all contrived to portray a rosy future that Charles would soon enjoy. Yet, at the entrance to the farm, Charles' horse took fright and stumbled. This could only mean that the farm and its occupants would

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69. Ibid., 353-354.
70. Ibid., 383.

bring tragedy to Charles, and, as the reader later learns, the suggestion of prosperity is sometimes a symptom of extravagance.[71]

Old Rouault, not knowing exactly what has happened to Emma and that she is dying, was leaving for Yonville when he saw three black hens sleeping in a tree. This was surely a bad omen. The old man recovered from his fright, since he could find no other signs of impending disaster. Again, he is faced with another omen. He has an hallucination on the road, where he sees Emma lying dead. These are again pure romantic touches, but they hardly touch the reader as such, because Flaubert treated them with understatement and a realistic finesse.[72]

Although the mid-nineteenth century saw the emergence of the bourgeoisie, Flaubert repeatedly indicates the influence the Ancien Régime still had on the people. More than that, it seemed to hold a fascination for the middle classes. Such a one is the old seamstress in the convent school. An impoverished noble woman, she sings the old love songs and sneaks cheap romances to the girls. What

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71. Ibid., 26-27.
72. Ibid., 394.

is more exciting to adolescent girls than wild dreams of grandeur and forbidden book? For Emma, who was highly suggestible, this was the first step of her downfall.[73]

Emma's education is another incongruity for two reasons. First of all, Emma, a farmer's daughter, is taught the niceties required of a lady of leisure. This was at a time that schools for the common people were first starting. Merely learning to read and write was an accomplishment. Emma went to an expensive boarding school, a thing almost unheard of for a woman of her class. Moreover, the education, so desirable for a noble woman of the Ancien Régime, is fast becoming obsolete in an industrial society. Thus, the fine education, which everyone admires in Emma, is really another symbol of extravagance. It only made her dissatisfied with her station in life, and she was of no use to her father.

Even Charles is touched by this symbol of Emma's flaw. Charles wishes for his own daughter the same education her mother had had. Charles is really a blinkered horse who cannot see true value, and his wishes for his daughter only reveal how much Emma had corrupted him.[74]

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73. Ibid., 54.
74. Ibid., 235.

Flaubert had a perfect ear for the subtle nuances of dialogue, and his was an acutely perceptive ear that remembered in detail the inflection, rhythm, and idiosyncracies of banal conversation. It is obvious from his letters that, even as a child, he was already perceptively observing the pretentious speech mannerisms of people around him, for he wrote to Ernest Chevalier when only nine:

> Et comme il y a une dame qui vient chez papa et qui nous contes toujours de bêtises je les écrirais.[75]

All his life Flaubert had collected and mimicked the language of the absurd (he would call it bourgeois). While writing Madame Bovary, he labored to reproduce this kind of speech with exactitude, for Emma Bovary, her supporting characters, and her environment were commonplace people who tried to hide their mediocrity under high flown language that was meaningless. This kind of dialogue was shocking to the reader, for Flaubert expressed in sharp, sensuous, precise detail, and in a familiar setting, dialogue the reader was used to listening to, but which he never really heard. It was a kind of verbal mirror that Flaubert audaciously held up to the reader's eyes, and this

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75. Oeuvres complètes, Correspondance, I, 1.

is what shocked the reader. The everyday speech patterns and cliches were thrown back into the reader's teeth, and he was forced to recognize his own petty, little universe by its neurotic chatter.

The dialogue is as alive today as it was then; with few changes it could be utilized anywhere. The people Flaubert created can be found anywhere in the world, for Flaubert deliberately designed it this way. Emma Bovary herself was invested with traits that could be revealed in women anywhere in France, for he would write of her as follows:

> Ma pauvre Bovary, sans doute, souffre et pleure dans vingt villages de France à la fois, à cette heure même.[76]

If Emma Bovary is shocking, it is not because she is wicked. She is rather the victim of her own foolish and vague notions of what life should be like and of her own importance. She is, in fact, the product of what she has read, and nowhere is this brought out more clearly than in the dialogue.

Ironically, it was at the convent that she began to steep herself in the hack writing of that period. It

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76. Ibid., III, 291.

repeated itself again after her visit to Vaubyessard, when she subscribed to Paris journals and devoured all the society news contained in them. It became a part of her psychosis when, later, she would sit up all night reading and reliving the adventures of her shadow heroes and heroines.

It was precisely for this effect that Flaubert exhausted himself reading the kind of claptrap that adolescent girls spent reading in their spare time. He also spent much time researching this type of writing, for he wanted to describe the dreams and fancies of adolescent girls:

> Voilà deux jours que je tâche d'entrer dans des <u>rêves de jeunes filles</u> et que je navigue pour cela dans les oceáns laiteux de la littérature à castels, troubadours à toques de velours à plumes blanches.[77]

In the scene at the inn in Yonville, when the Bovarys first arrive there, Flaubert brings into play the absurdities of Emma's notions and presumptions when she meets and talks with Léon. Léon, one realizes from the conversation, is also a product of what he has read, and Flaubert immediately brings the two people together in an incongruous and ironical dialogue. They hold a hackneyed discourse on romantic

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77. <u>Ibid</u>., V. II, 371.

sunsets, seascapes, music, and literature. The conversation was supposed to be trivial and vague, for two mediocre people were balanced between a warmth of feeling that engulfs two kindred souls when they meet and the absurdity of what they really were. Flaubert stabilizes these two aspects of his characters in such a way that the reader is drawn into the glow of their intimacy and a feeling of their restlessness, sensitivity, and a fatuous sense of superiority.

Each remark brought Emma and Léon more closely together and defined and outlined each character more sharply. Their differences in taste imply a difference in temperament. Léon, less decisive and somewhat shy, prefers poetry:

> ....C'est pourquoi, dit-il, j'aime surtout les poètes, Je trouve les vers plus tendres que la prose, et qu'ils font bien mieux pleurer.[78]

Emma, who is easily bored and vaguely disillusioned, prefers prose that is dramatic and terrifying:

> ....Cependant ils fatiguent à la longue, reprit Emma; et maintenant, au contraire, j'adore les histoires qui se suivent toute d'une haleine, où l'on a peur. Je déteste les héros communs et les sentiments tempérés, comme il y en a dans la nature.[79]

These differences in their temperaments will again be

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78. Madame Bovary, 107.
79. Ibid., 107.

redefined when their affair draws to an end later on in the book. It is Emma who will become dominant and aggressive, and Léon will withdraw.

Like a comic opera duet in a romantically rustic setting and with comic romantic characters, this scene reaches a climax when Leon culminates his vague, second-hand description of the majestic mountains with the following grotesquely ludicrous anecdote:

> Aussi je ne m'étonne plus de ce musicien célèbre qui, pour exciter mieux son imagination, avait coutume d'aller jouer du piano devant quelque site imposant.[80]

As a comic contrast to this fraudulent and ludicrous intellectualism, Homais delivers a Rabelaisian dissertation on the advantages of the locality and the life of a country doctor in Yonville. This dissertation becomes a counterpoint of parody to the intellectual and romantic pretensions of Emma and Léon.

During this conversation, Charles is almost completely left out. Only now and again will he make some noncommittal remarks that are more like verbal punctuations than real conversation. Everyone uses Charles; he cannot communicate with the others. They push him away.

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80. Ibid., 105.

Although dialogue alone must convey the many aspects of the characters involved, the reader is not left critically detached. Flaubert shows the pretensions of each character as each tries to mask his frustrations and mediocrity in his conversation. Yet, each is betrayed by the verbal mask itself, and, in so doing, reveals his submerged inadequacy.

Trivial dialogue was what Flaubert had in mind when he wrote this scene. He would write about the difficulties of creating such dialogue when it involved four or five people; moreover, in the midst of all this, he was trying to show a man and woman who are beginning to fall in love. He would, therefore, write:

> Que ma Bovary m'embête! Je commence a m'y débrouiller pourtant un peu. Je n'ai jamais de ma vie rien écrit de plus difficile ce que je fais maintenant, du dialogue trivial! ....[81]

The agricultural fair forms a high point to the book when Emma is about to enter a new emotional crisis. Against the rustic festivities which were planned to encompass the complete range of the social fabric of Yonville, Emma begins her affair with Rodolphe. Unlike the pursuit of sentimental literature, etc., that she shared with Léon, her affair

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81. Oeuvres complètes, Correspondance, III, 24.

with Rodolphe was purely physical. It is then perhaps fitting and symbolic that Rodolphe, the virile country squire, should begin his seduction of Emma in a setting with an animal background.

Flaubert spent much time planning this scene and discusses one such visit to a country fair in one of his letters:

> Ce matin, j'ai été à un comice agricole, dont j'en (sic) suis revenu mort de fatigue et d'ennui. J'avais besoin de voir une de ces ineptes cérémonies rustiques pour ma Bovary, dans la deuxième partie.[82]

In another letter he describes his concept of the agricultural fair:

> Elle sera énorme; ça aura bien trente pages. Il faut que, dans le récit de cette fête rustico-municipale et parmi ses détails (où tous les personnages secondaires du livre paraissent, parlent et agissent), je poursuive, et au premier plan, le dialogue continu d'un monsieur chauffant une dame. J'ai de plus, au milieu, le discours solennel d'un conseiller de préfecture, et à la fin (tout terminé) un article de journal fait par mon pharmacien, qui rend compte de la fête en bon style philosophique, poétique et progressif.[83]

Flaubert presents a masterfully detailed panorama of a nineteenth century fair. His characters impart to the reader all the petty rivalries, ostentation, gossip,

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82. Ibid., II, 466.
83. Ibid., III, 283-4.

hypocracy, and sham that one finds in any similar community undertaking. Homais, with his sure instinct of the politician, has managed to get himself appointed a member of the commission. Pompously, he pussyfoots around the exhibits. The politicians have come, too, for there is no better place for making political hay than such a fair. Yet, the prefect, who was to have attended, sent a substitute at the last minute.[84]

Rodolphe makes his play for Emma against this panoply of parades, contests, and speeches. Hidden away from the crowd, he woos Emma against the clamor of well-worn speeches and awards. Each time Rodolphe says something to Emma, fragments of the speeches drift in through the windows like vulgar echoes of Rodolphe's protestations of love. This interweaving of opposing dialogues makes for high comedy. Throughout the dialogue there is a staccato-like cadence of parody, which is relieved only by the pathetic figure of Catherine Leroux, who is presented with a medal for fifty-four years of service at the same farm.[85]

Here, in Flaubert's description the reader sees a symbolic contrast between Catherine's worn, gnarled hands

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84. Madame Bovary, 162-166.
85. Ibid., 174-184.

and the entwining hands of Rodolphe and Emma. The reader also finds a comparison between Flaubert's use of domestic animals as symbols of Catherine and Rodolphe. Catherine has absorbed the docility and obedience of animals, as can be seen from the dumbness and calm expression on her face. With Rodolphe, it is sexual prowess.

It should be added that Rodolphe's pleas are not what win Emma. If Rodolphe consciously sets out to coldly seduce a woman and to deceive her, Emma is deceived, not by Rodolphe, but by a mingling of her own vague dreams and memories. At that moment, Emma did not think of Rodolphe. His perfumed hair pomade and the sight of the "Hirondelle" recalled to her all her memories of the viscount and Léon. It was this, rather than Rodolphe's techniques of pursuit that won Emma. The seeds of her own tragedy lay within herself.

Again, when Emma, in emotional desperation goes to Bournisien for advice, the contrasts in dialogue take on a sardonic twist. Emma, who has neglected her own daughter, is frustrated in her pathetic appeals for help by the mischievous boys in the catechism class. Bournisien, whose very office was symbolic of spiritual leadership, was so involved with the barest physical needs of his poor parishoners that he could not perceive the depth of this woman's

emotional distress, let alone comfort and aid Emma in this crucial hour of distress.[86]

The dialogue unfolds a tragic irony which occurs when two people find it impossible to communicate. Emma reveals the inarticulateness of the maladjusted; Bournisien, the imperceptive. In his Correspondance Flaubert discusses the difficulty of conveying this problem of setting at cross-purpose the complexities of opposing characters:

> ....ma petite femme, dans un accès de religion, va à l'église; elle trouve à la porte le curé qui, dans un dialogue (sans sujet déterminé), se montre tellement bête, plat, inepte, crasseux, qu'elle s'en retourne dégoûtée et indévote.[87]

He then goes on to describe his priest as one who can only comprehend the physical needs of his parishoners:

> Et mon curé est très brave homme, excellent même, mais il ne songe qu'au physique (aux souffrances des pauvres, manque de pain ou de bois), et ne devine pas les défaillances morales, les vagues aspirations mystiques; il est très chaste et pratique tous ses devoirs.[88]

Perhaps, the most important revelation of Flaubert's greatness as a writer is the psychological depths he plumbs through dialogue. This particular scene sharply reveals the acuteness of Emma's maladjustment through its verbal

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86. Ibid., 137-143.
87. Oeuvres complètes, Correspondance, III, 166.
88. Ibid., III, 166.

implications, for the maladjusted and even insane betray themselves by their speech or the lack of it.

In the language of science and sanity there is a cardinal principle in terms of which language is used scientifically. It must be used meaningfully. In speaking meaningfully one does not just communicate; one communicates something to someone. The degree to which this occurs is an index of the clarity of the language employed. Such clarity is a basic feature of scientific languge. One cannot get a clear answer to a vague question. Individuals who suffer from personality maladjustments are especially well characterized by the vagueness of the questions they ask themselves. They persistently stump themselves, and they stump those around them.[89]

It is an accepted fact that the maladjusted or even insane are unable to tell clearly what their troubles are. On the one hand, one finds the reactions of some who talk at great rate and can never get outside their elaborate verbal circles. Their ideas and notions are spun from almost pure sound. Perhaps their compulsion to talk stems from the fact that they themselves realize vaguely that,

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89. Johnson, Wendell, People in Quandaries, Harper & Bros., 1946, p. 15-16.

after each verbal outburst, they have not said anything. They then continue vainly attempting to put into words the feelings from which they suffer. On the other hand, there are those who scarcely speak at all. Essentially both are inarticulate and characterize a trait common to the maladjusted.[90]

This inability to communicate with Bournisien is reflected in her hesitancy and the fact that she never really completes her statements. It is one reason why Bournisien, occupied as he was with the more physical needs of his flock, cannot comprehend Emma's feeble attempts to make herself understood. The exasperating quality in his reply to her question is due as much to the vagueness of the question as to his own preoccupation, for she never really completed the question:

> ....Mais celles, reprit Emma (et les coins de sa bouche se tordaient en parlant), celles, monsieur le curé, qui ont du pain, et qui n'ont pas....[91]

When the priest suggests the people may need wood for fire, Emma is completely lost. From here on Emma loses her intense but vain attempt to get any spiritual help. In her outburst against the poor she does not really reveal a

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90. Ibid., 17
91. Madame Bovary, 141.

selfish nature as much as the desperation of one who must constantly return to the end of the line because there are others in greater need. Yet, her need at that moment is much more acute.

The dialogue here sets forth a number of complex problems. Emma, because of her upbringing and environment, found it impossible to seek help in the confessional. When her problem becomes unbearable, she cannot articulate her problem. Moreover, since she does not really understand the problem, her inadequacy to communicate complicates the whole matter even more. Bournisien's success with the very poor in his parish, on the other hand, makes him blind to the needs of someone like Emma, and Emma, who had found comfort in the church during her school days, is ignored when she needs it most. From here on, her life has only one course to follow--degradation and decay.

The supreme irony of this book is that Emma, who outwardly disdains money, commits suicide because of her debts. Emma is not interested in money for itself. Her need for it and her extravagance are part and parcel of her pursuit of the ideal. Frustration and indulgence both intensify her tendency to spend foolishly and lavishly. Her very inability to cope with money and the manner in which she

cheats her husband financially and sexually are inherent symptoms of her developing psychosis, which Flaubert carefully develops and expands until they culminate in her death. Emma's corruption progresses with the state of her debts. Her insistent pursuit of the unattainable absolute must be fed by money, and therein lies a completely commonplace symptom in the maladjusted.

The realism of this novel lies, not so much in the suppression of romanticism, as in the treatment of romanticism. His portrayal of a woman's pursuit of romanticism is a far better choice than that of a man, since woman is particularly liable to make a love affair the sole center of her existence. It is in her nature to conserve and hold on to those factors in her life, such as marriage, etc., much more so than a man. Rarely does a man show the exacerbated form of idealization. It is simply not in his nature to do so. The realism, then, of this novel lies in Flaubert's treatment of the kind of intense and violent romanticism one would find in a maladjusted woman. It is not a novel devoid of romanticism, for it contains romantic settings that are treated in such a way they become a parody of romanticism, a pseudo-romantic heroine, and

romantic symbolism. If anything, Flaubert, with his Madame Bovary, treated pseudo-romanticism with such biting and ironic realism that the novel became the coup de grace of romanticism.

III SALAMMBÔ

After completion of Madame Bovary, Flaubert continued to stay at Croisset and began to work again on the Tentation de Saint Antoine. He cut and revised much of the old manuscript. In his letters he wrote that he was working very hard on Saint Antoine:

> Je travaille comme un boeuf à Saint Antoine. La chaleur m'excite et il y a longtemps que je n'ai été aussi gaillard.[92]

During this time he was also working on a story about Saint Julien. In fact, he seems to have worked on both works at the same time, for in June, 1956, he wrote that he expected to complete his story for Saint Antoine and Saint Julien in a month:

> Dans un mois j'aurai fini mes lectures, tout en travaillant au Saint Antoine. Si j'étais un gars, je m'en retournerais à Paris au mois d'octobre avec le Saint Antoine fini et Saint Julien écrit.[93]

The following September, however, he wrote that he was temporarily halting work on Saint Antoine to study and research a book on heresy:

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92. Oeuvres complètes, Correspondance, IV, 111.
93. Oeuvres complètes, Correspondance, IV, 104-5.

> Quant au Saint Antoine, je l'arrête provisoirement et, tandis que je suis à analyser deux énormes volumes sur les Hérésies, je rêve comment faire pour y mettre des choses plus fortes.[94]

In March, 1857, Flaubert wrote that he was busy studying the archeology of one of the least known periods of antiquity in preparation for an historical novel:

> Mais je suis bien empêché pour le moment, car je m'occupe, avant de m'en retourner à la campagne, d'un travail archéologique sur une des époques les plus inconnues de l'antiquité, travail qui est la préparation d'un autre.[95]

Fragments of Saint Antoine had already been published in l'Artiste:

> Tu recevras, au milieu de la semaine prochaine, ce qui a paru de moi dans l'Artiste. Il y aura quatre numéros, ce sont des fragments de la Tentation de Saint Antoine.[96]

Then Flaubert wrote shortly thereafter that he would discontinue his work on Saint Antoine indefinitely:

> "...mais la rigueur des temps me force à en ajourner indéfiniment la publication;...."[97]

Much later, when he was well into Salammbô, he would write that he had to put put Saint Antoine back in the box:

> Après la publication de mon roman, je me suis remis à une grande oeuvre de jeunesse intitulée: La Tentation de Saint Antoine. Après six mois de travail, il a fallu me resigner à la remettre dans le carton.[98]

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94. Ibid., IV, 119.
95. Ibid., IV, 164.
96. Ibid., IV, 154.
97. Ibid., IV, 167.
98. Ibid., IV, 306.

Flaubert did a monumental amount of research for this new novel. He read just about everything he could lay his hands on and continued to send for books from Paris. From March, 1857, to July of that same year he probably read close to a hundred books on Carthage.[99] In August he wrote that he had filled three notebooks with notes:

> Enfin! je vais en finir avec mes satanées notes! J'ai encore trois volumes à lire et puis c'est tout. C'est bien tout! Au milieu ou à la fin de la semaine prochaine, je m'y mets.[100]

Although he complained about the slowness of writing, he did not seem to have the same kind of frustration and anguish he suffered from so much while writing Madame Bovary. At least, the first letters of the fourth volume do not appear as filled with as much painful distress as when he wrote Madame Bovary. He was, however, very dissatisfied with his first chapter after it was completed. He could find nothing good in it and complained that few men had suffered as much for art as he had. He decided to be completely alone for two or three months without any company. Apparently he had fallen back into his old bad habits, for he accused himself of being vain.[101]

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99. Ibid., IV, 163-208.
100. Ibid., IV, 217.
101. Ibid., IV, 231.

In January he began to write that he must go to Tunis for more research. In the spring of 1858, he began his trip to Tunis. From Tunis he wrote that he spent four days at Carthage. He now wrote that he knew Carthage and its surroundings thoroughly.[102] Now that he had studied the actual site he felt more secure. He wrote, as follows, of his research in Tunis:

> J'ai visité à fond la campagne de Tunis et les ruines de Carthage, j'ai traversé la Régence de l'est à l'ouest pour rentrer en Algérie par la frontière de Kheff, et j'ai traversé la partie orientale de la province de Constantine jusqu'à Philippeville, où je me suis rembarqué.[103]

Since he had completed a thorough study of the site itself, he felt that he could now rewrite his book.

Strangely, he compared Salammbô to Madame Bovary at this time. Flaubert again mentioned his disgust with ugly things and how Madame Bovary had bothered him so while writing it:

> Je suis las des choses laides et des vilains milieux. La Bovary m'a dégoûté pour longtemps des moeurs bourgeoises. Je vais, pendant quelques années peut-être, vivre dans un sujet splendide et loin du monde moderne dont j'ai plein le dos.[104]

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102. Ibid., IV, 253-264.
103. Ibid., IV, 271.
104. Ibid., IV, 272.

It is evident from the above quote that Salammbô was a subject he enjoyed writing about. He could now lose himself completely in the wonder world of history and imagination. His friend Louis Bouilhet had not completely weaned him from his old misty dreams that he had complained about so much when writing Madame Bovary. Writing was a way of life for Flaubert, and Salammbô would give him the opportunity to enter infinite dreams. The new, modern way of life disgusted him:

> J'écris fort lentement, parce qu'un livre est pour moi une mannière spéciale de vivre. À propos d'un mot ou d'une idée, je fais des recherches, je me livre à des divagations. j'entre dans des rêveries infinies; et puis, notre âge est si lamentable, que je me plonge avec délices dans l'antiquité. Cela me décrasse des temps modernes.[105]

Salammbô is a romantic historical novel set in Carthage, of which city very little is known. Its most important character is Salammbô, the daughter of Hamilcar Barca and a priestess to the goddess Tanit. Any realistic characteristics of the book are to be found in the detailed description and impersonal style Flaubert used so successfully in Madame Bovary. In all other respects it is purely romantic.

Salammbô has often been called the romantic counterpart

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105. Ibid., IV, 359.

of Madame Bovary. Critics have usually pointed out certain parallel characteristics between the two women and the detailed description in both stories. It is true that there is a certain similarity between the two women in appearance and in their suicides. It should, however, be noted that Emma Bovary is a real woman of flesh and blood to the reader, while Salammbô is a fragile wraith veiled in the mists of imagination and antiquity. Both stories have an impersonal style with detailed descriptions that can be considered realistic. The difference between the two stories, however, is that Flaubert was intimately familiar with the scenes, cultures, and people in Madame Bovary. Conversely, so little is known of Carthage and its culture that it was impossible to describe Carthage as precisely and truly as he did the settings in Madame Bovary. Any comparison, therefore, will be found in a contrast between the plots, settings, and characters of the two stories.

When Emma is introduced to the reader, she is on her father's farm, a charming and beautiful young girl. Everything in this scene is familiar and comfortable to the reader. The people in this story are people the reader can identify in his own social world. The whole fabric is part and parcel of the reader's own experience. Emma

herself could be the next door neighbor.

The reader's introduction to Salammbô is very different. She is everything Emma ever dreamed of being, and her entrance is as dramatic as any of the heroines in Emma's books. Salammbô enters the story in the middle of a violent orgy. Her mere presence as the priestess of Tanit stupefies and frightens the sodden and wild soldiers; however, she is to the reader, as well as to the soldiers, very unreal.

Her unreality is sharper because Flaubert used precise detail, for the very characteristics which he so carefully delineated and which made Salammbô so glamorous and romantic contribute to the impression that she is a fantasy. At best she is a puppet manipulated by others. Her first appearance, her religious fervor, her first meeting with Mâtho, her humiliation, her capture of the Zäimphe, her suicide, --all these scenes are purest romanticism that belong to an impossible dream world.

Like Emma, Salammbô is very pretty, has dark hair, and is very delicate. Whereas Emma is chic and charming, Salammbô is gorgeous. If Emma is real, Salammbô only now and then peeks out from behind the lengthy descriptions of her clothes, jewels, and religious rituals:

> Sa chevelure, poudrée d'un sable violet, et réunie en forme de tour selon la mode des vierges chananéenes, la faisait paraître plus grande. Des tresses de perles attachées à ses tempes descendaient jusqu'aux coins de sa bouche, rose comme une grenade entr'ouverte. Il y avait sur sa poitrine un assemblage de pierres lumineuses, imitant par leur bigarrure les écailles d'un murène..."[106]

Both women lost their mothers when very young. Both had been educated by the religious schools of their respective cultures. Emma's father had sent her to convent school; Salammbô became the pupil of Schahabarim, the high priest. Both were filled with religious fervor and both learned well the lessons and rites of their religions.

Salammbô was jealously guarded and lived in seclusion. She had no knowledge of the impure and vulgar forms of worship connected with Tanit and spent her waking hours in prayer, fasting, and vigils. Her religious fervor resolved itself in a kind of hysteria, and she fainted. She was marked by the goddess, for when the moon waned, Salammbô became feeble, languishing all day, reviving only at night. Once, during an eclipse, she had nearly died.[107]

When Emma was thirteen, she entered a convent school. There she was protected in the calm seclusion of the convent. She liked the sisters, knew her catechism, and

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106. Flaubert, Gustave, Salammbô, Paris, Editions Garnier Frères, 1961, p. 12.
107. Ibid., 48-52.

was always able to answer the difficult questions asked in class. She was lulled by the incense, music, ritual, and symbolism. Vague dreams stirred within her when a life of religious devotion to the church was compared to that of an eternal marriage. Emma, however, did not find the emotional fulfillment she was seeking and turned to the dramatic and exciting adventures to be found in the popular romances of the day. These were to start her off on her pursuit of the ideal and the romantic. As Flaubert said of Emma:

> Pendant six mois, à quinze ans, Emma se graissa donc les mains à cette poussière des vieux cabinets de lecture.[108]

Shortly thereafter she left the convent, and the nuns, who had been so sure she would take the veil, were glad to see her go.

All of Emma's short life was spent vacillating between a search for the absolute emotional experience in religion and that of opulence, fame, and a great romance. Emma was happy on her father's farm for only a little while and ended up longing for the convent. Her marriage was a disappointment to her because she could not find the absolute romance. Disappointed in her marriage, she resorted to adultry. When her love affairs failed, she developed

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108. Madame Bovary, 55.

psychosomatic symptoms and would temporarily indulge in religious fervor. In this character delineation of Emma there is always a thread of fraudulence, of the superficial and mediocre person. Her unreality lies, not in the person itself, but in the way she deludes herself and ruins her life through this delusion.

Although Salammbô, like Emma, searched for the absolute emotional experience, she was always completely devoted to Tanit. Her every act, no matter how frightening, was committed for Tanit and in her name. Salammbô's devotion to the goddess never faltered, and Salammbô's zealous piety excluded any personal desire for marriage. In fact, when confronted with the idea that she must marry, she betrays her fear of men:

> ...Tous ceux qu'elle avait aperçus lui faisaient horreur avec leurs rires de bête fauve et leurs membres grossiers.[109]

Salammbô's consuming passion was to see the veil of Tanit. She had been warned that only those worthy and ritually prepared to see it could survive the sight of the veil, but she was persistent in her attempts to be one of the chosen ones to view the veil. Yet, when she finally

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109. Salammbô, 51.

got the veil, she was surprised and disappointed that her possession of the Zäimph did not give her the joy she had anticipated.[110] In this respect, she resembles Emma, who never could find real satisfaction with any of her love affairs or her religious devotions. Neither can ever be satisfied, for the goals these women set for themselves could never be achieved. They are unrealistically high.

Both Emma and Salammbô are maladjusted, and there is a provocative similarity in the symptoms of their maladjustment in general. Both women want what is unattainable, the absolute; therefore, they never find their successes satisfying. Success, absolute success, always eludes them.

These symptoms are not unique, but are common to the thousands of unknown women who suffer in the same way as Emma and Salammbô. This common symptom is an idealism and goal so high that they are almost unattainable. In extreme cases they are impossible and distorted. The reason these goals are so high and elude success is that they are vague; consequently, the individual whose ideals are high and vaguely defined never has any sure way of determining whether or not she has attained them. Unable to recognize

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110. Ibid., 228.

any one of her goals achieved, the unhappy individual comes at last to the unhappy state in which she evaluates each new achievement as further evidence of failure. Success will always elude her for the reason that it is merely a verbal mirage. What she seeks to escape is absolute failure; what she pursues is absolute success--and these do not exist except inside her head. What anyone can at the most achieve is a series of relative successes, and these are all that anyone can achieve.[111]

A number of scenes and situations in Salammbô are reminiscent of Madame Bovary. Both women exhibited symptoms of hysteria. They suffered from depression, fainting spells, and an overwhelming lassitude. The sight of the veil prostrated Salammbô:

> La vue du zäimph avait boulversé Salammbô. Elle croyait la nuit entendre les pas de la Déesse, et elle se réveillait epouvantée en jetant des cris...[112]

Just so had Rodolphe's retreating carriage prostrated Emma:

> Tout à coup, un tilbury bleu passa au grand trot sur la place. Emma poussa un cri et tomba roide par terre, à la renverse.[113]

Again, during their respective illnesses, each had a devoted man stay with her. With Emma it is Charles. Charles

111. Johnson, Wendell, People in Quandaries, Harper & Bros., New York, 1946, p. 3-7.
112. Salammbô, 117.
113. Madame Bovary, 249.

neglected his practice and went more deeply into debt buying her expensive medicine.[114] Schahabarim was constantly with Salammbô. He, who was skilled and had studied at the great schools and had traveled far and wide, could find no cure for Salammbô. Schahabarim was the most learned man in Carthage and prescribed the finest potions known to the civilized world of that time, but nothing helped.[115]

Although one finds in Salammbô the same impersonal style with sharp, sensitive detail that one finds in Madame Bovary, Salammbô and her supporting characters literally do not speak for themselves as did the characters in Madame Bovary. The beautifully balanced interplay between characters in a criss-crossing of dialogue that one finds in Madame Bovary are almost absent in Salammbô. An example of this is Emma's visit to Bournisien. Here one finds two characters revealing themselves to the reader solely through dialogue. Here the reader observes an extremely distraught woman trying to get help from a kindly but uncomprehending priest who is frightened by the very intensity, vehemence, and incoherence of her plea for help.[116] Flaubert makes short

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114. Ibid., p. 252.
115. Salammbô, 201.
116. Madame Bovary, 137-143.

shrift of a similar situation in Salammbô with one sentence:

> ...Elle appelait Schahabarim, et, quand il était venu, n'avait plus rien à lui dire.[117]

The reader, therefore, never feels that he himself is observing people in critical detachment and is unable to feel that he is drawing his own conclusions as he does in Madame Bovary.

In comparing Madame Bovary with Salammbô it becomes increasingly obvious that the absence of realistic dialogue from Salammbô is one of the big factors that makes the characters less real than those in Madame Bovary. Flaubert knew how the people around him talked; he had collected their cliches for years and had a good file of ready-made dialogue; he did not, however, know how people acted and talked in Carthage. This is perhaps why Salammbô is always intoning a prayer to the goddess. Other than that, she has little to say.

Spendius seems to be a counterpart to Homais. Especially in the camp, as he wanders around visiting and boasting, conniving and pushing, does he remind the reader of Homais at the fair. Like Homais, he is always involving

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117. Salammbô, 201.

others in his machinations; Spendius incited others to commit the deed. He got Mathô to go after the veil just as Homais got Charles to operate on Hippolyte's foot. Both Homais and Spendius were cowards and used others to promote their schemes; however, Homais, as a final irony, was successful and received the cross of the Legion of Honor. Spendius was crucified with Zarxas and Autharitius. To Spendius came a strange courage after a lifetime of being a coward and cold-blooded opportunist.

There is an ironic twist in the opposing characters of Bournisien and Schahabarim. Bournisien, a simple and rather crudely uncomprehending man, never lost his deep faith and love for his religion. Schahabarim, the high priest of Tanit and most learned man in Carthage, turned from a life of consecration to Tanit and worshipped Moloch in the crucial hour. Bournisien failed Emma because he did not understand the nature of her problem. When Salammbô became ill, Schahabarim, in spite of his skill and knowledge, could not help her. He also personally urged her to recapture the sacred veil and instructed her in the necessary purification rites. After she had returned with it, he reproached her for having followed his advice. If Bournisien lacked the intellectual insight of Schahabarim, neither was he faced with the respon-

sibility of making important political decisions. Yet, it was the intellectual who faltered in Flaubert's novels.

As in Madame Bovary, Salammbô contains a network of poetic symbols. Unlike Madame Bovary, however, the characters here are doomed by a relentless fate and a jealous goddess. The Mercenaries had rioted in Hamilcar's garden and desecrated the animals sacred to the gods. Mâtho and Salammbô were inexorably drawn together by the veil. Salammbô's longing to see the veil seemed somehow to cause Spendius to get Mâtho to go after it. When Mâtho put on the veil, he became hysterical. When he insisted upon bringing the veil to Salammbô, he acted like a man under a spell. The veil's influence over him became obvious when he told Salammbô she had commanded him to bring it to her in a dream.

The book is abundantly filled with symbols of impending tragedy. Mâtho saw a black ram in the temple. When leaving the temple a cynocephalus clung to the veil, and in Hamilcar's palace the veil became entangled with a golden star adorning the pavement. When Mâtho approached Salammbô's bed, his lamp burned up the fine mosquito netting around the bed, a symbol of the vulnerability of Carthage.

In Madame Bovary Flaubert made a detail like shoes fit the personality of the character he was describing. Rodolphe

has fine, soft leather boots; Binet's are carefully polished; Charles wears country boots with deep ridges; Emma's change from sabots when she was on the farm to swansdown slippers. One finds similar details in Salammbô. The slaves wear wooden sandals, and Mâtho's cothurns are a symbol of his profession. Salammbô has papyrus sandals, reminding the reader that she lives in North Africa. Her sandals of snake skin are symbols of the part the snake played in her religious rites. The little slave boy who took Hannibal's place as a sacrifice to Moloch wore Salammbô's slippers with pearl encrusted heels. Her sandals made of bird plumage are reminiscent of Emma's swansdown slippers.

In Madame Bovary description was deliberately kept colorless and subordinate to the action and characters in the story. In Salammbô description is violently colorful and overwhelms the characters. Flaubert used description presumably to make ancient Carthage come alive to the reader. He wanted to recreate for the reader the climate, archeology, culture, and religion in such a way that the characters would take on a semblance of reality. What happened was that he created a marvelous description of the archeology of Carthage and retraced the first Punic War as fiction. His characters became submerged in his own erudition. The leading protagonist

became the first Punic War and not Salammbô.

Although there are many similarities between Madame Bovary and Salammbô, one obvious difference between the two books is the difference in dialogue. Salammbô lacks that subtle touch of simple conversation familiar and comfortable to the ear as an old shoe is to feet that have worn those shoes a long time. The dialogue is not as carefully developed in Salammbô as it was in Madame Bovary. In some cases, dialogue in Salammbô is missing in scenes comparable to those in Madame Bovary.

Salammbô never becomes a live, warm woman in the story, for her conversation is never real. She is usually seen praying to the goddess. Most of her conversation is with her slave to whom she gives commands, or she talks to Schahabarim. The talks with Schahabarim are no better than her incantations. Nothing she ever says in the book reveals a complex, living human being, and this is true for every character in the book.

In no scene is there dialogue which in any way at all approaches the fine nuances of normal conversation one finds in Madame Bovary. In fact, except for only a few scenes, there is an almost total absence of true dialogue. In most scenes what begins as dialogue usually ends as narrative,

and a few quotation marks are not necessarily dialogue. It is very curious that Flaubert, who had such a sensitive ear for speech and who so mercilessly cut false romantic dialogue to ribbons, would completely reverse himself to commit the cardinal sin he abhorred in others. This dialogue is the rankest kind of verbal posturing one could find in any silly romance.

On the journey to Sicca, Spendius and Mâtho rode together. Spendius told Mâtho the story of his life, and the reader learns something about Mâtho's past. At no time does any of this become dialogue; it is all narration. It could have been dialogue, but Spendius never got beyond calling out to Mâtho here.[118]

Again, Narr' Havas came to Mâtho to offer his alliance. This is a natural place for dialogue, but the only dialogue here is Mâtho calling for a sword.[119]

When Hamilcar returned to Carthage, Salammbô came to meet him. There is no dialogue of consequence here, only a tense, dramatic scene of an angry father dumb with rage,

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118. Ibid., 26-27
119. Ibid., 32.

and Salammbô was tongue-tied with fear and shame. Yet, drama, if there was any, is lost in the elaborate description of Hamilcar's return and the manner in which he was greeted by all members of his household.[120] Even when Salammbô risked her life to bring her father the veil, Hamilcar could not communicate with his daughter:

> ...Hamilcar, sans pouvoir parler, la remerciait par des signes de tête. Ses yeux se portaient alternativement sur le zäimph et sur elle, et il remarqua que sa chaînette était rompue. Alors il frissonna, saisi par un soupçon terrible...[121]

Flaubert believed that in times of stress words failed people, and the author could best leave out dialogue. Dialogue was, according to Flaubert, best replaced with description of a look. He wrote, therefore, the following about poetic language:

> ...Pour les choses qui n'ont pas de mots, le regard suffit...[122]

This was in all likelihood his reason for cutting out dialogue in these instances; however, in the same scene, when Salammbô brought him the veil, he immediately regained his composure to give Salammbô to Narr' Havas in marriage. He was a very strange parent. Was this because the general was

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120. Ibid., 139-142.
121. Ibid., 234.
122. Oeuvres complètes, Correspondance, II, 462.

a man of fast action? Or was he so indifferent to the daughter who risked her life to help him? The scene simply does not come off.

Even in scenes where Flaubert does use long dialogue, such as Hamilcar's meeting with the Elders, all speeches here are declamation rather than natural conversation. Even the Elders' hints about Salammbô never quite shock the reader the way understatement in Madame Bovary did. Perhaps it was the very fact that the beauty he sought in Salammbô as an antidote to Madame Bovary made him reckless--or careless. Dialogue in Salammbô is plain old-fashioned pre-Scribian declamation.

Madame Bovary caused scandal and became a cause célèbre in a famous court fight. Salammbô, in its own way, was also a controversial book. The critics and historical experts of the day tore it to pieces, but the public bought it. This was a surprise to Flaubert, for he thought it would not sell to a broad reading group. He felt he had written a book for an elite kind of reader, as he wrote to Madame de Maupassant:

> ...ma Carthaginoise fait son chemin dans le monde: mon éditeur annonce pour vendredi la deuxième édition. Grands et petits journaux parlent de moi. Je fais dire beaucoup de sottises. Les uns me dénigrent,

> les autres m'exaltent. On m'a appelé "ilote ivre," on a dit que je répandais un air empesté, on m'a comparé à Chateaubriand et à Monsieur...[123]

Farther on in the same letter he wrote that he had expected a completely different reaction to his book:

> N'importe; j'avais fait un livre pour un nombre très restraint de lecteurs et il se trouve que le public y mord. Que le Dieu de la librairie soit béni![124]

Descharmes wrote as follows about the success of Salammbô and why it sold so well:

> ...En general, on demeura stupéfait du genre choisi et du sujet traité, et cette surprise, la remarque est de Th. Gautire (5), contribua beaucoup au succès du livre. Trois éditions furent enlevées en deux mois...[125]

The Salammbô fad began. Women went to masked balls dressed as Salammbô. Songs, operettas, caricatures, and parodies such as Folammbô were written. The battle between Flaubert and the historians and critics began, too. Flaubert defended his book in two now very famous letters: one to Froehner and one to St. Beuve. In his letter to Froehner, Flaubert defended the historical accuracy of his book. The letter is important, for it reveals the depths of this man's erudition and the accuracy of his work. One also cannot help

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123. Correspondance, V, 73.
124. Ibid., p. 73.
125. Descharmes, René, et Dumesnil, René, Autour de Flaubert, Mercure de France, Paris, 1912, p. 151.

but be amused as he punctures Froehner at the beginning of his letter with a not too subtle sarcasm:

> Je n'ai, monsieur, nulle prétention à l'archéologie. J'ai donné mon livre pour un roman, sans préface, sans notes, et je m'étonne qu'un homme illustre, comme vous, par des travaux si considérables, perde ses loisirs à une littérature si légère! J'en sais cependant assez, monsieur, pour oser dire que vous errez complètement d'un bout à l'autre de votre travail, tout le long de vos dix-huit pages, à chaque paragraphe et à chaque ligne.[126]

Then, Flaubert went on and defended his book on each point that Froehner had challenged, and he was able to back up his defense with sound scholarly authority.[127] Even today, one is amazed by the tremendous scholarship that is revealed in this letter.

When the book was finished, Flaubert himself analyzed its weakness in a reply to St. Beuve's criticisms. To St. Beuve he said that he was apologizing. He does display some pique with St. Beuve in spite of his opening conciliatory tone:

> ...Vous commencez par douter de la réalité de ma reproduction, puis vous me dites: "Après tout, elle peut être vraie"; et comme conclusion: "Tant pis si elle est vraie!"...[128]

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126. Correspondance, V. 76.
127. Ibid., 76-87.
128. Ibid., 56.

St. Beuve had compared Salammbô to Emma Bovary and Velléda, but Flaubert insisted she was not like any of them:

> Quant à mon héroïne, je ne la défends pas. Elle ressemble selon vous à "une Elvire sentimentale," à Velléda, à Mme Bovary. Mais non! Velléda est active, intelligente, européenne, Mme Bovary est agitée par des passions multiples; Salammbô, au contraire, demeure clouée par l'idée fixe. C'est une maniaque, une espèce de sainte Thérèse. N'importe! 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.[129]

Honesty would not permit Flaubert to say he had created a real figure, and he recognized the difficulty of making such ancient characters come alive. His sense of honesty also caused him to write that his book had many faults, and he listed for St. Beuve the important faults of the book as he saw them:

> 1. Le piédestal est trop grand pour la statue. Or, comme on ne pèche jamais par <u>le trop</u>, mais par <u>le pas assez</u>, il aurait fallu cent pages de plus relatives à Salammbô seulement.
>
> 2. Quelques transitions manquent. Elles existaient; je les ai retranchées ou trop raccourcies, dans la peur d'être ennuyeux.
>
> 3. Dans le chapitre VI, tout ce qui se rapporte à Giscon est <u>de même tonalité</u> que la deuxième partie du chapitre II (Hannon). C'est la même situation, et il n'y a point progression d'effet.
>
> 4. Tout ce qui s'étend depuis la bataille du Macar

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129. <u>Ibid.</u>, 57-58.

> jusqu'au serpent, et tout le chapitre XIII, jusqu'au dénombrement des Barbares, s'enfonce, disparaît dans le souvenir. Ce sont des endroits de second plan, ternes, transitoires, que je ne pouvais malheureusement éviter et qui alourdissent le livre, malgré les efforts de prestesse que j'ai pu faire. Ce sont ceux-là qui m'ont le plus coûté, que j'aime le moins et dont je me suis le plus reconaissant.
>
> 5. L'aqueduc.
>
> Aveu! mon opinion secrète est qu'il n'y avait point d'aqueduc à Carthage, malgré les ruines actuelles de l'aqueduc. Aussi ai-je eu soin de prévenir d'avance toutes les objections par une phrase hypocrite à l'adresse des archéologues. J'ai mis les pieds dans le plat, lourdement, en rappelant que c'était une invention romaine, alors nouvelle, et que l'aqueduc d'à présent a été refait sur l'ancien. Le souvenir de Bélisaire coupant l'aqueduc romain de Carthage m'a poursuivi, et puis c'était une belle entrée pour Spendius et Mâtho. N'importe! mon aqueduc est une lâchete! Confiteor.
>
> 6. Autre et dernière coquinerie: Hannon.
>
> Par amour de la clarté, j'ai faussé l'histoire quant à sa mort. Il fut bien, il est vrai, crucifié par les Mercenaires, mais en Sardaigne. Le général crucifié à Tunis en face de Spendius s'appelait Hannibal. Mais quelle confusion cela eût fait pour le lecteur.[130]

It is obvious from the above quotation that Flaubert had carefully dissected his own book and found the results of his labors disappointing. He wrote as he did about his own work, because he practiced his own code of honesty and truth. Perhaps he summed up his problems with Salammbô best in his letter to Ernest Feydeau:

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130. Ibid., 69-70.

> Non! mon vieux, ne va pas croire que les beaux sujets font les bons livres. J'ai peur, après la confection de Salammbô, d'être plus que jamais convaincu de cette vérité.[131]

131. Ibid., IV, 388.

IV L'EDUCATION SENTIMENTALE

When Flaubert started work on L'Éducation sentimentale, he wrote that he wanted to create a novel about contemporary Paris:

> Me voilà maintenant attelé depuis un mois à un roman de moeurs modernes qui se passera à Paris. Je veux faire l'histoire morale des hommes de ma génération; "sentimentale" serait plus vrai.[132]

He went on to write that his subject would be a true one and pertinent:

> Le sujet, tel que je l'ai conçu, est, je crois, profondément vrai, mais, à cause de cela même, peu amusant probablement.[133]

He was also somewhat anxious about the book, because he felt certain parts were weak. He outlined those parts that he thought were weak in the same letter:

> Les faits, le drame manquent un peu; et puis l'action est étendue dans un laps de temps trop considérable. Enfin, j'ai beaucoup de mal et je suis plein d'inquiétudes.[134]

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132. Ibid., 158.
133. Ibid., 158.
134. Ibid., 158.

The finished product was neither romantic nor realistic; it was, in fact, a new genre he had created for the novel: a ruthless satire. This satire was a curious blend of roman à clef, psychological novel, and a satirical study of the political, economic, and social structure of mid-nineteenth century France. The characters were only thinly disguised, and critics all are agreed that the Arnoux of the novel are Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Schlésinger, a couple Flaubert had first met at Trouville when he was only fifteen and had also continued to correspond with all his life.[135] He was also invited to the daughter's wedding.[136]

The book was ruthlessly attacked upon its publication; it was also neglected by the general public. Flaubert had anticipated a reaction to his book; he probably foresaw people would recognize themselves in his book. A year before the book was published he wrote to George Sand that he expected to have certain people to be angry about his book:

> J'ai violemment bûché depuis six semaines. Les patriotes ne me pardonneront pas ce livre, ni les réactionnaires non plus! Tant pis; j'écris les choses

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135. Gerard-Gailly, Flaubert et les Fantômes de Trouville, Paris, La Renaissance du Livre, 45-97.
136. Oeuvres complètes, Correspondance, IV, 118.

> comme je les sens, c'est-à-dire comme je crois qu'elles existent.[137]

When the book finally came out, Flaubert could not help but be disappointed. To George Sand he wrote how everyone was attacking him and how even his friends were afraid of being compromised.[138] He wrote to Turgenev in 1874 that he could not reconcile himself to the utter lack of understanding L'Éducation sentimentale had had.[139] The book was a profound, sardonic comment on the France of Flaubert's young manhood. The novel's ruthless analysis of human selfishness amid social upheaval was still too close to his readers; they recognized themselves too easily in it. For this they could not forgive Flaubert, and there was perhaps an unconscious desire to let the book drop unnoticed.

The novel's interest does not rest on its merits as fiction but as a caricature of the society in which Flaubert lived. There is much action in the book. It is, however, a difficult book to read, for the reader must understand the political and social changes that were rapidly occurring in nineteenth century France in order to know what Flaubert

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137. Ibid., V., 385.
138. Ibid., V, 96-97
139. Ibid., VII, 159.

was trying to do in this novel. Without some knowledge of these events in French history, one cannot understand that Flaubert had mirrored the confusion and instability that resulted from these frenzied changes in technology, politics, economics, and society.

The book covers the period from September, 1840 to Louis Napoleon's coup d'état in December, 1851. The action is seen through the eyes of Frédéric Moreau, whose almost impoverished mother has sent him to Paris to study law. The first part of the book deals with the rise of the middle class through wild business deals, the stock exchange, etc. Investments, mortgages, loans are the preoccupation of the characters in the novel. Those who have money and are in the social station, want to make more or financially ruin their rivals; those who have nothing want to get information from influential people and become one of those in power. Reputations and social positions rose and fell with the stock market and the auctioneer's hammer. Friends betrayed one another by holding promissory notes over each others' heads; underneath all the action runs a thread of personal treachery--a veritable social jungle with no holds barred.

The second theme is the Republican and Socialist revolts against bourgeois rule. Here Flaubert masterfully recreated the outbreaks of the people and states of siege in Paris. One of the novel's greatest settings is the invasion of the Tuilleries and street fighting in 1848. As in Madame Bovary, he disinterestedly dissects the hysterics, the terror, and the fakes in the Socialist movement. Just so, he exposes the upper classes who are ready to sell their country and families for profit. The book ends with Paris again in a state of siege. Louis Napoleon has taken over, and the Second Empire has begun.

The last two chapters form a kind of postscript to the climax of the story. Here the reader sees Deslauriers and Moreau years later. They are much older, but they have not gained in wisdom. Both have failed to gain what they set out to do. Frédéric had dreamed of the perfect love; Deslauriers, of power. Deslauriers sums up their failures with:

...J'avais trop de logique, et toi de sentiment.[140]

Madame Arnoux does, however, return in these last two chapters to return the twelve thousand francs she owed Moreau.

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140. Flaubert, Gustave, L'Éducation sentimentale, Garnier Frères, 1961, p. 426.

There is an understanding between the two. If Moreau suffered from unrequited love, perhaps he is still ahead of Deslauriers: the dream is not entirely reduced to ashes. In this he is a little like Hans Im Glück; no one and nothing can destroy his dream.

L'Éducation sentimentale contains many similarities to Madame Bovary. Like Madame Bovary, it depicts mid-nineteenth century middle class Frenchmen--but on a much broader and colder canvas. The vein of irony runs deeper and is much more ruthless and violent. No character is spared in this book, except perhaps Madame Arnoux and Louise. There is the same depiction of character in dialogue, but the irony of Madame Bovary becomes sardonic in L'Éducation sentimentale. Perhaps, this is because there is an almost absolute exclusion of sympathy in the book.

Frédéric Moreau is the most boring man in fiction, and the reader finds himself appalled by his weakness and simpering vanity. He is perhaps all the more disgusting because he reminds the reader of Madame Bovary. He has Emma's extravagant tastes and does not know how to handle money. His vague dreams of far distant places are so like Emma's. His search for the absolute is again like Emma's. His spendthrift life is exactly the way Emma would

have lived had she been in his position. Frédéric, unlike Emma, comes from an upper class family and inherits a lot of money; however, he comes from the provinces like Emma. Moreau lives in Paris and attends the theatre, parties, etc. Emma could only dream of these.

Madame Moreau is like Charles Bovary's mother. She has sacrificed everything to give her son an education and to help him succeed. She is a calculating opportunist whenever she thinks her son would benefit. A very proper grande dame, she would marry her son to the daughter of a man whom she despises and considers beneath her, for she wants the money the girl will inherit. Money and social position at any cost are her driving aims in life.

Sénécal is perhaps the most revolting character in the book, for he uses the condition of the poor as a stepping stone to further his own power. He also undergoes the greatest change in the book. A democratic dogmatist, he develops by degrees into a tyrant and member of the police. It is Sénécal the factory overseer, who extracts fines ruthlessly from the workers. To Moreau he defends his action with the following remarks:

> "....La Démocratie n'est pas le dévergondage de l'individualisme. C'est le niveau commun sous la loi,

répartitions du travail, l'ordre![141]

It is Sénécal who kills Dussardier, the honest believer in Socialist virtue and who attributed all the evil in the world to authority. Sénécal is perhaps the most astonishing character in the book to modern readers because Flaubert has sketched him with such deadly accuracy. There is only a thin line between the tyrannical overseer and policeman and the modern dictator, and as each grows and expands, the tyrannical maw becomes more voracious. In Sénécal one also finds the germ of the basic idea in L'État de Siège by Camus, a justice so impersonal that it becomes tyranny.

Certain scenes and certain details in L'Éducation sentimentale parallel Madame Bovary. The costume ball Frédéric attends with Arnoux is somewhat like the one Léon and Emma attend.[142] The party at the Dambreuse is much like that at Vaubyessard.[143] Moreau dreams of taking Madame Arnoux to far off places like Spain and Switzerland, just as Emma dreamed of those places.[144] When Frédéric returns to Paris, he stops to say good-bye to Louise. She breaks into sobs. Though neither cried when Léon left for Paris, the

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141. Ibid., 198.
142. Ibid., 114-119.
143. Ibid., 156-164.
144. Ibid., 171.

scene is reminiscent of the departure of Léon.[145] Like Madame Bovary, each scene is replete with the atmosphere of fiasco and fraud, and the tender moments and evocative description only outline this fraudulence more sharply.

Flaubert's description is, as usual, superb. The opening scene on the boat recalls the broad panoramic canvasses of Seurat and introduces the Arnoux and Frédéric to the reader. Other descriptions are those of the invasion of the Tuilleries and the street fighting. These are probably among the finest of Flaubert's descriptions. The descriptions of the dinners of the Arnoux, the Dambreuses, the races--each one is more vivid than the former.

Although dialogue is used to develop character and action, it never becomes as fine and subtle as in Madame Bovary. It may be that dialogue here is swallowed by the very size of the social structure Flaubert chose to depict. Madame Bovary was structurally much smaller in scope, and its very limitations were just right for a more intimate kind of dialogue, a dialogue much closer to the reader's realm of experience. The dialogue is also not as delicately balanced as in Madame Bovary, due to the fact that the characters are more coldly sketched. They are less pretentious, bolder, and deliberately and openly

stalk money and power like animals of prey. There is a terrible kind of rivalry among these people, which is reflected in their dialogue.

L'Éducation sentimentale, although a satire, has some romantic elements. A grotesquely romantic character is the old ragpicker so like the old blind man in Madame Bovary. The patriotic leaders fighting for a great cause are opportunists in pseudo-romantic clothes. Frédéric Moreau is a romantic dreamer. He never succeeded because he sought the inaccessible, a common romantic failing. His love affairs, so romantic in the beginning, end in disappointment. The assignations, notes, parties, flirtations are romantic elements that acquire a sardonic tinge. Even the woman he cherishes shuns passion out of religious fear. These elements are not so obvious in L'Éducation sentimentale as in Madame Bovary, because the characters in the former novel are so openly rapacious and the vein in which Flaubert writes is not so much parody and irony as the lethally, caustic sardonic.

V LA TENTATION DE SAINT ANTOINE

For the third time Flaubert began to work on the Tentation de Saint Antoine, and this time it was published in its entirety in 1874. The book was very unpopular. Apparently he had expected the book to be unacceptable to the general public, but he had hoped it would be appreciated by the intellectuals. This was not to be, for the book was unacceptable even to his friends. Hurt and disappointed, he wrote the following letter to Turgenev:

> Vous me parlez de Saint Antoine et vous me dites que le gros public n'est pas pour lui. Je le savais d'avance, mais je croyais être plus largement compris du public d'élite. Sans Drumont et le petit Pelletan, je n'aurais pas eu d'article élogieux.[145]

Although the Tentation de Saint Antoine was badly received by the critics and public alike, Flaubert felt that this book was the work of his life:

> Au milieu de mes chagrins, j'achève mon Saint Antoine. C'est l'oeuvre de toute ma vie, puisque le première idée m'en est venue en 1845, à Gênes, devant un tableau de Breughel et depuis ce temps-là

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145. Correspondance, VII, 159.

> je n'ai cessé d'y songer et de faire des lectures afférentes.[146]

It was perhaps this lifelong devotion to an idea that compelled him to return to the book he had loved and which had been such a disappointment to him. He had to try and achieve the thunderclap he had dreamed of during those early years.

Most critics have pointed out Flaubert's admiration for Goethe, and he did often write about Goethe in his letters. He did, in fact, express the desire to be another Goethe in one of his earliest letters:

> ...je voudrais être complètement simple pour t'aimer comme un enfant, ou bien alors être un Goethe ou un Byron.[147]

Again he wrote to Louise Colet, while working on Madame Bovary, that he agreed with Goethe's theory of writing:

> Tout dépend de la conception. Cet axiome du grand Goethe est le plus simple et le plus merveilleux résumé et précepte de toutes les oeuvres d'art possibles.[148]

This was a cardinal rule Flaubert used to discipline his own writing, and in this letter he freely admitted that

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146. Ibid., VII, 156.
147. Ibid., I, 245.
148. Ibid., III, 21.

he followed Goethe in this matter. His admiration for Goethe is again revealed in a letter to Mlle. L. de Chantepie, for he advised her to study Goethe:

> ...Étudiez à fond Shakespeare et Goethe.[149]

Since Flaubert's letters are replete with reference to Goethe, it should not be surprising to find Goethe's influence in certain areas of Flaubert's works, even if the works they produced were very different.

Although both men belonged to different generations and literary periods, certain comparisons can be made between the two men. Both studied law; both became ill and had to leave school (Goethe, however, returned to the university and received his degree.). Both men became formidable scholars of antiquity and both were avid students of science. Both men were in love with married women and idealized these women in novels.

There is a strange coincidence in the lives of these two men; one also is struck by a similarity of some of their works, an influence Goethe may have had on Flaubert. Frédéric Moreau in L'Éducation Sentimentale is in many ways like Werther, except that Moreau does not commit

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149. Ibid., IV, 197.

suicide. Die Leiden des jungen Werthers is more or less based upon Goethe's hopeless and unrequited passion for Charlotte Buff, whom he idealized in the story as Lotte. Strangely, Flaubert's own novel was based upon his own requited love for Madame Schlésinger, and she, in turn, was idealized in L'Éducation sentimentale as Madame Arnoux.

Again, each man reflected the sum total of his respective erudition and love of antiquity in a single historical work, although each author had produced at least one other historical work. Each labored almost a lifetime on his project, and the literary work in the case of each author is based on an historical character. For Goethe it was Faust II; for Flaubert, the Tentation de Saint Antoine. Each work is different; however, each work is a monumental project in which each man dramatized and echoed on a grand scale the image of man tormented by the problem of his nature. Each work is read today only by a very small reading audience, and each man's claim to fame rests on other works he produced.

Of all the works written by Flaubert, Saint Antoine defines most clearly and completely the complex personality and temperament of Flaubert. Even today it is the most difficult of his books to read and to understand. It is

perhaps the supreme expression of a man's ambivalence: the fertile imagination versus the analytic observer. The imagination appears to be even more undisciplined because of its precision in details and its superb description. It is this frenzy and wearisome ennumeration of detail which sharply outline the overpowering imagination and intrusive erudition. Saint Anthony's cries become the gibberish of a very senile old man who has lost touch with reality.

The book probably meant so much to him, because his youth was inextricably bound to the conception of this work. It belonged to his sister Caroline's honeymoon and the long, happy days he had spent under Alfred Le Poittevin's tutelage; therefore, it was only fitting that Flaubert should dedicate this book to the memory of his long dead friend:

> ...un ami mort il y a bientôt trente ans, celui à qui j'ai dédié mon Saint Antoine.[150]

Flaubert wrote that Saint Antoine was to be a dramatic exposition of the Alexandrine world of the fourth century.[151] Yet, it never became that. Unfortunately, it became lost in the fantastic visions that parade before the hermit.

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150. Ibid., VIII, 325.
151. Ibid., VI, 132.

What remains are some echoes of history, religion, and mythology. There is also the marvelous description which is unsurpassed, but that is all.

It is curious that Madame Bovary, which was so limpid and fluid, so easy to read, was discussed in detail and at great length in Flaubert's letters. Yet, Saint Antoine, the work he loved and worked on for a lifetime, was rarely discussed in his letters. His intent and the goals he was striving to achieve in Madame Bovary are all there for the reader to read. There is very little to find in the letters about Saint Antoine. Was the book incomprehensible to the reader because Flaubert's own conception of the story was not too clear? Were the visions of Saint Antoine merely the disjunctive phantoms of a scholar's overworked imagination?

Faguet has said that Saint Anthony believed everything vain except God; therefore, nothing in the world is worth troubling about or cooperating with, that nothing is worth being known or understood. That consequence is a monstrous error. Since it is impossible to suppress the nature of man, as Saint Anthony tried to do, the whole of the Universe came to solicit Saint Anthony. The very natural and necessary inclinations which Saint Anthony wished to uproot within

himself revolted against him and persecuted him. Thus, Saint Anthony, ever motionless, finds thousands of phantoms luring him to reach out for all the sensual pleasures, power, thought, imagination, and reverie, that man's desire is a prey to.[152]

Flaubert used the large cities and landscapes of Egypt as a background on which to lavish brilliant colors and gigantic forms. In Saint Antoine the detailed pictures of the phantoms are particularly colorful; however, the saint is crushed by the material: Flaubert's overpowering imagination and erudition. The Tentation de Saint Antoine is not really a novel. It is closer to the old miracle play, or one could perhaps say that it is a panoramic description of the geneology of the gods. It is romantic in time and setting and the sheer imagination of its author. Its realism, if there is any, is in the impersonal style and verisimilitude of detail.

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152. Faguet, Emile, Flaubert, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1914, p. 70.

VI LES TROIS CONTES

Les Trois contes was the last of Flaubert's books to be published before his death in 1880. Each tale reveals a maturation and mastery of the style he evolved in Madame Bovary; each tale is also written in the most concentrated form possible of one or more of Flaubert's works. Un Coeur simple has a setting like that in Madame Bovary and contains the best of style and form found in Madame Bovary. La Légende de Saint Julien L'Hospitalier reminds one of the less successful Tentation de Saint Antoine, and one cannot help but compare Hérodias with Salammbô in all its barbaric splendor.

Both Hérodias and Saint Julien were inspired by art objects in the Rouen Cathedral. On the front of the cathedral is a tympanum. Here a thirteenth century sculptor has depicted Salome walking on her hands just as Flaubert described her in his story.[153] The tale of Saint Julien was inspired by a stained-glass window in the same cathedral. Flaubert himself mentioned this in at least two letters and

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153. Dumesnil, René, Madame Bovary de Gustave Flaubert, Paris, Hachette, 1958, 390.

wrote as follows in one:

> Je lui avais montré et moi-même apporté le dessin en question, celui du vitrail de la cathédrale de Rouen, auquel la dernière ligne de Saint Julien renvoie le lecteur. Ce n'était pas bien difficile à découvrir.[154]

Flaubert himself tells the reader of the story that he got the idea from the church window:

> Et voilà l'histoire de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier, telle à peu près qu'on la trouve, sur un vitrail d'église, dans mon pays.[155]

This sentence, which ends the tale, gives to the story a quiet charm and ring of authenticity.

For writing his account of the story of Saint Julien he consulted various works on hagiography, such as the legend of Pécopin,[156] a thirteenth century manuscript of Saint Julien in the Bibliothèque Nationale, da Voragine's Golden Legend, and others.[157]

Although the story of Saint Julien is similar to that of Saint Antoine, Flaubert makes a more judicious use of his erudition than in the earlier work. The rich colors

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154. Correspondance, VIII, 161.
155. Flaubert, Gustave, Les Trois contes, Garnier Frères, 1961, p. 135.
156. Correspondance, IV, 105.
157. Dumesnil, R., Madame Bovary de Gustave Flaubert, Paris, Hachette, 1958, p. 388-389.

serve as a background for the swift-moving action and in no way hinder that action. The narration flows smoothly and easily in the best tradition of an oft told tale. He re-created the legendary world of the Middle Ages and not the Middle Ages themselves. He made the spirit of those Middle Ages come alive through his incomparable style. His dispassionate approach and marvelous description give the story its realism, but the story itself and its setting make it a romantic tale.

In Hérodias, Flaubert evokes the historical past and brings all of that tense period in history to life. Again, the erudition and scholarship give the story its historical realism. The story, however, does not revolve around Hérodias. It is rather an impresonal account of a momentous occurrence in history which, at the time it happened, gave no indication that that incident and the people involved would become immortal because of this incident. Hérodias is only the machinery which will help to bring about the events that will change the course of history. This is accomplished through Flaubert's impersonal style and gives the reader that same sense of participation to be found in Madame Bovary. It is as though the reader is an unseen observer, and sees both the event as it happened and how the

event will change world history.

The description of the party and the events leading up to the appearance of Salomé set the stage for the climax. The party and Salomé are reminiscent of Salammbô, and Salome has that same unreal quality about her. She is the same dream woman that Salammbô is; yet, she is more real because the reader knows she did at one time exist. She is, therefore, all the more heartless and amoral for her action.

Flaubert described her dance in detail. This is perhaps a bit of realism he took from his experiences in Egypt, for here Salomé resembles the dancer Kuchiuk-Hanem, who performed her famous dance for Flaubert and du Camp, and, of course, she ends her dance walking around on her hands like the statue in the front of the Rouen Cathedral.

The descriptions of the party and the dance are a masterful blend of realism and scholarship. The scholarship is so carefully developed, so fluid, that the reader is unconscious of the tremendous amount of research required to depict such a scene. Hérodias is Salammbô in which erudition and description remain the background for a well known story.

Un Coeur simple is associated with the closest facets of Flaubert's personal life. Every character, every setting

corresponds to some place in Flaubert's life. All the places and descriptions are accurate, and he made special trips to these places to be sure he was accurate.[158] The farms belonged to the Flauberts. There was, in fact, a Golden Lamb at Trouville kept by a Mère David. The other minor figures in the story were known to Flaubert, or he had heard his parents speak of them. Most of the names were altered only slightly. Félicité was a composite of an unmarried mother and an old servant who had been with the Flauberts since Flaubert's boyhood. The parrot belonged to a retired sea-captain living in Trouville. Félicité's mistress resembles Flaubert's aunt, and the children resemble Flaubert and his sister Caroline.[159]

In his Un Coeur simple Flaubert depicts the life of an obscure woman. As in Madame Bovary and again in Salammbô, he portrays a woman who is preoccupied with religion. Félicité is all alone in the world, so religion is here her one consolation. Flaubert said that Un Coeur Simple was to be like the smell and taste of freshly baked bread. His own summation of the story in his Correspondance is concise and to the point:

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158. Oeuvres complètes, Correspondance, VII, 243.
159. Flaubert, Gustave, Les Trois contes, Garnier Frères, Paris, 1961, Notes: 1-88.

> L'Histoire d'un coeur simple est tout bonnement le récit d'une vie obscure, celle d'une pauvre fille de campagne, dévote mais mystique, dévouée sans exaltation et tendre comme du pain frais. Elle aime successivement un homme, les enfants de sa maîtresse, un neveu, un vieillard qu'elle soigne, puis son perroquet; quand le perroquet est mort, elle le fait empailler et, en mourant à son tour, elle confond le perroquet avec le Saint-Esprit.[160]

Afraid that he would be misunderstood and that people would think he was again being ironic, Flaubert hastened to say that this was not the case at all. This story was sad and serious:

> Cela n'est nullement ironique comme vous le supposez, mais au contraire très serieux et très triste. Je veux apitoyer, faire pleurer les âmes sensibles, en étant une moi-même.[161]

Un Coeur simple had been written expressly for George Sand, but she died before it was completed. He wrote the following letter to her son regarding this story:

> J'avais commencé Un coeur simple à son intention exclusive, uniquement pour lui plaire. Elle est morte, comme j'étais au milieu de mon oeuvre.[162]

Unfortunately, the three stories were not well received. Always a controversial figure at best, he was again disappointed and hurt. He complained bitterly about

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160. Oeuvres complètes, Correspondance, VII, 307.
161. Ibid., 307.
162. Ibid., VIII, 65.

the critics, especially their reception of Hérodias. Only one or two critics gave the book favorable notice. After he had finished complaining about the critics in his letter, he wrote that he would not think about this affront:

> ...Je n'y pense plus et retourne à mes bonshommes qu'il faut avancer et finir.[163]

This meant, of course, that he would work on Bouvard et Pécuchet.

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163. Ibid., VIII, 44.

CONCLUSION

Although every work that Flaubert wrote is different, one finds a blend of realism and romanticism in each one. His realistic works do not consist of a detached observation that is mere mechanical copying. Each contains that mingling of observation, a deep sensitivity to the sensuous, controlled emotion, and a heightened artistic sense aroused by a vivid imagination. This curious harmony of realism and romanticism is not a new thing; it is as old as art itself. The segment of observed life is not the element that makes the artist's work powerful. Strangely, true realism rises from the deeper sources in the human soul, and it is the intense feeling of the artist which is so powerfully expressed through the subject and media with which the artist works. Conversely, romanticism, with its enchanting historical distance, its restless sensitivity, its undisciplined ardor, its alternating tempestuousness and lassitude, has for its base some real and honest facet of life and derives its strength therefrom. This is, at least, true of Flaubert's work, and it is most obvious in

his masterpiece Madame Bovary.

What makes an artist's work a masterpiece? It is that curious mixture of an honest and careful observation of life heightened by the disciplined imagination and emotion of the writer. These components are molded by the skill of the writer, his ability as a craftsman, and his sensitivity to the harmony of all those ingredients which are part and parcel of the work of art. Thus, when a work combines all the necessary components in such a way as to create as nearly as possible a perfect harmony, that work belongs to no school of writing. The unique style of its creator sets it apart, and it is recognized by savant and illiterate alike as a great work of art. It is almost redundant to say that Madame Bovary contains all these components.

Flaubert's works certainly contain the elements of both realism and romanticism, whether the work is described by his critics as romantic or realistic. The romantic stories are all based on an historical event. Salammbô, to be sure, is a figment of Flaubert's imagination, but Carthage and the Punic Wars were real. The male characters were also sketched from people who took part in the first Punic War. The same is true of Hérodias and Saint Julien.

Both were real people. Not only did Flaubert write about historical figures, he recreated the era in which they lived. The realism of these stories lies, however, not in the realism of the characters, but in the scholarly way in which he recreated the periods and settings in which they occur. He admitted that he had changed the story of Julien and changed some of the archeological facts about Carthage in order to create a more effective story. He could not create historical characters as they had really lived and spoken. He himself said it was not possible, since one could never know how the people of that period really had talked or lived; therefore, the historical works were really romantic.

Emma Bovary and Frédéric Moreau are both romantic people living in a realistic world. They are like so many people of their period. They had been raised on a kind of romantic pap and had to live in a world that would not shape itself to their romantic concepts. L'Éducation sentimentale, for all its impersonal approach, goes beyond realism and becomes a biting commentary of the society of Flaubert's generation.

Un Coeur simple is a gentle tale and very tender. Its

tenderness lies in the mingling of Flaubert's matchless style and a nostalgia for the familiar things of the past. His very restraint are what create a touching pathos in this story.

In each of the realistic works there is a network of symbolism. Even Félicité had her pathetic romance, and her religious devotion is not too unlike that of Emma's. Madame Bovary perhaps makes the most obvious use of it in Flaubert's masterful use of contrast.

Flaubert, who was so careful and restrained in his books, burst all the bonds of restraint in his Correspondance. He wrote long letters to his friends, and it is here that the reader finds a style that is very free and often careless. One finds in them all the tautologies he so ruthlessly banished in his works. The letters are important, because Flaubert set forth his literary theories in them. He also analyzed his own writing, discussed the social changes that shaped his own style of writing, and expounded his ideas on art and the creative process. Although the letters, at times, seem contradictory, patient research by the reader will turn up the solution to the contradiction in those letters. It was in his letters to Louise Colet during the composition of Madame Bovary that he defined

his theories of art and the concept for his novel. This is also true of the other works, but to a lesser extent.

As fame came to him, the tenor of the letters changed. He no longer complained as much about the difficulties of writing as when he was writing Madame Bovary. His circle of friends also broadened. Towards the end of his life he also wrote more often to du Camp. His comments on socialism, positivism, the changing political and social scene, are very interesting; however, his letters are perhaps most interesting to the reader because they are an unconscious self-portrait and reveal the complex inner man to the reader.

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