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CREATIVE GENDER AND THE FLAUBERTIAN IMAGINARY

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ABSTRACT

Throughout this dissertation, I demonstrate how Gustave Flaubert's corpus provides the literary critic with a textual rendering of the imaginary that demands further investigation into its creative potential in the context of gender theory. Using a selection of his novels, specifically *Madame Bovary*, *Salammbô*, *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1845 and 1869), and, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, I assert the status of literature as a creative force, not only through poetics, but also as a way into a better accounting for the imaginative faculty at large. Within this scope of Flaubert studies, I examine the place of gender in Flaubert's opus. Taking into consideration the remarkable attention dedicated to the uniqueness of his writing style, there is a disconnect between the extensive critical scholarship treating Flaubert's written technique and the relative limitation of scholarship on gender. While considering philosophical conceptions of the imaginary and narrative creativity, I place literary criticism at the heart of a renewed reflection on gender.

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DEDICATION

À tous les flaubertistes, y compris les flaubertologues, les flaubertographes et d'autres critiques spécialistes de Flaubert parmi lesquels j'espère me trouver un jour.

À tous les flaubertiens, flaubertophiles, et flaubertolâtres, pour qui Flaubert demeura toujours “présent partout” même s'il n'est “visible nulle part”.

À tous les flaubertophobes—peut-être que cette thèse vous fera changer d'avis.

À ma grand-mère qui aurait apprécié d'être à mes côtés pour cette occasion si particulière.

INTRODUCTION

1. Gender, agency, and literature

“Gender,” as a category of analysis, has come to be as multifaceted as the potential genders it can spawn. Yet, as Christine Planté observes, French literary studies have been particularly hesitant to adopt the notion of gender¹. Reasons for this hesitation, Planté continues, are both linguistic and cultural in nature. The deep-rooted tradition of literature as a product and representation of French culture renders gender in literary criticism all the more precarious². Nonetheless, rich literary analyses have resulted from the intersection of gender studies and literary criticism, and this dissertation intends to continue this critical legacy³. By examining how gender is textually “created” in the novels of Gustave Flaubert, I confirm the mutually and critically productive relationship between gender and literature.

As a primary component of this literary analysis, it is important to define how I understand “gender.” For the purpose of this study, I subscribe to Judith Butler’s definition of gender, as detailed in her landmark work *Gender Trouble*: “It would make no sense, then, to

¹“La résistance à l’emploi de cette notion [de genre] apparaît donc à la fois comme une singularité française et, en France, un peu comme une singularité des études littéraires” (127). Planté, Christine, “Genre, un concept intraduisible?” in *Le genre comme catégorie d’analyse*. (L’Harmattan: Paris, 2003).

²“Mais la résistance rencontrée à l’emploi du terme engage plus qu’une question de mots. La conviction qu’avec la langue française, qui ne permet pas l’exacte traduction du terme, c’est quelque chose du génie national, d’une histoire et d’une singularité culturelle qui résiste, hante, de façon implicite ou explicite, de nombreuses argumentations. Pour celles-ci, le terme ne serait ni nécessaire, ni pertinent, pour penser une culture française qui aurait miraculeusement échappé au modèle de la guerre des sexes, comme au modèle du machisme” (129).

³See, for example, Eve Sedgwick’s *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), Christine Planté’s *La Petite Sœur de Balzac - Essai sur la femme auteur*. (Paris: Le Seuil, 1989), Margaret Waller’s *The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1993).

define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex itself is a gendered category. Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established” (7). The dissociation of sex and gender is, however, easier said than done. As much as sexes are “pre-given,” assumptions of gender identity often couple the given biological sex. In literature, for example, gender becomes relevant when a character’s gender identity (as represented by his actions, her demeanor, its symbolism) does not match the category of sex to which it is assumed it belongs. My framework of analysis, as elaborated through my reading of Flaubert, is to envision gender as the result of a significant creative process, whether the end result corresponds to social expectations or not. The majority of my readings do not, in fact, focus on the “final” gender identity embodied by Flaubert’s literary characters, but rather question the importance of such conclusive representations and analyses of gender in literature. Instead, I trace gender development as a creative process, examining how literary characters, themselves products of the imagination, constitute textual conceptions of gender as a process in play. Indeed, as I demonstrate, in some instances no “mature” gender identity is perceptible by the end of the narrative, which underscores my conception of gender as a creative process.

Given the socio-cultural make-up of gender, its manifestation in literature, also a socio-cultural production, could also lead to a conflation of the historical, social, temporal, and textual representations of gender. Planté references this difficulty: “Outre les problèmes théoriques généraux que soulève l’emploi du *genre*...des difficultés propres à la littérature tiennent probablement pour beaucoup à l’idée de *construction* socio-culturelle de la différence des sexes que le concept mobilise. Que faire d’une telle approche dans l’univers de la littérature où tout est

« construit »?» (130) Although literary criticism detailing the ways in which texts correspond (or not) to perceptions of gender in their contemporary societies have led to fruitful conclusions,⁴ this is not the purpose of my thesis. Flaubert's writing style complicates the understanding of "real" (understood as socio-historical references sometimes used as a point of comparison for representations of gender in literature) in its relation to the "fictitious"⁵ (what is represented within the work of fiction). Flaubert constantly asserts his absence from his novels, both as person and as author,⁶ further distancing any autobiographical references that might infiltrate his writing, as Pierre Georges Castex⁷ argues in his reading of *L'Éducation sentimentale* as a "novelization" of Flaubert's love for Éliisa Schlésinger.⁸ Although the literary text is indeed a product of history, it also contains, in the words of Roland Barthes, a "résistance à l'histoire" (*Essais* 111). The works of Flaubert, I argue, take this element of resistance one step further. Indeed, even within his texts, Flaubert's literary characters, born from the Flaubertian imaginary,⁹ use gender as a means of resisting history. This dissertation demonstrates the ways in

⁴For example, in Mary Orr's *Flaubert: Writing the Masculine*, Orr focuses on how representations of masculinity in Flaubert's novels correspond to contemporary definitions of masculinity as detailed in the Napoleonic Code.

⁵I use the term "fictitious" to emphasize the fictional work as a product of the imaginary. As Louis Hay proclaims, creative work can occur at any time and in any place (the citation appears in chapter 3), and while I distinguish the imaginary from the real world, I do not limit the reflections of the imagination to the published text.

⁶This distinction is discussed by Michel Foucault in "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?": "le lien du nom propre avec l'individu nommé et le lien du nom d'auteur avec ce qu'il nomme ne sont pas isomorphes et ne fonctionnent pas de la même façon" (*Dits et écrits I* 825).

⁷See *Flaubert: L'Éducation sentimentale*. (Paris: CDU, 1972.) This argument is also treated in subsequent criticisms of the novel, including Alan Raitt's *Flaubert's First Novel: A Study of the 1845 Éducation sentimentale* where Raitt argues that the love between Flaubert and Schlésinger was indeed consummated (thus a model for both *Éductions*).

⁸Impersonal narration, defined by the lack of the author in his text, is often used as the element dividing Flaubert's "mature" works from his juvenilia. While it is at the discretion of the literary critic whether to consider or not the words of the author (whether as person or as narrative figure), the prevalence of this discussion in Flaubert studies especially warrants its mention, at the very least.

⁹By "Flaubertian imaginary" I refer to the creative space in which the texts attributed to Flaubert (as author) were composed. This is to distinguish the creative writing process from both Flaubert the person

which characters interpret, manipulate, and individualize projections of masculinity and femininity to generate reflections on gender identity that resist social, temporal, and historical boundaries in literature. It is by reading gender as a creative process, like writing, that the significance of gender identity in the Flaubertian corpus is realized. Before I turn to the texts themselves, it is important to develop a reflection of how the study of gender through Flaubert's fiction addresses current issues in gender studies.

Gender and agency have become topics of recent debate among gender theorists. Questions regarding how inventive the subject is in the construction of his or her own gender identity has signaled a new caveat to those subscribing to deterministic and essentialist theories¹⁰ of how gender is attributed to one's identity and identity interface. In response to a recent call¹¹ for a revitalization of contemporary theories of gender identity and agency, I use the works of Gustave Flaubert, an author celebrated for his intricately constructed fictional prose, as a primary object of analysis to investigate parallels between Flaubert's poetic principles (see, for example, "impersonal narration") and autonomous development of character gender identity that have yet to be treated by literary scholars. My contribution to new reflections on gender identity speaks to theories of creative¹² identity construction that allow me to place the literary persona in a more

and Flaubert the physical author, but also to suggest that the workings of the novel extend beyond the published text. By using "Flaubertian imaginary" instead, I emphasize the conceptual dimension of writing (and, as I will show, gender).

¹⁰Models deemed determinist (i.e. the social as determining individual identity) or essentialist (i.e. the individual experience as deriving from an essential, biological model) have been criticized for a lack of consideration of individual agency and of how individual potential impacts the larger social framework, respectively. See Dorothy Smith, *The Everyday as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987).

¹¹As signaled by Lois McNay in *Gender and Agency*. The entire book discusses the need for an inclusion: of "New forms of autonomy and constraint...which can no longer be understood through dichotomies of male domination and female subordination" (7).

¹²Throughout this dissertation, the words "creative" and "creation" will be used in the Castoriadian sense: "*Création*: dans l'être/étant (*to on*) surgissent des *formes autres* – se posent de *nouvelles* déterminations. Ce qui chaque fois (à chaque "moment") est, n'est pas pleinement déterminé – pas au point d'exclure le

functional role and places literature at the heart of questions of gender. Through this theoretical lens Flaubert's corpus provides a significant discourse on gender identity illustrated through a practice of creative poetics that breaks away from mimesis and (re)production in favor of an active paradigm of character development. As the following introductory remarks illustrate, the transformative element of my literary analyses is contained within what I envision as Flaubert's "creative space," which exists beyond binaries, such as creator/created or real/fiction. In this space, his characters are presented as the creators of their own gender identity, independent from authorial direction, which manifests itself through the textual representations of actions, reactions, relationships, and meditations.

Throughout this dissertation, I demonstrate how Gustave Flaubert's corpus provides the literary critic with a textual rendering of the imaginary that demands further investigation into its creative potential in the context of gender theory. Using a selection of his novels, specifically *Madame Bovary*¹³ (1856), *Salammbô*¹⁴ (1862), *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1845¹⁵ and 1869¹⁶), and, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*¹⁷ (1881), I assert the status of literature as a creative force, not only

surgissement de déterminations *autres*. Création, être, temps vont ensemble : être signifie à-être, temps et création s'exigent l'un l'autre" (Castoriadis, *L'institution imaginaire de la société* 6).

¹³Ed. Thierry Laget, (Éditions Gallimard, 1972) (All editions of the novels, except the 1845 *Éducation sentimentale* and *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, were chosen from those listed on ITEM [institut des textes et manuscrits modernes] "Bibliographie Flaubertienne"). This edition offers a contextual history of the book's publication that proved useful in my analysis of Flaubert's writing process.

¹⁴Ed. Gisèle Séginger, (GF Flammarion, 2001). Séginger provides an analytically rich preface in which she elaborates a "poetics of contrast" that I find particularly pertinent to my own reading of *Salammbô*.

¹⁵Eds. Claudine Gothot-Mersch and Guy Sagnes, (Éditions Gallimard, 2001). This text is part of the first book of Flaubert's *Œuvres complètes*, a collection of his *Œuvres de jeunesse*, and is one of the few existing critical editions of Flaubert's juvenilia.

¹⁶Ed. Stéphanie Dord-Crouslé, (Éditions Gallimard, 2001). This edition provided details of Flaubert's composition of *L'Éducation sentimentale*. Given the genetic dimension of my reading of the two *Éductions*, I found this particularly useful.

¹⁷Ed. Claudine Gothot-Mersch, (Éditions Gallimard, 1999). Gothot-Mersch has written extensively on Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (and Flaubert in general) and her critical findings are significant for any analysis of the work. This edition is also one of the only that contains ancillary texts such as *Le Sottisier* and *Le Dictionnaire des idées reçues*.

through poetics, but also as a way into a better accounting for the imaginative faculty at large. Within this scope of Flaubert studies, I examine the place of gender in Flaubert's opus. Taking into consideration the remarkable attention dedicated to the uniqueness of his writing style, there is a disconnect between the extensive critical scholarship treating Flaubert's poetic technique and the relative limitation of scholarship treating gender. While considering philosophical conceptions of the imaginary and narrative creativity, I place literary criticism at the heart of a renewed reflection on gender.

Also residing at the core of my project is a nexus of two prevalent areas of literary studies: stylistics and gender representation. While both topics present rich findings in their own right, critical scholarship in which the two overlap are relatively rare. Still, those studies that do investigate how Flaubert's poetics produce gendered meaning offer an important insight into the research project. After a brief synopsis of the contentions made by these aforementioned studies, I will introduce the framework for my own study, which will elaborate a novel approach to the literary analysis of gender.

Mary Orr, a prominent Flaubert scholar, has offered some of the most comprehensive studies intersecting literary and gender studies. In an essay entitled, "Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* Revisited," Orr discusses Flaubert's stylistic endeavors in crafting a subtly coded bisexual reading of the novel that parallels the more overtly scripted heterosexual love triangles dispersed throughout the plot. Amidst her reading, Orr presents the author's consciously ambiguous use of literary devices, such as simile, irony, and juxtaposition, to encrypt Frédéric's homosocial, if not homosexual, relationship with Deslauriers. The significance of Orr's findings, in light of my own research, is Flaubert's inventive use of literary poetics to create sexuality. Furthermore, the coded nature of this bisexual reading accentuates the generative function of the

author's textual creations. This "other" reading that Orr deciphers unveils the creative force of the Flaubertian imaginary: attentive reading reveals an exhaustive portrait of the character's identity as constructed throughout the text. This generative function of Flaubert's poetics is not, however, novel to recent critical scholarship as even the author's contemporaries remarked the creative potential of his literary characters.

It has not gone unnoticed that some of these approaches may be limited in consideration of the progressing field of gender theory. Recognizing the problematic nature of a purely thematic literary analysis, in "Pour une thématique restreinte: écriture, parole, et différence in *Madame Bovary*¹⁸," Naomi Schor postulates: "À la différence de la lecture thématique 'générale' qui tend toujours à 'une lecture infinie', qui vit, pour ainsi dire, en état d'anamorphose avec le texte, la thématique restreinte serait l'équivalent d'une anastomose, sectionnant le texte afin d'aboucher les opposés binaires..." (32). This move from a boundless to a contained textual analysis refocuses the corpus of study to the text itself, allowing Schor to conclude, "En définitive, le 'bizarre androgyne' ce n'est ni Flaubert (Sartre), ni Emma (Baudelaire), mais le Livre, lieu d'affrontement mais aussi de croisement d'animus et d'anima, du masculin et du féminin" (46). While this approach gains for literary criticism a return to the "text itself" as an object of study, it fails to escape the relational logic inherent in the negative paradigm¹⁹ of subjection. When Schor remarks:

¹⁸In the critical framework that follows, I use *Madame Bovary* as a prime example, not only because it is the novel where parenthood is most prominently featured, but also because it marks a significant turning point in Flaubert's poetics. Although the seeds of his infamous *style indirect libre* are evident in his 1845 *Éducation sentimentale*, it is with *Madame Bovary* that he masters the technique.

¹⁹The negative paradigm, as explained by McNay, often limits, if not entirely prohibits, the agency of the subject. She writes: "This uni-directional and repressive dynamic is reinforced by the exclusionary logic that is used to invest the subject with levels of self-awareness and autonomy. Following a relational theory of meaning, the assertion of the subject's identity is explained through a logic of disavowal of difference; the subject maintains a sense of self principally through a denial of the alterity of the other"

C'est donc en fin de compte sur le plan de l'imaginaire, c'est-à-dire du rôle joué dans le couple, que s'affirme la virilité croissante d'Emma: aussi l'ordre de ses liaisons. Rodolphe avant Léon, prend-il tout son sens: alors que dans ses rapports avec Rodolphe Emma joue le rôle féminin, traditionnellement passif, dans ses rapports avec Léon, les rôles sont intervertis (43),

she attributes Emma's increasing virility (synonymous with masculinity) to the decreasing virility of her partners. What is perhaps missing from this analysis is precisely where I situate my own project; how can the literary critic look at Emma Bovary's actions as imaginative and constitutive of a unique gender identity as opposed to contrasting her character to the "other" constituent of the romantic coupling. In other words, what is Emma Bovary's gender process? If the reader perceives, as Schor does, a less passive Emma with Léon than with Rodolphe, what is it that she *does* to engender this change? Although I agree that Flaubert introduces a character in Emma who has masculine tendencies, it is her struggle with gender, more so than her construction as masculine, which interests me. Emma Bovary's masculine identity is only one example of gender treated in Flaubert's corpus, but it is significant in its longevity. In fact, the masculinization of Emma is a topic noted even by Flaubert's contemporaries.

"...par un paradoxe dont tout l'honneur appartient aux nerfs, elle substituait dans son âme au Dieu véritable le Dieu de sa fantaisie, le Dieu de l'avenir et du hasard, un Dieu de vignette, avec éperons et moustaches; —voilà le poète hystérique."

– Charles Baudelaire

(9). Although McNay references theories that involve human subjects, I find that this negative paradigm becomes especially problematic in literary criticism where characters are often attributed gender qualities through differentiation rather than providing evidence of those qualities within the individual character. The result is sometimes the same. My own reading of *Madame Bovary*, for example, concludes, like many other critics, that Charles possesses feminine qualities and Emma has a penchant towards a masculine gender identity. I argue, however, that the process used to reach these conclusions is of equal, if not more, importance than the conclusions themselves. In order to account for the creative and procedural dimensions of gender creation, and thus avoid the relational theory of the negative paradigm, literary criticism must examine how each character understands, interprets, and interacts with gender.

In his 1857 essay on *Madame Bovary*, Baudelaire evokes the figure of the hysterical poet, the artist whose nervous affliction bestows creative and imaginative capabilities. Although initially used to describe Emma Bovary, Nancy Rubino examines the figuration of the hysterical poet in Flaubert's *Salammbô*, commenting on the transformative qualities of this stereotypically feminine ailment in the character of Mâtho. This "gender-blending" quality attributed to hysteria offers a novel approach to creative literary gender identity. Baudelaire himself saw hysteria in the male as provocative of both impotence and artistic prowess leaving the individual with a certain sexual void needing to be filled. Rubino remarks that the complementary attributes of *Salammbô* and Mâtho fuse into one androgynous whole. Similarly, Tony Williams has made analogous conclusions about the gendered traits of Charles and Emma Bovary, hinting at, although the two may subvert their respective gender roles, a harmonizing complementarity between the two. Furthermore, Roger Huss in an article on "Masculinité et féminité dans *Madame Bovary et Ulysses*" compares the loss of femininity in the multiple Madame Bovarys to a process of fermentation, claiming that their physical aging is tantamount to a progressive masculinization. While many critics conclude that these androgynous couplings ultimately reinforce gender stereotypes rather than subvert them, there is another point of cohesion between these studies that is, in my opinion, much more fruitful. In all three scenarios, the androgenizing of literary personas is described as a process. The gradual progression towards a subversive gender identity described by these critics is symptomatic of the creative function of character development I intend to examine.

Another pertinent topic discussed by many literary critics of Flaubert is the performative aspect of certain gendered roles,²⁰ more specifically, that of the mother. Much has been written on Emma Bovary's lack of certain maternal qualities, as well as the implications of the motherly perspective on both Charles Bovary and Frédéric Moreau. These maternal qualities are often equated to categorical femininity; that Emma is said to lack these motherly characteristics is suggestive of her apparent masculinity, and, in a similar vein, Charles's yearning to mother his child are frequently used as evidence of his lingering feminine persona. It is this parallel between maternal and feminine that I find problematic, especially given the accounts of Emma Bovary's ability to feign a stereotypically maternal behavior. It would be difficult to claim that gender identity is evidenced by an instinctual desire to fulfill a certain parental role if this role can be performed at any given moment. Indeed, the junction of parental roles and gender identity, I demonstrate, offers a unique point of departure to posit literary style as reflective of gendered development.²¹ While the critical scholarship I have outlined establishes important progress in the junction between literary and gender studies, the project I develop here will further

²⁰In the Butlerian sense: "Gender is what is put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly, with anxiety and pleasure..." (Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" *Theatre Journal*. 40(4):1988. 519-531.)

²¹Incidentally, contemporary social theories of gender also question this behavior, conjecturing on the link between individual conceptions of traditional gender roles and a person's actions. A recent study examining the potency of a Cognitive-Active gender role identification continuum (CAGRIC) discusses the interplay between an individual's beliefs and actions regarding gender, allowing for a person to "act out" a gendered role recognizing of the situational necessity for this and in contrast to their own, believed gender identity:

Flexibility of gender role action is exhibited when individuals adapt their gender role behavior to meet the demands of a situation despite the feminine or masculine nature of that situation's behavioral expectations. Flexible action is the behavioral component of androgyny. However, this behavior may or may not be accompanied by cognitive gender role flexibility. Rigidity of gender role action is exhibited when individuals do not adapt their gender role behavior in situations where it may be beneficial to do so. An individual with rigid gender role actions consistently displays either solely traditional or solely gender-reversed behaviors (Priest, Jacob B., et al. "An Exploratory Evaluation of the Cognitive-Active Gender Role Identification Continuum." *The American Journal of Family Therapy*. 40(2):2012, 152-168).

complicate the problematics I have suggested, hopefully resulting in a new understanding of the creative potential of gender identity within the Flaubertian corpus.

Authors and critics alike have at times described textual creation as a form of intense, physical labor. Some argue that crafting a novel is tantamount to human procreation and the act of giving birth.²² Indeed, Gustave Flaubert's correspondence abundantly speaks to the physical pain he experienced while writing.²³ On the other hand, Flaubert also famously likens the author's role to that of God, responsible for creation but seemingly detached in regards to the maturation of the work²⁴. The unique relationship between Flaubert and his literary creations, as both symbolic "mother"²⁵ and "father," makes the study of gender in his corpus more fruitful. Indeed, Flaubert's status as both physically and emotionally invested in his writing, yet adamantly against the intermingling of art and artist²⁶ seems paradoxical. This paradox, however, creates space beyond mother and father (by being both), beyond creator and creation (by being everywhere and nowhere²⁷), and beyond masculine and feminine. This space is precisely what I consider the Flaubertian imaginary, and in this dissertation I read gender as a development within the imaginary at large, as well as inside the texts generated within this creative space.

²²See MacCallum-Whitcomb, Susan, Tharp, Julie Ann. *This Giving Birth: Pregnancy and Childbirth in American Women's Writing*, (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green, UP, 2000); see also articles written by contemporary authors such as Kim Greenblatt.

²³He writes in his correspondence in regards to the composition of *Madame Bovary*: "ce sacré nom de dieu de roman me donne des sueurs froides"; "d'autres fois ce sont des oppressions ou bien des envies de vomir à table"; "J'ai souvent des douleurs à défaillir, j'en suis malade physiquement"; "La cervelle me danse dans le crâne" (*Correspondance*, Paris: La Pléiade, 1980 75, 104, 156).

²⁴"L'auteur, dans son oeuvre, doit être comme Dieu dans l'univers, présent partout, et visible nulle part" (*Correspondance*, I. Paris: La Pléiade, 1980).

²⁵Naomi Schor discusses the femininity attached to Emma's/Flaubert's writing in *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory, and French Realist Fiction* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) I elaborate more upon this fact in my first chapter, which treats *Madame Bovary* in greater detail.

²⁶"L'Art n'a rien à démêler avec l'artiste. Tant pis s'il n'aime pas le rouge, le vert ou le jaune; toutes les couleurs sont belles, il s'agit de les peindre" (*Correspondance*, I. Paris: La Pléiade, 1980).

²⁷I elaborate upon the idea of being "everywhere and nowhere" in my second chapter, through the ever-present yet consistently elusive zaïmph in Flaubert's *Salammbô*.

2. “From Yonville to Chavignolles”

The succeeding part of this introduction provides a brief synopsis of the dissertation’s chapters. Each chapter, with one exception, will examine a single novel by Gustave Flaubert. I have chosen to proceed in this way to underscore the dual existence of each work, both as a product of the Flaubertian imaginary at large, and as an individual textual piece where the characters interact with gender in different ways. In each chapter, then, I detail how reading the novel through its characters’ gender development unveils new ways of understanding character development and identity construction at large. While each novel elaborates a gendering process specific to that work, I also make connections between them to trace gender creation within the Flaubertian imaginary as a whole. In this vein, genetic criticism provides a useful parallel for my reading of both gender and Flaubert’s corpus as creative processes. Genetic criticism, or *critique génétique*, has a long history in French literary studies, and a particularly rich one when it comes to Flaubert Studies,²⁸ yet most generally is used according to Louis Hay’s definition. For Hay, the literary publication is but one potential product from the writing process:

À commencer par la délimitation du champ de la génétique. Il embrasse le temps de la création, cette dimension de la littérature qui n’appartient qu’à l’écrivain. En le dévoilant, la génétique nous offre une vision globale du fait littéraire. Désormais, la critique peut accéder à l’univers individuel de l’écriture, de la production de l’œuvre, aussi bien qu’à l’univers social de la lecture, de la recréation de cette œuvre par ses lecteurs. Mais tout n’est pas dit pour autant. La lecture commence et finit quand s’ouvre et se ferme le livre - mais où commence et finit la genèse? Le travail de création peut s’engager en tout lieu et à tout moment, il peut être déclenché par un choc soudain - lecture, événement, vision - aussi bien que par un long travail de l’esprit ou par la résurgence d’un souvenir lointain.

²⁸Éric Le Calvez is one major figure in this tradition (see: *Flaubert topographe. L’Éducation sentimentale: essai de poétique génétique*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997; *Genèses flaubertiennes*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009) Other genetic critics of the Flaubertian corpus include Raymonde Debray-Genette (*Métamorphoses du récit: Autour de Flaubert*. Paris: Seuil, 1988.) and Almuth Grésillon (*Éléments de critique génétique: Lire les manuscrits modernes*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994).

Dans son carnet, l'écrivain suisse Ludwig Hohl note: « Et que je souligne un mot où que je copie un texte, que j'écrive une lettre, prenne des notes, exprime une opinion – tout est œuvre ». (“Qu'est-ce que la critique génétique?” np)

Within the context of this vision of genetic criticism, my dual reading of Flaubert's works (as both unique textual bodies and part of a larger imaginary) permits fruitful conclusions. Indeed, one point I would like to highlight regarding both gender and literature as creative processes is that their development is not linear. One benefit of genetic criticism for literary studies is that it helps dismantle the blank page (start) to manuscript (finish) “way of thinking”:

“Symétriquement, le regard de la critique s'est souvent arrêté aux inscriptions dernières, à l'ultime manuscrit au net qui fait face à la feuille blanche des origines” (Hay np). A similar way of thinking, I argue, exists when reading gender in literature, that characters must “finish” with a gender identity (masculine or feminine) by the novel's end. My reading of Flaubert's *oeuvre* challenges this on every level. Not only do I look at how gender develops within the more generally conceived Flaubertian imaginary, understood as the “time of creation” Hay suggests, I also demonstrate how it generates gender flexibility (in chapter 1), how a critical gender reading can lead to a rearward reading of the written narrative (in chapter 2), how gender development can be discarded or even resisted (in chapter 3), and, finally, how the gendering process, like the writing process, remains open-ended (in chapter 4). Creative work, as Hay writes, can occur at any time, in any place.

With the confines of the present study being the (rather limitless) Flaubertian imaginary, a choice was made when deciding what particular novels to include in this dissertation. The texts selected for my study reflect a chronological representation of Flaubert's creative work. Given the importance of Flaubert's accomplished principles of poetics to my reading of gender creation, I have decided to not include Flaubert's earliest works where they are still in the

process of maturation. Consequently, *Madame Bovary* is an apt choice for the first chapter, as the first novel to exhibit the acclaimed Flaubertian writing style. In relation to this technical maturity, the protagonists within the text create, through their various levels of emotional and physical attachment to other characters, the textual manifestations of gender identity that I wish to illustrate. The second chapter analyzes *Salammbô*, where literary distance takes on new dimensions. Flaubert's (a)historical novel is set in ancient Carthage, a moment of time that purposely lacks connection to the present. Although the work is shrouded in inaccessibility, I demonstrate how a gendered reading unlocks the novel's entangling language. Both novels titled *L'Éducation sentimentale*, the first written in 1845 and the second, more recognized, published in 1869, figure as objects of study in my dissertation's third chapter. Although these works share the same name, it is the stylistic progression notable between the two texts that offer a singular textual testimony of creative maturation, paralleling the character development of these *romans de formation*. Finally, the last chapter focuses on Flaubert's final novel, the posthumously published *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. The experimental nature of this work, both in the writing style and the characters' actions, provide a *laboratoire* in which to test my own theories regarding gender identity in literature.

It is the work of the literary scholar, I believe, to not only assert the imaginative techniques of writers but also to explore the ways in which these inventive discourses *create* new facets of aesthetic expression and identity that inform our experience of the world. Current dissonance between literary criticism and theories of gender construction is the product of privileging social reality over the imaginary. As I mentioned above, gender criticism of the Flaubertian corpus is consistently reducible to differentiation from a socio-historically established *other*. Such conclusions infer that literary gender is a mimetic representation, or re-

production, of existing models and authorial agency is restricted to reconfiguration. Given the inventiveness of Flaubert's imagination, as evidenced by his capacity to artfully render the experience of living, stifling the creative expression of gender identity in his works would undermine the radical imaginary potential of this textual moment of being that severs the constraints of pure mimesis. It is within this void, provoked by the rupture between emulative reproduction and the active sensation of existing, between the repression of the imagination as secondary and the possibility for "radical newness" through this creative faculty, that the inventive poetics of Flaubert can substantiate new, active, and imaginative gender identities.

"ENFANTS: Affecter pour eux une tendresse lyrique, quand il y a du monde."
- Flaubert, *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*

To this end, in my first chapter, I examine Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* in light of obfuscating the reductive association between gender identity and parental roles. Within the text itself, there are myriad examples of displaced, performed, and questionable parenthood. Further, it is in this work that Jacques Neefs argues Flaubert attains the height of his authorship, claiming that his *effet de réel*²⁹ takes on the effect of replicating existence, not unlike a textual "birthing" of the characters within the pages of his novel. In his words:

Dans un tel tissage entre ce qui est posé comme la conscience du personnage et les lumières et les sons venus du monde extérieur, dans ce chiasme de la sensation de soi de la perception du monde (dehors et dedans "se mêlant comme une musique"), Flaubert cherche à atteindre plus que la représentation d'un "personnage", de ses "sentiments", de ses émotions. La prose cherche à atteindre — et produire—mimétiquement, par la fiction, et par la tension prosodique, l'expérience d'être, à la limite la plus intime du sensible. Le "réel" c'est d'abord cette dimension où circule avec précision une sorte d'indistinction entre être soi, être au monde, être le monde. (*Du réel écrit...* 706)

²⁹See Barthes, Roland. "L'effet de réel". *Communications*. 11(11): 1968, 84-9.

What Neefs indicates is that Flaubert prosaically captures the experience of “being”, a sentiment that exceeds pure mimesis. Further, I read Neefs’s description of Flaubert’s prose as textually simulating the creative space of the author. The idea of this space existing beyond the limits of creator/creation is underscored by the indistinction Neefs notes between being oneself, being part of the world, and being the world.

In a similar vein, the significance of attachment/detachment is paramount in examining the individual character’s agency in the creation of its gender. Ignoring the sexual basis of the terms mother and father, I study instead how the character’s *actions* in relation to its parental role shape a unique gender identity. The degree of emotional and physical attachment between parent and child, in both the literal and figurative sense, as textually manifested within the novel, provides the basis of a creative and active construction of gender.

Just as Neefs privileges the relationship between the author and his text, this initial examination of the Flaubertian corpus focuses on the actions of the creator towards his creation. Subsequently, the figures who comprise the majority of this analysis of *Madame Bovary* are the characters of Emma and Charles Bovary. Reading them as parents, critics often cite a reversal of gender roles evidenced by Emma’s poor mothering and Charles’s emotional bond with his child. It is my argument, however, that this apparent exchange is, in fact, attributable to how the characters (mis)understand their own parental roles and not necessarily indicative of the character’s gender identity. A reading of Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* paying close attention to the ways in which characters (re)act towards their role as parent will reveal the complex and creative process of gender embodiment enacted by these textual figures.

The character of Emma will constitute the predominant part of this chapter, as it is her parental role that is most criticized³⁰ and most prevalent in the text. It is, in fact, often claimed that Emma's lack of maternal affection is indicative of her character as a "bad mother".³¹ These criticisms, however, only underscore the conflation of femininity with motherhood, depicting Emma (as mother) indissociably from an idealized femininity. I challenge this by examining the character of Emma as conscious of these social pressures. Indeed, there are moments in the novel when Emma takes on the role of perfect mother and ideal wife, moments that disrupt, rather than support, a linear progression from femininity to masculinity. It is through these pivotal narrative moments that I elaborate the idea of immature and reflective gender. In contrast to a character like Charles who is content with his non-conforming gender identity, Emma consistently struggles with her cultivating masculinity and the social expectation of her femininity, exacerbated by her role as wife and mother. It is Emma's gender struggle, I argue, that constitutes the major conflict of Flaubert's first literary triumph.

I offer here a few examples of the richness of Gustave Flaubert's novel and how one (textual) creation can illuminate issues regarding other (parental) creations. While this chapter decisively focuses on the effect of parental roles on the literary character's autonomous gender identity, overarching elements, including the significance of attachment and distance in manifestations of gender identity, constitute dimensions that link this chapter to the other chapters and works to follow. For instance, the detailing of mature and immature gender identities plays a significant role in my third and fourth chapters, where the gendering process becomes more complex.

³⁰Gallagher, Edward J. "Displacements of the Maternal in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*." *Romance Languages Annual* 11 (2000): 37-42.

³¹*Ibid.*

“*Les œuvres les plus belles sont celles où il y a le moins de matière.*”
 - Gustave Flaubert, *Souvenirs, notes et pensées intimes*

In the second chapter, I tackle Gustave Flaubert’s Carthaginian novel, *Salammbô*.

Detachment figures as an important component of this work as well, but in different ways. The choice of ancient Carthage as the setting for this novel seems to be a way of “detaching” the narrative from its contemporary readership. Further, the exotic elements, historical references, and lavish descriptions shroud the understanding of the novel as a whole. As part of the larger Flaubertian imaginary, *Salammbô* marks the invention of the “science fantastique” genre. With this work, Flaubert envisions a new type of novel, one that readers had not yet witnessed. This classification only further distances the narrative from its readership³². Stemming from extent criticism that discusses the inaccessibility of this novel, I show how reading it through a gendered lens uncovers a new understanding of this text. My own reading begins at the end of the novel to examine how layers of gender identity are constructed and placed on the protagonists, producing the textual embodiments of masculinity and femininity many critics have seen in Mâtho and Salammbô.

There is little contestation that disparate fragments throughout the work signify or echo the masculine/feminine binary: Sun and moon, sky and earth, male and female, civilized and uncivilized. Rather than reading the novel as a progressive deterioration of these binaries, as some critics suggest, I propose a reversed reading that posits these binaries as artificial constructions that are put in play by the Carthaginian patriarchy. In doing so, my reading brings

³²By this, I refer to critical reception of the work and modern literary criticism that consistently speaks of the novel’s inaccessibility. Even in spite of these exoticizing devices, the novel was still a bestseller of its time, and thus the distancing I suggest is figurative in nature. Nonetheless, public interest in the novel supports the idea that Flaubert’s *Salammbô* contains some “truth” about ancient Carthage—a truth that I show to be artificially constructed.

the novel closer to contemporary understanding of gender as a social construction and reveals the status of gender in the Flaubertian imaginary.

The layering process present in *Salammbô* is accomplished in part through the descriptive clothing worn by its protagonists. While clothing and dress are often discussed by critics of Flaubert for their gendered functions,³³ within the textual weavings of Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô*, fabric takes on a multifaceted significance. Through the character of Salammbô, I examine how her restrictive dress is placed upon her in order to construct the ideal woman, or feminine possession. In contrast, then, Mâtho's layers of flesh and virility construct the masculine phallus, incarnating the patriarchy's power. As a result, the two protagonists we meet in the novel's opening are personifications of femininity and masculinity, textually rendered in society's stead.

These textual layers, however, also serve a dual purpose. As much as they protect the socially established gender norms, they are equally vulnerable. This point is most clearly displayed through the elusive zaïmph, which is constantly exchanged between Mâtho and Salammbô, through barbarian and civilized, through male and female. This tension between masculine and feminine is *texturally* rendered pliable, and, in many ways, the characters of Mâtho and Salammbô weave a tapestry of gender-blending.³⁴ It is beneath the veil, I argue, where the artificiality of gender differences is exposed. The end of *Salammbô* marks the original state of contemporary notions of masculinity and femininity: that is, nonexistence.

³³In addition to the above, cf. Festa-McCormick, Diana. "Emma Bovary's Masculinisation: Convention of Clothes and Morality of Conventions." *Gender and Literary Voice: Women and Literature*. 1(1980): 234.

³⁴Cf. Rubino, Nancy. "Impotence and excess: Male hysteria and androgyny in Flaubert's *Salammbô*." *NCFS*. 29.2(2000):78-99.

“Nous avons à créer notre propre pensée au fur et à mesure que nous avançons – et certes, cela se fait toujours en liaison avec un certain passé, une certaine tradition – et cesser de croire que la vérité a été révélée une fois pour toutes dans une œuvre écrite il y a cent vingt ans”

- Castoriadis *Domaines* 82-83

The third chapter treats as its object of study Gustave Flaubert’s novel, *l’Éducation sentimentale*, which, having multiple stages of its own genesis, offers me the opportunity to look at both character and stylistic development. As a genre, the *roman de formation*, or *Bildungsroman*, emphasizes the development of the protagonist as he progresses from his youth to adulthood. After the discussion of birthing in the first chapter, it seems a poignant continuation to look at how the individual character develops on his own throughout the pages of the work, and, more importantly, how he *learns* his own gender. An earlier text, originally completed in 1845, bears the same title as the more widely known narrative, published in 1869.³⁵ A juxtaposition of these two works, both remarkably different in style, gives insight into the maturation of the novel as creation. Using the earlier *hypotext* in conjunction with the later *hypertext*,³⁶ I examine the protagonists of both works and how the progression of style and maturity parallels a process of gender development.

While Flaubert’s earlier 1845 text is gaining attention among literary critics, many agree that there is little similarity between this *texte de jeunesse* and the more widely appreciated *Éducation Sentimentale* of 1869.³⁷ Although an assessment of the two as versions of the same

³⁵Due to the relative unfamiliarity with the 1845 *Éducation*, I will provide more substantial citations from the text itself.

³⁶Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsestes: La Littérature au second degré*. (Paris: Seuil, 1982.)

³⁷“In her discussion of Flaubert’s style in this early novel, Gothot-Mersch acknowledges what many critics of this work have viewed as shortcomings. She describes the 1845 *Éducation* as “une oeuvre bavarde,” and “une oeuvre où l’invention, généralement pauvre, procède trop souvent par parallèles et antithèses mécaniques”. Anderst, Leah. (“Reading Flaubert’s First and Second *Education sentimentale*.” *Orbis Litterarum* 67:4 332-350, 2012.)

work would be unfitting, both texts share similarities in plot and character portraits that warrant further investigation.

Maturation and development constitute the focus of this chapter. Stylistically, critics claim that the later *Éducation* exhibits a mature Flaubert, having achieved in this work the pinnacle of his indirect writing style.³⁸ Even in the earlier text, however, Jules comes to learn the authority of literary style:

Insoucieux de son nom, indifférent du blâme qu'il soulève ou de l'éloge qu'on lui adresse, pourvu qu'il ait rendu sa pensée telle qu'il l'a conçue, qu'il ait fait son devoir et ciselé son bloc, il ne tient pas à autre chose et s'inquiète médiocrement du reste. Il est devenu un grave et grand artiste, dont la patience ne se lasse pas et dont la conviction à l'idéal n'a plus d'intermittences ; en étudiant sa forme d'après celle des maîtres, et en tirant de lui-même le fond qu'elle doit contenir, il s'est trouvé qu'il a obtenu naturellement une manière neuve, une originalité réelle. C'est la concision de son style qui le rend si mordant, c'est sa variété qui en fait la souplesse ; sans la correction du langage, sa passion n'aurait pas tant de véhémence ni sa grâce tant d'attrait. (310)

Incidentally, this creative maturation complements a similar development in Jules's character:

Ainsi vivait Jules, fréquentant davantage les hommes et de moins en moins leur ouvrant son cœur ; son isolement intime était relatif à la foule qui l'assiégeait, résultat multiple de l'expérience, de l'orgueil blessé, du parti pris et des circonstances extérieures. Deux choses arrivent : ou l'homme s'absorbe dans la société, en prend les idées et les passions, et disparaît alors dans la couleur commune ; ou bien il se replie sur lui-même, en lui-même, et rien n'en sort plus, des différences profondes s'établissent entre lui et ses semblables, il y a des abîmes rien que dans la manière de comprendre une même idée ; il vit seul, rêve seul, souffre seul, personne ne s'associe à sa joie, il n'y a pas de caresse pour son amour ni de consolation pour sa douleur, son âme est comme une constellation égarée que le hasard pousserait dans l'espace. C'est pour cela qu'on voit tant d'amitiés chez les enfants, que l'on en rencontre déjà moins dans la jeunesse, presque pas chez les hommes mûrs, point du tout entre les vieillards. (275)

³⁸Ibid, "Comparing parallel passages from the 1845 and the 1869 *Éducation* underscores the development of Flaubert's formal and thematic preoccupations and demonstrates, in particular, an important change in Flaubert's narrative voice. As his writing evolves, Flaubert's narrators and characters grow increasingly farther apart, and this move plays an important role in what become interconnected features of Flaubert's mature works: narrative impersonality, irony, and *style indirect libre*" (332).

The character of Jules marks an intervention of the author's creative process in the narrative. Lacking the authorial detachment present in Flaubert's later works, the 1845 *Éducation* exemplifies an immature/incomplete creation that echoes the immaturity of its protagonist's gender identity. Indeed, when Henry abandons his immature gender in the novel, this decision reflects the genesis of the work itself as Flaubert eventually abandons this first *Éducation*, citing its irreparability.

The incomplete status of both the 1845 *Éducation* and its protagonist's gender identity is then contrasted to the better known *Éducation* of 1869. In my reading of the novel, I demonstrate how the character of Frédéric persistently resists gender maturity through his identification with a more infantilized role. His perpetual immaturity within the confines of this published novel, I argue, illustrates the literary character's potential to be actively non-gendered. Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* challenges the constricting mentality that posits both the literary work and gender identity as products of linear progression.

“La littérature s'avère constituer un vaste laboratoire d'expérience de pensée où sont mises à l'épreuve les ressources de variation de l'identité narrative”
- P. Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre*

The literary analyses in the preceding chapters represent theoretical developments regarding the active construction of gender identity by the characters created within the pages of Gustave Flaubert. While important for renewed appreciation of literature as a source of critical reflections on gender identity, theory often translates into practice. As a final chapter to this dissertation, Flaubert's final and unfinished work, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, provides a narrative where literary characters practice gender in ways we have not yet witnessed. As a novel, this

posthumously published work is, in the words of Paul Ricoeur, “un vaste laboratoire d’expérience”; two opposite yet complementary men form a bond and proceed to experiment in all facets of their life. I argue that, throughout this literary experiment, the two men are simultaneously experimenting with their identity and gender. From copyists to experimenters, the experience of Bouvard and Pécuchet seems to resonate with frustrations seen in Flaubert’s other characters with their assigned gender identities.

An important theme throughout Flaubert’s final novel is that of progress. Perhaps fittingly, the fact that the novel remained unfinished leaves the text open to speculation but also figuratively represents the unfinished conclusion of the novel’s two protagonists. Although progress is often measured by a forward momentum, Kate Rees sees fluctuation and ebb and flow as generative, quoting Nemoianu’s *Theory of the Secondary*:

Full, unimpeded and linear progress is the shortest way to stagnation and death. This movement is hindered, delayed and in fact blocked by reactive gestures of creation. These gestures of reaction (a new trend in literary criticism, a philosophical construction, a political party, an economic empire, and many others) themselves soon become the target of subversion as they pull towards new horizons of progress and thereby of closure. Entropy is thus averted through reactive creativity and gleanings of the past.³⁹

As Rees aptly points out, the contradictory views of the novel’s main characters is one cause of this back and forth motion of textual progress in the work. Furthermore, their own intellectual pursuits are consistently met with failure, launching them into a different pursuit altogether. Hopeful in the onset of their new experiment, the progress they make by the end of the novel is unsubstantiated as the two decide to return to the lives they abandoned near the beginning. To look at this work as a cyclical manifestation of nothingness, however, would undermine the

³⁹Rees, Kate. “‘Une tortue avec des ailes’: Progressing in Flaubert’s *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.” (*French Studies*. 63(3): 2009, 271-82.)

creative nature of experimentation to which Rees alludes in her argument for progress in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

Indeed, as my reading demonstrates, it is failure that provokes the two men to continue, rather than prevent them from progressing. In light of my previous chapter, this “undulation” unique to the narrative progression of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* underscores the fluctuations of the creative process. What Bouvard and Pécuchet demonstrate, however, is the strength of the mind and the conceptual aspect of gender. Although incapable of accumulating knowledge, the imaginative potential of the two protagonists is never exhausted. It is this mental fortitude, I argue, which frees the literary persona from the restrictive gender norms of their textual societies. Roger Pearson has recently touched on the intersection of literature and freedom in an article entitled “Flaubert’s Style and the Idea of Literary Justice”:

It will be the contention of this article...that in contributing to the creation of an autonomous literary domain, governed by its own criteria of rightfulness, Flaubert was not simply withdrawing into style as a self-sufficient realm of aesthetic perfection but rather was employing it to create an alternative moral universe at variance with that inhabited by the state and the majority of its citizens. (np)

While it is not my objective in this dissertation to discuss the political implications of Flaubert’s narrative style, there is, I believe, much to be said in regards to the experimental freedom that Bouvard and Pécuchet exhibit. This capacity to experiment is, realistically, interspersed with failures, inconsistencies, and misunderstandings. These failures interrupt the linear progression of the novel and, I argue, parallel the oscillation associated with active gender construction. Recognizant of biological laws, Bouvard and Pécuchet continue to portray the limitations of nature, a point explored in my earlier chapters but witnessed in this final novel. Even though the two men return to their former occupations in the end, their experimentation unveils the creativeness and inventiveness of the literary character in the Flaubertian imaginary.

In many ways, Flaubert's posthumously published *Bouvard et Pécuchet* culminates in a textual manifestation of the creative potential of an individual to generate his/her own gendered identity. As the ensuing textual analyses demonstrate, reading these textual "happenings", all resulting from the same imaginary, through the characters' gender development unlocks new ways of understanding the creative process. Following a long tradition of literary scholars who have incorporated elements of gender studies in their critical studies, this dissertation reasserts the status and power of the imaginary as an integral part of textual representations and rethinking of gender. It is through strength of the imaginative faculty that the literary character is liberated from the restrictive shackles of rigid formulations of masculinity and femininity. In light of my readings, gender, within the Flaubertian imaginary, becomes the property of the characters that react to, reflect upon, interact with, and actively choose to (or not to) embody gender.

Chapter 1

GENDER THROUGH PARENTING IN *MADAME BOVARY*

INTRODUCTION

When Gustave Flaubert was taken to trial in 1857 for his recently published *Madame Bovary*, the indictment claimed that the novel spoke out against public and religious morals. The question of Emma Bovary's morality is, in fact, a principal source of personal angst and tension within the work. Indeed, the female protagonist suffers from emotional dissatisfaction, her innermost desires at constant odds with her present situation as a wife and mother in bourgeois society. Some critics attribute her state of discontentment to romanticized ennui. Furthermore, there is little question that her sex plays a significant role in her view of the world as oppressive. Rather than focusing on these external⁴⁰ factors, I instead examine the relationship between Emma and her society, and how the pressures attached to her gender are processed, conceptually, by her character. To distinguish literature from reality, I focus on social definitions of gender as expressed by the textual society. To this end, characters such as Charles's parents provide significant portraits of how parental identities also represent gender identities. Given these rigid associations between parenthood and gender, when certain characters deviate from these norms, it warrants critical attention. In this chapter, therefore, I examine the literary characters in

⁴⁰By external, I mean to distinguish factors that affect Emma's emotional state from the outside, i.e. social pressures, financial dependence, lack of legal authority, etc. In an effort to look at gender as a creative process, I privilege the thought based component I see attached to gender development. In this way, I read Emma's (re)actions to social "reminders" as indicative of an internal meditation on her gender identity.

Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* in order to show how, through parenting, the textual persona is able to imagine and create unique gender identities.

1. GENDER IN *MADAME BOVARY*

Before I begin my reading of *Madame Bovary* through the association between parenthood and character gender development, I will introduce some of the work that has been done on gender in this novel. Tony Williams's piece on "Gender Stereotypes in *Madame Bovary*" provides context to many common conclusions about gender identity in Flaubert's novel. He writes: "The fictional world of *Madame Bovary* is marked by the over-differentiation of the sexes which characterises patriarchal society" (131). At first glance, this perception is tenable, especially when one considers the examples listed in its defense:

Charles receives an education as a health officer which equips him for a useful role in society whilst Emma...receives an education in the Rouen convent-school which provides her with skills which have little practical relevance to her subsequent life. The marriage between Charles and Emma is arranged initially between Charles and Emma's father; Charles is legally the head of the household and special powers of attorney have to be granted to Emma in order to allow her to settle his financial affairs after the death of his father. Adultery, like marriage, is organised more according to the man's convenience...(131)

From a social perspective, many of the gendered norms are maintained in the novel. The narrative expressively shows how Emma must go through Charles before having access to any legal or financial rights, the institution of marriage reasserts man's privileged role in the union, etc. Indeed, even in regard to Emma's role as a mother, some critics have concluded that: "If Emma fails to fulfill her duty as mother to her child, she proves herself able to conform to society's expectations of maternal nurture via her sexual relationship with Leon" (Rooks 3). Even

if her maternal affinity is displaced, there are many ways in which Emma conforms to social expectations of maternal behaviors⁴¹.

While some critics focus on Western definitions of masculinity and femininity that have, to some degree, persisted in history (often associated with a patriarchal, heteronormative hierarchy), Mary Orr shows instead how the male characters in *Madame Bovary* conform to Napoleonic codes. In her novel, *Madame Bovary: Representations of the Masculine*, Orr divides the “men” of the novel into two categories: fathers (Rouault, Bovary, Roger, Bournisien, Canivet, Larivière, Guillaumin, Lheureux, and Homais) and sons (Justin, Rodolphe, Léon, and Charles). The fathers, she argues, embody antiquated patriarchal values whereas the sons demonstrate gender as a social construct. For Orr, *Madame Bovary* is a microcosm of a “crisis of masculinity” that occurs in nineteenth-century France. In using the *Code Napoléon* of 1804 as her source for specific definitions of masculinity, Orr demonstrates how gender can be uniquely defined within a work. My own reading, however, makes the distinction between the “real” and the imaginary much more explicit. Gender itself can be seen as a creation from within the text, not simply as a reproduction of contemporary notions of masculinity and femininity.

The difficulty in distinguishing between the real and the imaginary is a topic also treated by Margaret Cohen. In her article, “‘Flaubert lectrice’: Flaubert Lady Reader”, Cohen comments on a proclamation often attributed to Flaubert: “Madame Bovary, c’est moi”. Rather than social codes, Cohen reads the character of Emma as a personification of Flaubert’s writing: “The pathology of a heroine who is ‘de temperament plus sentimentale qu’artiste’ enables Flaubert to invoke practices of the novel that have shaped his own writing, but at the same time to devalorize

⁴¹See Segal, Naomi. *The Adulteress's Child: Authorship and Desire in the Nineteenth-century Novel*. Cambridge: Polity P, 1992; Gallagher, Edward J. “Displacements of the Maternal in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.” *Romance Languages Annual* 11 (2000): 37-42

them” (749). According to her analysis, gender and sex become representations of literary style.

By “cross-dressing” as his heroine, then, Flaubert is able to further blur the line between real and fiction, while also offer commentary about his own creative practice.⁴²

Critical response to Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* has often noted this connection between sex, gender, and creativity, especially concerning the character of Emma. Charles Baudelaire claims that Emma is representative of the triumph of the imagination over the real: “On dit que madame Bovary est ridicule. En effet, la voilà...[qui] poursuit l’idéal à travers les bastringues et les estaminets de la préfecture: —qu’importe? disons-le, avouons-le, c’est un César à Carpentras: elle poursuit l’Idéal!” (np). More recent critical readings, such as in Naomi Schor’s *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory and French Realist Fiction*, also comment on this “triumph” of the imaginary. Schor claims:

It is not by chance that the writing apprenticeship and the ‘virility apprenticeship,’ if I may call it that, follow paths which ultimately converge at the time of Emma’s affair with Leon, for their affair marks the triumph of the imaginary over the real, this being the precondition of all writing. If, insofar as the effect on the real is concerned, Homais’ writing surpasses Emma’s; considered in terms of the ‘reality effect,’ it is without any doubt Emma’s (Flaubert’s) writing that surpasses Homais’ for the ‘reality effect’ can only be achieved through a total renunciation of any real satisfaction, can only be the just reward of sublimation, i.e., castration. For Flaubert writing thus has a sex, the sex of an assumed lack, the feminine sex. (24)

The creative writing process, she concludes, necessitates a victory of the imagination over the real, and through association of author to his creation, Flaubert is exposed as a practitioner of this creative, feminine process. While these critical readings offer significant conclusions about the connections between gender and literature, and even more important, between gender and

⁴²“But there is also a way to understand Flaubert’s fascination with the female Quixote from the perspective of literary practices in Flaubert’s own present, using a sociology of the literary field. In doing so, we move from the celebrated sentence of Flaubert to the significance of Flaubert’s portrait in the novel of Emma herself as female Quixote,” writes Cohen. “The practices in question are the codes of sentimental fiction, which dominated the novel in the first decades of the nineteenth century, but which fell from prestige after 1830” (749).

creativity, my own reading of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* takes as its point of departure how masculinity and femininity are defined within the novel, by its characters. By doing this, the creative writing process does not become gendered itself, but rather a means through which literary characters can create their own genders.

2. GENDER DEFINED THROUGH PARENTING

Within Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* gender is defined through the parental roles of mothering and fathering. The feminine gender is expressed predominantly, if not entirely, by the role of the ideal mother. Among the various mothers in the text, it is Mme Homais who is regarded by her literary peers as the perfect wife and mother. Although a minor character, it is to her whom Emma is compared. Even before Mme Homais, however, we meet the parents of Charles, whose mother and father represent rigid idealizations of mothering and fathering, respectively. I use the Bovarys as models of inflexible gender roles that conform to social expectations of their parental roles and, as a result, their sex. Similar to Mary Orr's division of "fathers" and "sons," then, I posit the Bovary parents as examples of the patriarchal order, where men must be fathers (in its gendered sense) and women must be mothers. Even though the Bovarys depict rigid gender norms, there are many other characters that do not follow such unbending embodiments of their expected parental roles. These characters, including Emma's father, Charles, and Emma herself, exhibit behaviors that do not correspond to their sexes' expected parental role. How these characters interact with their children, or child-like individuals, reveals a more complex interpretation of gender that is the result, at least in part, of Flaubert's distinctive prose.

How do the characters in *Madame Bovary* develop their genders? To begin to answer this question, I turn once again to Williams who touches upon the transformative nature of gender identity, if only subtly: “Flaubert’s presentation of the development of Emma Bovary points to a malleability as she draws upon a repertoire of both ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ roles. Emma’s so-called ‘masculine’ qualities are not immediately apparent; they gradually emerge in the course of the novel, leading to a slow dismantling of the conventional view of woman” (133). Rather than examining gender as a selection from existing possibilities of masculine and feminine qualities, I instead posit gender identity as something that can be created individually. Gender, like biological maturation, develops over time. Such a process can be seen in the novel, when Flaubert refers to Mme Bovary’s aging:

Sa femme avait été folle de lui autrefois; elle l’avait aimé avec mille servilités qui l’avaient détaché d’elle encore davantage. Enjouée jadis, expansive et tout aimante, elle était, en vieillissant, devenue (*à la façon du vin éventé qui se tourne en vinaigre*) d’humeur difficile, piaillarde, nerveuse. (51, my emphasis)

Roger Huss comments on this passage as evidence of Mme Bovary’s de-feminization, claiming, “Le vieillissement de Madame Bovary mère et son manque de soumission sont ressentis par le narrateur comme une altération de sa féminité: en tant que vinaigre elle n’est plus potable” (104). If we look at this “alteration” of femininity not as a transition to masculinity (as some argue), but instead as a deterioration of an established gender identity, the flexibility of gender takes on a meaning different than the malleability envisioned by Williams. What if, rather than an oscillation between masculine and feminine identities, Emma is experiencing a process of gender creation that has yet to mature? It is this process that I intend to examine further later in the chapter after discussing characters who have, or at least appear to have, attained a mature gender identity.

As mentioned above, I do so by examining the ways in which sex, gender, and sexuality intersect with parenthood. The conflation of mothering, as an activity, and motherhood, as a biologically determined role, is not uncommon. Nancy Chodorow, in her landmark work on *The Reproduction of Mothering* argues that, “Society’s perpetuation requires that someone rear children, but our language, science, and popular culture all make it very difficult to separate the need for care from the question of who provides the care. It is hard to separate out parenting activities, usually performed by women and particularly by biological mothers, from women themselves” (35-6). Scholars have already argued that Flaubert’s novel contains contemporary sentiments regarding ideals of motherhood.

As Amanda Kane Rooks notes in “Motherhood and Sexuality in Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*”: “As related sites of contestation in the early nineteenth century, motherhood and sexuality were subject to appropriation by scientific, moral, medical, clerical and literary authorities, all competing and contributing to a dramatic transforming of sexuality and gender into public discourse” (2). We find countless examples of the 19th-century “ideal” mother, who would be the result of, “a dramatic sentimentalizing of domesticity, where the home became a safe haven against the cruel world and where Mother, the Angel of the House, would preside. The ‘new’ mother was defined by her purity, her superior morality, and selfless devotion to her husband and children” (2). Writers of the time commented on this moral regulation of the mother, such as when George Henry Lewes remarks in an 1850 edition of the *Edinburgh Review*: “The grand function of woman, it must always be recollected, is, and ever must be, *Maternity*: and this we regard not only as her distinctive characteristic, and most endearing charm, but as a high and holy office—the prolific source, not only of the best affections and virtues of which our nature is capable, but also of the wisest thoughtfulness, and most useful habits of observation, by

which that nature can be elevated and adorned” (Lewes 82). In a somewhat enclosed cycle, sex, gender, and parenthood are fused in the role of the Mother. Woman, determined biologically by her sex, was to be judged by her role as a mother, whose qualities reflected the ultimate ideal of femininity. A woman’s worth, henceforth, was to be “measured by her ability to nurture” (Rooks 2). To nurture is related to the selfless devotion, if not subservience, to the household that Rooks mentions. Furthermore, motherhood is marked by purity, morality, and charm. A woman’s sexuality, then, had no place in motherhood. This was also biologically explained. One such example is written in William Acton’s *The Function of Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in Childhood, Youth, Adult Age, and Advanced Life: Considered in Their Physiological, Social, and Moral Relations* (1862), where he argues, “the majority of women (happily for them) are not every much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind...The best mothers, wives, and managers of the households, know little or nothing of sexual indulgences. Love of home, children, and domestic duties, are the only passions they feel” (144). Indeed, in this context it would be justified to say that feminine sexuality does not, in fact, exist at all. The construction of a feminine gender resting on the socially constructed Mother, portrays a pure, moral being whose passion exists only in the domestic sphere.

In relation to sanctioned parenthood, and more precisely sanctified motherhood, the institution of marriage also plays a significant role in how the characters in *Madame Bovary* treat gender. According to Williams, “It is the ‘literature of patriarchy’ which leads Emma to believe that fulfillment can be found only through a man. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, she believes marrying Charles will allow her to possess ‘cette passion merveilleuse qui jusqu’alors s’était tenue comme un grand oiseau au plumage rose planant dans la splendeur des ciels poétiques,’ only to find that the quietness of married life is far removed from ‘le bonheur qu’elle

avait rêvé” (132). As the sanctity of marriage is further represented by the taken name of the wife, it is no surprise that the two characters who most conform to the ideal image of wife and mother are Mme Bovary mère and Mme Homais, whose given names are never revealed to the reader. In contrast, the name “Emma Bovary” is never mentioned in the novel, and even her titular name “Madame Bovary” is exceedingly rare.⁴³ The union between Charles and Emma constitutes a large portion of the issues at hand. However, it is only after certain roles are fully illustrated by Charles’s upbringing that the chaotic nature of Emma’s gender identity becomes clear.

Charles’s parents are often ignored in discussions of gender in *Madame Bovary*. It is both the immediacy of their presence in the narrative as well as the determination of their parenting styles that leads me to use them as literary manifestations of masculinity and femininity in this work whose analysis must inform models to be later complicated by other characters in the novel. Already within the brief description we are given of Charles’s upbringing, the interplay of social requirements and personal affection is remarkable. As both the first mother and the first Madame Bovary in the novel, Charles’s mother solidifies the parallel between femininity and mothering that manifests throughout Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*. And, while she may appear as the social construction of Mother incarnate, I argue that Mme Bovary actively creates a feminine identity through her internalization of motherhood, as she perceives it.

Upon childbirth we learn that Charles’s mother places her newborn with a wet-nurse, “Quand elle eut un enfant, il le fallut mettre en nourrice” (52). Her social duty, noted by the verb choice here is then immediately juxtaposed by her maternal affection, the extent of which implies that, had it not been necessary, Mme Bovary would have kept her infant with her:

⁴³See Hasumi, Shiguéhiko. “Absence d’Emma Bovary: Réalité textuelle de la fiction” (MLN 125.4 (2010): 803-824).

“Rentré chez eux, le marmot fut gâté comme un prince. Sa mère le nourrissait de confiture...”

(52). What Flaubert illustrates in this short introduction to Charles’s childhood is a profound link between motherhood and physical attachment. This motif is significant throughout the novel; later, his mother will send him nourishment while Charles is away at school: “Pour lui épargner de la dépense, sa mère lui envoyait chaque semaine, par le messenger, un morceau de veau cuit au four, avec quoi il déjeunait le matin” (55). While sustenance is one important manifestation of motherhood, maternal attachment is textually rendered elsewhere through images of storytelling, playing, and physical and emotional closeness between mother and child:

Sa mère le traînait toujours après elle ; elle lui découpait des cartons, lui racontait des histoires, s’entretenait avec lui dans des monologues sans fin, pleins de gaietés mélancoliques et de chatteries babillardes. Dans l’isolement de sa vie, elle reporta sur cette tête d’enfant toutes ses vanités éparses, brisées. Elle rêvait de hautes positions, elle le voyait déjà grand, beau, spirituel, établi, dans les ponts et chaussées ou dans la magistrature. Elle lui apprit à lire, et même lui enseigna, sur un vieux piano qu’elle avait, à chanter deux ou trois petites romances. (52)

In addition to maintaining physical closeness with her son, Charles’s mother attempts to transfer her own desires to her child. Motherhood here involves both physical and emotional nurturing; what she confers to Charles is undeniably what has been inaccessible to her. For Mme Bovary, her identity as mother is synonymous with her identity as woman, and, although suffering, she intentionally manifests femininity within her character.

This incarnation is further expressed by her internalization of these qualities, which, I argue, constitutes the creation of her feminine identity. She was once madly and blindly in love with her husband, but the narrator notes a shift in Mme Bovary’s behavior: “Elle avait tant souffert, sans se plaindre, d’abord, quand elle le voyait courir après toutes les gotons de village et que vingt mauvais lieux le lui renvoyaient le soir, blasé et puant l’ivresse ! Puis l’orgueil s’était révolté. Alors elle s’était tue, avalant sa rage dans un stoïcisme muet, qu’elle garda jusqu’à sa

mort” (52). Just as she expresses her maternal affection through physical nourishment, the figurative image of Madame Bovary swallowing her rage confirms her internalization of feminine attachment. Symbolically, her repressed emotions are always linked to her mouth, as if to emphasize her act of silence. When Charles’s father protests her methods of educating their son in the arts, “Mme Bovary se mordait les lèvres, et l’enfant vagabondait dans le village,” (53) and, later, when Charles marries Emma, “Mme Bovary mère n’avait pas desserré les dents de la journée. On ne l’avait consultée ni sur la toilette de la bru, ni sur l’ordonnance du festin ; elle se retira de bonne heure” (79). By forcefully fastening her own mouth, the first Mme Bovary assumes her own vision of motherhood and, by association, femininity. The reference to her as Mme Bovary mère, to distinguish her from the newlywed Mme Bovary, only further qualifies her feminine identity. She is known only as wife and mother; if another identity once existed it has long since been stifled. To release her emotional anguish would jeopardize the femininity that has been created through its very retention. Indeed, in these moments where her maternal attachment is called into question, her decision to remain silent marks the perseverance of her established gender identity.

In stark contrast to the maternal identity of Mme Bovary, Charles-Denis-Bartholomé Bovary personifies fatherly detachment. Flaubert remarks on their opposition:

À l’encontre des tendances maternelles, il avait en tête un certain idéal viril de l’enfance, d’après lequel il tâchait de former son fils, voulant qu’on l’élevât durement, à la spartiate, pour lui faire une bonne constitution. Il l’envoyait se coucher sans feu, lui apprenait à boire de grands coups de rhum et à insulter les processions. (52)

It is important to note that, although these parenting styles are presented as contradictory, the father’s treatment of his child is far from neglect. Although his mother spoils him with sweets, his father’s version of pampering is that he: “le laissait courir sans souliers, et, pour faire le philosophe, disait même qu’il pouvait bien aller tout nu, comme les enfants des bêtes” (52).

Consequently, in the novel, fatherly affection is established through distance and fostering independence. Just as Charles's mother creates a feminine identity through an internalization of motherly attachment, the reader sees that his father embodies his masculinity through his paternal actions. In the brief description of the father's past that Flaubert offers us, we can witness a gradual progression of emotional and physical detachment. Contrary to Mme Bovary's affective investment, Charles's father "avait alors profité de ses avantages personnels pour saisir au passage une dot de soixante mille francs, qui s'offrait en la fille d'un Marchand bonnetier, devenue amoureuse de sa tournure" (50). Superficiality and monetary gain are shown to be the motivation for Charles senior's personal relationships. This emotional detachment later progresses and becomes tantamount to his eventual physical isolation: "il en fut indigné, se lança dans la fabrique, y perdit quelque argent, puis se retira dans la campagne..." and later, "et, chagrin, rongé de regrets, accusant le ciel, jaloux contre tout le monde, il s'enferma dès l'âge de quarante-cinq ans, dégoûté des hommes, disait-il, et décidé à vivre en paix" (51). Although the father chooses to isolate himself from the world, to the contrary of his wife whose silence is manifested internally, this detachment is manifested externally by his physical seclusion and verbal protestations. Textually, the author directly quotes the father while indicating the mother's silence in the same moment:

M. Bovary, peu soucieux des lettres, disait que ce n'était pas la peine! Auraient-ils jamais de quoi l'entretenir dans les écoles du gouvernement, lui acheter une charge ou un fonds de commerce? D'ailleurs, avec du toupet, un homme réussit toujours dans le monde. Mme Bovary se mordait les lèvres, et l'enfant vagabondait dans le village. (53)

The seemingly "active" nature of the father (and thus masculinity) is, in fact, due to the external manifestation of his detachment.

The Bovary couple, as I have shown, establishes textual manifestations of masculinity and femininity through their active roles as father and mother. Although these two characters

decidedly conform to social standards of their respective genders, there is clearly, especially for Mme Bovary, some agency present in the construction of a gendered identity. In the case of Charles's mother, then, I would argue that her gender is reflective, that is to say that she consciously embodies social expectations of her sex and gender. While it may not be atypical, and has thus attracted little scholarly attention, Charles's mother reveals the weight of social pressures within the fictitious world crafted by Flaubert.

3. FLEXIBLE GENDER

Mme Bovary mère also helps illustrate what I term "mature" gender. Both of Charles's parents, I argue, present mature genders. By mature I am drawing attention to both the rigidity of their gender identity and to the fact that it conforms to the expected gender of their biological sexes (Mother/Female/Feminine and Father/Male/Masculine). It is also possible, however, that a character's gender does not conform to her sex. Certain individuals in the novel, such as Emma's father, exhibit what I term gender flexibility. By deeming a character gender's "flexible", I am not saying that the character is "gender fluid", or that s/he has a gender identity that is constantly (but passively or unconsciously) shifting between masculine and feminine. Instead, I am adding a different dimension to gender identity that focuses primarily on the character's conscious appropriation of social standards of masculinity or femininity. Whereas as Charles's parents' gender identities are "inflexible", because they remain constant, other parent figures in *Madame Bovary* demonstrate an acute awareness of social gender conventions and adjust their own genders accordingly. Gender flexibility, then, does not necessitate a resistance to a gender label.

That being said, flexibility in gendered actions can be evidence of an immature gender, as we will see with Emma. In the case of Emma's father, however, I argue that his developed

feminine gender is masked, in social situations, by a conscious “performance,” in the Butlerian sense, of fathering. His actions, then, indicate an acute understanding of his society’s expectations for him as a man, and also as a father, even if this does not correspond to his inner, maternal inclination. The performance of fatherhood in Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, although similar to Judith Butler’s theorization of gender performativity, differs from the shift from the “real” to the “imaginary.” For Butler:

Gender performativity is not a matter of choosing which gender one will be today. Performativity is a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms by which one is constituted: it is not a radical fabrication of a gendered self. It is a compulsory repetition of prior and subjectivating norms, ones which cannot be thrown off at will, but which work, animate, and constrain the gendered subject, and which are also the resources from which resistance, subversion, displacement are to be forged. (22)

Clearly, Butler’s definition of performativity, which occurs in the real world, diverges from how I intend to read the performative actions of the characters in Flaubert’s prose. Nonetheless, Butler’s distinction between performativity and “a radical fabrication of a gendered self” helps illustrate what I mean by gender flexibility. To be flexible is to perform gender in a conscious way (a point upon which I insist, but that is not present in the citation above). That being said, this awareness does not mean that even flexible genders can be “put on” and then easily “taken off.” In my analysis of Emma’s father, M Rouault, which follows, I illustrate one example of flexible gender. Despite his maternal nature, Rouault, when in situations saturated with social convention, takes on the role of the father, thus manifesting a masculinity. While I argue that this shift is thoughtful, it is not merely a costume. Rather, Rouault’s gender identity is precisely flexible, in that it adapts to his awareness of social context. This unique aspect of gender is what I attribute to gender’s creative nature. Again, the distinction between Butler’s theory of gender performativity and how I interpret the latter in my analysis lies in the creative space from which both literature and gender arise.

The inherent nature of literature, and by extent, literary analysis is that everything is creation, hence the critical intent in thinking of gender literature.⁴⁴ The history of Flaubert's characters exists only insofar as what is written in the pages of the narrative. Therefore, paradoxically, the norms that Charles's parents may be reiterating are standards that they themselves establish in the text. As such, M. Rouault's deliberate transitions from mothering to fathering expose the fragility of these social norms. Although Emma's father still feels it necessary to play the role of the father in public view, he quite easily preserves his underlying maternal nature in the process. While he is another minor character, Emma's father presents perhaps a more complex case of gender identity than Charles's parents. In his practicing of both the roles of mother and father, M. Rouault demonstrates gender flexibility. Feigning detachment from his daughter through her supposed independence, we see that he actually maintains a steady, maternal influence in her life, only acting the masculine, fatherly role when social situations require.

For one, the courtship of his daughter is telling of Rouault's flexibility between maternal and paternal behavior. Indeed, while his external actions illustrate a fatherly dissociation from Emma, his internal thoughts parallel Mme Bovary's desire to marry off Charles earlier in the novel. When Charles finally musters the courage to ask for Emma's hand, Rouault interrupts:

Moi, je ne demande pas mieux, continua le fermier. Quoique sans doute la petite soit de mon idée, il faut pourtant lui demander son avis. Allez-vous-en donc; je m'en vais retourner chez nous. Si c'est oui, entendez-moi bien, vous n'aurez pas besoin de revenir, à cause du monde, et, d'ailleurs, ça la saisirait trop. Mais pour que vous ne vous mangiez pas le sang, je pousserai tout grand l'auvent de la fenêtre contre le mur: vous pourrez le voir par-derrière, en vous penchant sur la haie. (73)

⁴⁴See Planté, Christine: "Mais au-delà du mot, c'est toute la problématique qu'il a aidé à imposer qu'il me paraît important d'accueillir, de faire connaître de de reconnaître plus largement. Cette problématique consiste à penser la différence des sexes comme historiquement, socialement, culturellement construite, investie de ses, mais aussi constamment retravaillée et déplacée—aussi par et dans la littérature et le langage" (133).

This scene is littered with subtle variations in his gendered parenting. At first, Rouault assumes his daughter's acceptance but then proclaims she must be asked herself. He claims that Charles's absence will spare her daughter's nerves but then arranges things so that Charles will know her response in order to spare his. In spite of his protestations, there is textual evidence that Rouault has already decided for his daughter earlier: "S'il me la demande, se dit-il, je la lui donne" (72). Even though here Emma is treated as a possession, since his emasculating accident (Rouault breaks his leg, which is the reason why Charles and Emma meet in the first place)⁴⁵ it is Emma who is, in fact, in charge of the farm: "Mademoiselle Rouault ne s'amusait guère à la campagne, maintenant surtout qu'elle était chargée presque à elle seule des soins de la ferme" (24). Implicitly, it is Emma who decides in the end if the marriage will take place, with her father being the messenger and Charles left watching from behind for his signal.

His conversations with Charles are equally telling of his inclination towards maternal attachment. In a scene shortly after the death of Charles's first wife, the reader gains insight into the development of Rouault's gender identity:

Je sais ce que c'est! disait-il en lui frappant sur l'épaule; j'ai été comme vous, moi aussi! Quand j'ai eu perdu ma pauvre défunte, j'allais dans les champs pour être tout seul; je tombais au pied d'un arbre, je pleurais, j'appelais le bon Dieu, je lui disais des sottises; j'aurais voulu être comme les taupes, que je voyais aux branches, qui avaient des vers leur grouillant dans le ventre, crevé, enfin...j'étais quasiment fou, que je ne mangeais plus...Il faut vous secouer, monsieur Bovary; ça se passera! Venez nous voir; ma fille pense à vous de temps à autre, savez-vous bien, et elle dit comme ça que vous l'oubliez. Voilà le printemps bientôt; nous nous ferons tirer un lapin dans la garenne pour vous dissiper un peu. (67-68)

Within this short scene, we can see how Rouault's gender develops in a different way than that of Charles's father. After the death of his wife Rouault decides to isolate himself, just as

⁴⁵According to Williams: "Male characters undergo a symbolic emasculation—Emma's father breaks his leg, Hippolyte has his amputated. A large number of objects associated with the power and influence of men are broken, or given to men by Emma" (137).

Charles's father does after his failed business venture. However, unlike M. Bovary, he is incapable of remaining in isolation, recognizing his former state as one of madness. Furthermore, we find more substantiation of the link between nourishment and femininity. In the above citation, I see the link between madness and starvation as further confirming Rouault's feminine identity and motherly tendencies. Consumption, in all its forms, whether it be emotional or physical, is tied to the maternal behavior of attachment, whereas hunger symbolically illustrates dissociation and evacuation, qualities linked to fatherhood. Rouault's decision to no longer starve himself, believing that to do so would be foolish, also marks recognition of his femininity. Additionally, in his effort to encourage Charles, he proposes for him to visit and offers a rabbit, both demonstrating his maternal propensities. Just as we witnessed with his own mother, Emma's father also uses food as means of assuaging Charles's worry:

il le pria de ne point se découvrir la tête, lui parla à voix basse, comme s'il eût été malade, et même fit semblant de se mettre en colère de ce que l'on n'avait pas apprêté à son intention quelque chose d'un peu plus léger que tout le reste, tels que des petits pots de crème ou des poires cuites. Il conta des histoires. Charles se surprit à rire; mais le souvenir de sa femme, lui revenant tout à coup, l'assombrit. On apporta le café; il n'y pensa plus. (68-69)

There are more similarities between M. Rouault and Charles's own mother than his father, who, as stated previously, establishes the paternal model in the work. The continual offering of sustenance reflects the feminine, maternal identity that has developed in Rouault. On a textual level, this passage echoes the one cited earlier. Like Charles's own mother, Rouault also speaks to him softly, filling his head with stories.

Although his character is absent from the majority of the novel, when he does reappear the reader can see other textual manifestations of his maternal actions. Indeed, the next time he is

mentioned in the text we learn that, “C’était l’époque où le père Rouault envoyait son [sic]⁴⁶ dinde, en souvenir de sa jambe remise” (242). Having already established the link between motherly attachment and feeding present in this novel, it is not surprising that Rouault would maintain the tradition of sending provisions emotionally linked to the gift he gave Charles after having remedied his broken leg. Furthermore, he continues the motherly tradition for his granddaughter, mentioning, “Il me fait deuil de ne pas connaître encore ma bien-aimée petite-fille Berthe Bovary. J’ai planté pour elle, dans le jardin, sous ta chambre, un prunier d’avoine, et je ne veux pas qu’on y touche si ce n’est pour lui faire plus tard des compotes, que je garderai dans l’armoire, à son intention, quand elle viendra” (243). It is clear that M Rouault exhibits a feminine identity, as established by his maternal actions, but it is equally important to remark that these scenes all occur in the feminine, private sphere. For example, the aforementioned conversations between Rouault and Charles all occur in private, and his presence later in the novel is only through personal correspondence. Although there is something intimate attached to the private sphere, this is also indicative of the domestic, highly feminized space of the Mother. Rouault’s veritable gender identity is complicated in that, though his private actions belie his biologically determined role as father, they do conform to the gendered sphere in which he resides at the time. Just as there are examples of maternal behavior in the private sphere, there are also examples of emotional distance in public.

Indeed, while his actions speak to the contrary, Rouault has no qualms about giving up his daughter: “Le père Rouault n’eût pas été fâché qu’on le débarrassât de sa fille, qui ne lui servait guère dans sa maison. Il l’excusait intérieurement, trouvant qu’elle avait trop d’esprit

⁴⁶The use of the masculine possessive here, although at other points in the novel we find “une dinde”, appears to have been deliberate on the part of Flaubert. For a discussion of this, see the correspondence assembled by Gilles Philippe in *Flaubert savait-il écrire?: une querelle grammaticale* (Grenoble: ELLUG, 2004).

pour la culture, métier maudit du ciel, puisqu'on n'y voyait jamais de millionnaire" (35). At first glance this scene is telling of fatherly distance and emotional detachment. However, in light of Charles's relationship with his mother, we can see again an echo of Mme Bovary's aspirations for her son, whereas his father saw no use for such ambition. Further, the mention of Rouault forgiving his daughter interiorly is significant of his embodiment of emotional attachment.

Another example occurs after the marriage of Charles and Emma. When the newlyweds prepare to leave, Emma's father "embrassa sa fille une dernière fois, mit pied à terre et reprit sa route. Lorsqu'il eut fait cent pas environ, il s'arrêta, et, comme il vit la cariole s'éloignant, dont les roues tournaient dans la poussière, il poussa un gros soupir" (79). Here, Emma's father maintains his fatherly façade until the newlyweds have distanced themselves enough for him to reveal his emotions. In this scene, the passing from private to public is marked only by Rouault's view. It is not until he sees that the carriage is distant enough, leaving him alone, that he releases any sort of emotional reaction. He becomes sentimental and, "les souvenirs tendres se mêlant aux pensées noires dans sa cervelle obscurcie par les vapeurs de la bombance, il eut bien envie un moment d'aller faire un tour du côté de l'église. Comme il eut peur, cependant, que cette vue ne le rendit plus triste encore, il s'en revint tout droit chez lui" (80). Sentimentality is to remain in the domestic sphere, as evidenced by Rouault's decision to return home rather than risk his sadness being viewed in public. The thoughtfulness behind his choice, I argue, is evidence of Rouault's gender flexibility. Not only does Emma's father consider the fact that his femininity would be revealed through his emotional display, he also suggests that the act of walking by the church would itself expose his feminine identity. His flexible gender also exemplifies an element of self-awareness that lacks from more rigid incarnations of gender, such as those seen in Charles's

parents. Conscious of his feminine, emotional state, Rouault avoids spaces/activities where this gender would be revealed and/or intensified.

In spite of their many similarities, there is a marked difference between the characters of Rouault and Mme Bovary; while the latter remains in a traditional coupled state, the former is, in the narrative, a single parent. In earlier scenes where Charles's mother is seen retaining her emotion, she is always in the presence of others, particularly her husband. I have argued that, particularly in *Madame Bovary*, the image of the ideal mother becomes synonymous with this novel's definition of femininity. As a result, feminine identity is wholly reliant on the existence of others. If to be feminine is to be maternal, femininity can only be expressed through actions of nurturing. It is for this reason that Rouault becomes feminine upon the death of his wife; while we do not know anything about his late wife, it becomes clear that after her passing Rouault decides to nurture his daughter. His public display of masculinity is therefore performative in the sense that Rouault chooses to keep his feminine identity private. The character of Emma's father is significant because he demonstrates that a developed gender identity does not forcibly imply a rigid one. His gender flexibility is consistently thought out, and textual reasoning assists readers in understanding why Rouault decides to contain his femininity in certain situations.

Up to this point, I have analyzed what some might view as minor characters in the novel that offer insight into how gender definitions are established and how gender identities are developed in *Madame Bovary*. The insight they offer is foundational, yet limited, because we are only offered textual flashbacks of their gender development. These recollections are significant in establishing important context for the two characters that actively develop their genders throughout the narrative: Charles and Emma Bovary. While the life events of their parents are displayed through memory, the reader takes part in both the marriage of Charles and

Emma and the birth of their daughter, Berthe. Whereas these moments offered hints of gender creation for M. and Mme Bovary and for M. Rouault, we can clearly see their effects on both Charles and Emma's gender identities.

4. THE CASE OF CHARLES BOVARY

Reading this description of Charles written by Flaubert, "Que n'était-il pas la mère, lui! comme il aurait du plaisir à se lever la nuit et à allaiter la petite fille, en lui parlant doucement!" (quoted in Williams 132), I find Charles's vision of what being a mother entails more important than his desire to take on that role. Images of dependence, physical attachment, and emotional comfort construct the portrait of the maternal figure in his mind, the same images we have seen embodied by both his own mother and Emma's father. There are many textual clues that foreshadow the development of Charles's feminine identity, even though his gender does not mature until the birth of his daughter.

I have already shown how mothering is demonstrated by physical and emotional attachment to those one nurtures, but what can be said of those receiving the nurturing? In the case of Charles, this attachment is clearly mutual, as is displayed by his practices while away at school. We learn:

Le soir de chaque jeudi, il écrivait une longue lettre à sa mère, avec de l'encre rouge et trois pains à cacheter, puis il repassait ses cahiers d'histoire, ou bien lisait un vieux volume d'*Anacharsis* qui traînait dans l'étude. En promenade, il causait avec le domestique, qui était de la campagne, comme lui. (44)

The details of this passage are seemingly scattered, but in fact are all significant marks of Charles's emotional attachment to his home and, by extension, his mother. The color of the ink, not being the usual black, marks the letter as more meaningful, intimate, and perhaps private, which is further emphasized by the use of three wafers to seal the letter. One of the only

surviving writings of Anacharsis recounts his voyage away from home, only hoping to return a better man⁴⁷, which parallels both Charles's attachment to home and his time away at school to gain the formation his mother so fervently advocated. Finally, his companionship with the domestic further underscores this connection to the home, literally (both are from the countryside) and figuratively (the servant is associated with the domestic sphere). It is not surprising that, when Charles is unable to help his wife, he writes to his mother again for assistance: "Alors il écrivit à sa mère pour la prier de venir, et ils eurent ensemble de longues conférences au sujet d'Emma" (178). When he fails his medical exam, he confides only in his mother, anticipating her maternal affection: "Il partit à pied et s'arrêta vers l'entrée du village, où il fit demander sa mère, lui conta tout. Elle l'excusa... et le raffermit un peu, se chargeant d'arranger les choses" (47). Indeed, at this stage of his life, Charles exists only through his mother, just as her maternal identity requires her son. In fact, when he finally passes his exam, it is more a celebration for his mother than for him: "Il fut reçu avec une assez bonne note. Quel beau jour pour sa mère! On donna un grand dîner" (47). Charles Bovary is perhaps feminized at this point in the novel⁴⁸, but this gender identity is not his own.

The attachment to his mother, and vice versa, generates a symbiotic gender identity in which Charles simply displays his mother's femininity.⁴⁹ Indeed, much of Charles's youth is directed by his mother, including his first marriage: "Mais ce n'était pas tout que d'avoir élevé

⁴⁷"ANACHARSIS TO CROESUS: O king of the Lydians, I am come to the country of the Greeks, in order to become acquainted with their customs and institutions; but I have no need of gold, and shall be quite contented if I return to Scythia a better man than I left it. However I will come to Sardis, as I think it very desirable to become a friend of yours" (Salignac de La Mothe- Fénelon, François de. *Lives of the ancient philosophers*. London: Knight and Lacey, 1924).

⁴⁸Many critics discuss Charles's feminization as constant throughout the narrative (Williams, Orr). I complicate this by claiming that there is a shift between reflecting the femininity of his mother and interiorizing his own femininity after the birth of his daughter.

⁴⁹This is a phenomenon I will discuss further in my third chapter, where the main characters of Flaubert's two *Éductions sentimentales* exhibit similar behavior.

son fils, de lui avoir fait apprendre la médecine et découvert Tostes pour l'exercer: il lui fallait une femme. Elle lui en trouva une: la veuve d'un huissier de Dieppe, qui avait quarante-cinq ans et douze cents livres de rente" (47). If we were to compare the maternal characters discussed this far, both Mme Bovary and M. Rouault play a significant role in the choice of their children's spouses. This could be negligible, arranged marriages not being uncommon in the time; and yet, both chosen suitors are described in a negative way. Not only is Charles's first wife a widow decades his senior, she is also described as, "laide, sèche comme un cotret et bourgeonnée comme un printemps" (47-8). Similarly, M. Rouault finds Charles, "un peu *gringalet*, et ce n'était pas là un gendre comme il l'eût souhaité; mais on le disait de bonne conduite, économe, fort, instruit, et sans doute qu'il ne chicanerait pas trop sur la dot" (36). It would seem that both mothers, in demonstrating maternal behaviors, choose spouses who do not exactly live up to their expectations, if not their own affections.

In the case of Charles's first wife, her existence as a replacement of his own mother is quite obvious. Although Charles saw marriage as a new beginning, his new wife further contains his freedom:

Charles avait entrevu dans le mariage l'avènement d'une condition meilleure, imaginant qu'il serait plus libre et pourrait disposer de sa personne et de son argent. Mais sa femme fut le maître ; il devait devant le monde dire ceci, ne pas dire cela, faire maigre tous les vendredis, s'habiller comme elle l'entendait, harceler par son ordre les clients qui ne payaient pas. Elle décachetait ses lettres, épiait ses démarches, et l'écoutait, à travers la cloison, donner ses consultations dans son cabinet, quand il y avait des femmes (57).

Although his marriage clearly did not offer Charles any physical liberty due to his wife's controlling personality, it can also be argued that Charles himself was already submissive, merely miming his mother's identity with little self-development. Indeed, after the death of his first wife, the reader begins to see a more independent Charles:

Charles se surprit à rire; mais le souvenir de sa femme, lui revenant tout à coup, l'assombrit. On apporta le café; il n'y pensa plus. Il y pensa moins, à mesure qu'il s'habitua à vivre seul. L'agrément nouveau de l'indépendance lui rendit bientôt la solitude plus supportable. Il pouvait changer maintenant les heures de ses repas, rentrer ou sortir sans donner de raisons, et, lorsqu'il était bien fatigué, s'étendre de ses quatre membres, tout en large, dans son lit. (31-32)

The maternal attachment that he displays prior to this moment cannot be used to substantiate his interior femininity because it was more akin to mimesis (to his mother, and to the ideas with which she filled his head). That being said, the freedom that Charles discovers deals almost exclusively with his activities within the domestic sphere. At this stage of his character's development it is difficult to differentiate lingering feminine behaviors copied from his mother and the cultivation of his own femininity. Still, it is significant that when Charles feels his first sense of independence, he delights in having his meals at any time and sprawling out in his bed, these actions reflecting his dominance over the domestic space.

His marriage to Emma Rouault further displays the character's developing femininity.

Although he desires to ask her hand in marriage, he has difficulty in voicing his sentiments:

Le père Rouault lui fit la conduite; ils marchaient dans un chemin creux, ils s'allaient quitter; c'était le moment. Charles se donna jusqu'au coin de la haie, et, enfin, quand on l'eut dépassée:—Maître Rouault, murmura-t-il, je voudrais bien vous dire quelque chose. Ils s'arrêtèrent. Charles se taisait.—Mais contez-moi votre histoire! est-ce que je ne sais pas tout? dit le père Rouault, en riant doucement.—Père Rouault...père Rouault... balbutiait Charles. (36)

Charles inability to express his feelings may recall the beginning of the novel when, asked to say his name, he could only muster "*Charbovari*". The scene with Rouault stylistically captures Charles's retentiveness, the time it takes for him to stammer the beginning of his demand without ever speaking the question. Still, the mouth has other feminine implications. After they are married it is Charles who cannot help touching his wife: "Il ne pouvait se retenir de toucher continuellement à son peigne, à ses bagues, à son fichu; quelquefois il lui donnait sur les joues de

gros baisers à pleine bouche, ou c'étaient de petits baisers à la file tout le long de son bras nu..."

(50). In fact, the day after their wedding we see that Charles "semblait un autre homme. C'est lui plutôt que l'on eût pris pour la vierge de la veille, tandis que la mariée ne laissait rien découvrir, où l'on pût deviner quelque chose" (44). Charles appears to be a different man, but at the same time, the virgin girl who just arose from her wedding bed. The constant touching of his new wife only further reinforces his developing feminine identity; indeed, Charles is another "man".

If the time between his first and second marriage depicts femininity in development, once Berthe is born Charles's feminine gender reaches a level of maturity and stability. In Charles's mind, the birth of Berthe represents another attachment to his wife and the completion of his family, "à mesure que le terme en approchait, il la chérissait davantage. C'était un autre lien de la chair s'établissant, et comme le sentiment continu d'une union plus complexe" (125). To return once again to the image of the sanctified mother, her identity is established through her attention to her spouse, children, and home. Charles's elation in regards to his wife's pregnancy is indicative of his sense of fulfillment. His desire to nurture confirms his feminine identity. Like his mother before him, he projects the future of his daughter:

...il y comptait, car il voulait que Berthe fût bien élevée, qu'elle eût des talents, qu'elle apprît le piano. Ah! qu'elle serait jolie, plus tard, à quinze ans, quand, ressemblant à sa mère, elle porterait comme elle, dans l'été, de grands chapeaux de paille! on les prendrait de loin pour les deux sœurs. Il se la figurait travaillant le soir auprès d'eux, sous la lumière de la lampe; elle lui broderait des pantoufles; elle s'occuperait du ménage; elle emplirait toute la maison de sa gentillesse et de sa gaieté. Enfin, ils songeraient à son établissement: on lui trouverait quelque brave garçon ayant un état solide; il la rendrait heureuse; cela durerait toujours. (270)

The parallel with the passage where Mme Bovary fills her son's head with great ambitions is striking. Imagining his daughter beautiful, as his mother had imagined him handsome, that he will find her an honest man, as his mother attempted to find him a wife. Charles even takes it upon himself to teach his daughter to read, harkening back how his mother had taught him:

il prenait la petite Berthe sur ses genoux, et, déployant son journal de médecine, essayait de lui apprendre à lire. L'enfant, qui n'étudiait jamais, ne tardait pas à ouvrir de grands yeux tristes et se mettait à pleurer. Alors il la consolait ; il allait lui chercher de l'eau dans l'arrosoir pour faire des rivières sur le sable, ou cassait les branches des troènes pour planter des arbres dans les plates-bandes... Puis l'enfant avait froid et demandait sa mère.—Appelle ta bonne, disait Charles. Tu sais bien, ma petite, que ta maman ne veut pas qu'on la dérange. (376-377)

The maternal tendencies of Charles are undeniable and significantly similar to those of his own mother who has established, in this novel, the standard for femininity.

Not only is his nurturing of his child and family indicative of his femininity, his profession also exhibits signs of his maternal behavior. Charles Bovary's profession is an established early in the novel as a point of contention. Although not officially a doctor, he is often referred to as one. For example, when he first attends to M. Rouault he is asked: “— Êtes-vous le médecin? demanda l'enfant. Et, sur la réponse de Charles, il prit ses sabots à ses mains et se mit à courir devant lui. L'officier de santé, chemin faisant, comprit aux discours de son guide que M. Rouault devait être un cultivateur des plus aisés” (17). In addition to titular confusion, there is also evidence that Charles is not meant to be a physician. Not only must he resort to memorizing the answers in advance to pass his examination, he does not seem physically capable of handling his studies:

Le programme des cours, qu'il lut sur l'affiche, lui fit un effet d'étourdissement: cours d'anatomie, cours de pathologie, cours de physiologie, cours de pharmacie, cours de chimie et de botanique, et de Clinique, et de thérapeutique, sans compter l'hygiène ni les matières médicales, tous noms dont il ignorait les étymologies, et qui étaient comme autant de portes de sanctuaires pleins d'augustes ténèbres. (45)

We see another example of his sensibility when he lets the blood of a patient and has difficulty applying the compress because of his strong emotion.⁵⁰ In an effort to advance his career, Emma

⁵⁰ “— Ma femme! ma femme! appela Charles. D'un bond, elle descendit l'escalier. — Du vinaigre! cria-t-il. Ah! mon Dieu, deux à la fois! Et, dans son émotion, il avait peine à poser la compresse. — Ce n'est rien, disait tout tranquillement M. Boulanger, tandis qu'il prenait Justin entre ses bras” (178).

later convinces Charles to attempt a surgery, the mere thought of the spectacle causing an emotive reaction:

— « Malgré les préjugés qui recouvrent encore une partie de la face de l'Europe comme un réseau, la lumière cependant commence à pénétrer dans nos campagnes. C'est ainsi que, mardi, notre petite cité d'Yonville s'est vue le théâtre d'une expérience chirurgicale qui est en même temps un acte de haute philanthropie. M. Bovary, un de nos praticiens les plus distingués... » —Ah! c'est trop! c'est trop! disait Charles, que l'émotion suffoquait.—Mais non, pas du tout! comment donc!... « A opéré d'un pied-bot... » Je n'ai pas mis le terme scientifique, parce que, vous savez, dans un journal..., tout le monde peut-être ne comprendrait pas; il faut que les masses... (246)

Ironically, the simplistic language used to relate to the masses foreshadows the inability of Charles to successfully perform the surgery, which eventually causes Hippolyte's leg to gangrene: "La gangrene, en effet, montait de plus en plus. Bovary en était malade lui-même. Il venait à chaque heure, à tout moment" (253-4). Charles's only recourse is to nurture the patient, and to display emotional attachment to the suffering boy. Although Charles practices a profession, it becomes an extension of his feminine identity. The fact that his office is located within his home underscores his role as *officier de santé* and his inability to surpass that professional title, as another example of his attachment to the domestic sphere.

The question of the domestic sphere has been brought into play several times in my analysis. Domesticity is also a relevant point on which to transition from Charles and his feminine competence in relation to the domestic sphere to Emma and her lack of domestic skills. One such skill that presents itself in *Madame Bovary* is sewing. As Mary Donaldson-Evans writes: "An investigation of the role played by pins and needles in cultural history necessarily leads to the seamstress, a figure of domesticity who is often represented in art as young and docile, perhaps eager to be subjugated by the male" (255). The art of needlepoint, however, is

not always seen as representative of passive femininity,⁵¹ and Donaldson-Evans points to examples dating from the Middle Ages: “In both the medieval cloth and the modern sampler, women have used the tools—needles and thread or yarn—of a quintessentially “feminine” activity to express a distinctly insubordinate attitude” (257). I would argue that this is true in *Madame Bovary* as well, but perhaps in a different way.

For Charles, sewing demonstrates his domestic capabilities, which, in addition to the countless examples of his comfort in the home, attachment to his mother, wife, and child, and his nurturing tendencies, subverts his male sex and reinforces his feminine gender. After Emma’s death, Charles is left to take care of Berthe and does so by crafting toys and sewing her dolls back together: “Il raccommodait ses joujoux, lui fabriquait des pantins avec du carton, ou recousait le ventre déchiré de ses poupées” (481). For Emma, however, sewing serves a different purpose.

First, there are many references to Emma’s inability to sew. As Williams puts it, “Emma either sews incompetently or endows sewing with an auto-erotic quality. The one time her heart is in her work is when she is undoing the lining of a dress, just as in adultery she has unravelled the very fabric of married life” (135-136). One such example is a widely commented scene when Charles and Emma are first getting acquainted: “mademoiselle Emma tâchait à coudre des coussinets. Comme elle fut longtemps avant de trouver son étui, son père s’impatia; elle ne répondit rien; mais, tout en cousant, elle se piquait les doigts, qu’elle portait ensuite à sa bouche pour les sucer” (23). Donaldson-Evans comments on this scene, drawing attention away from the critical attention often placed on the seductive qualities of Emma’s actions and instead focusing on her inept handling of the needlepoint:

⁵¹See Parker, Rozsika. *The Subversive Stitch. Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: The Women’s Press, 1984).

The critics' attention has been drawn to Emma's gesture of sucking the blood from her fingers, and psychological interpretations have been advanced. But from a more prosaic perspective, the essential feature of the passage is the insistence on the fact that Emma is not an accomplished seamstress. At first, she can't find her sewing kit. When she does locate it, she only attempts to sew, and she keeps pricking her fingers with the needle. (258)

As Donaldson-Evans suggests, however, Emma does use these domestic activities to her advantage, despite her ineptitude. Although the focus may be on Emma's lack of domesticity, she does succeed in attracting the attention of Charles, who "fut surpris de la blancheur de ses ongles. Ils étaient brillants, fins du bout, plus nettoyés que les ivoires de Dieppe, et taillés en amande" (23). She later uses a similar tactic in seducing Léon, as recounted by Donaldson-Evans:

In another, she grabs a dishtowel and begins hemming it when she sees Léon coming, thus making a show of her domestic virtue that only underlines her secret desire to inflame Léon's passion. Here, Flaubert maliciously exploits the sexual symbolism that has for centuries been associated with the needle and the needle case, putting the case into Léon's hands ("il faisait tourner dans ses doigts l'étui d'ivoire" [193]) while Emma persists in pushing the needle through the folds of fabric. (258-259)

If Emma despises sewing (which she illustrates at one point, throwing her needlepoint against the wall shouting "à quoi bon? à quoi bon? La couture l'irritait", 90) why does she continually practice it? I argue that these displays of (attempted) domestic competency are, in fact, calculated performances of femininity. Fully aware of the social implications of her role as wife and caretaker, Emma feigns the image of the perfect mother. In the aforementioned scenarios, the goal is clearly one of seduction, perhaps convinced that by acting ideally feminine she would attract someone ideally masculine. Emma's inability to sew is just one example of her incompetence in the domestic sphere. While these two instances of needlepoint may be subversive in her misrepresentation of gender norms, her domestic practices become much more destabilizing as the novel progresses.

5. THE CASE OF EMMA BOVARY

I introduced this chapter by discussing the significant intersection of sex, gender, sexuality, and mothering. One possible reading of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, then, might focus on the narrative juxtaposition of Emma's sexual desires and her motherhood. The contrast that is seen between the two reflects an internal conflict in the character of Emma that is not without comment in extant criticism. Rooks, for one, claims that "Emma's acknowledgement of her motherly posturing positions her at odds with the mid-nineteenth century maternal ideal and its requirement of mothers' single-minded devotion to their children" (3). In her thesis, *Mother Love and Mothers in Love: the Novel of Adultery*, Janette Suzanne Johnson contends that Emma's sexual passions "are more powerful than any maternal or domestic attentions" (165), although Rooks claims to disagree with this conclusion.

The positing of Emma's sexuality in contrast with her role as mother is perhaps incorrect. Instead, these two seemingly opposing elements reflect Emma's own internal gender conflict, with her sexual desires representing her projection of masculinity and her maternal compulsions reflecting a projection of femininity. Still, this is not to say that what is at play is an inner conflict between masculinity and femininity. I argue that the important aspect of Emma's motherly behavior is its compulsion; it occurs at these moments in the novel where Emma attempts to reconcile her own identity with what her society expects, that is the sanctified mother and, by consequent, the ideal feminine woman.

Where other scholars note "the peculiar contrast between Emma's apparent lack of maternal instinct towards her own child and her dramatic bestowment of maternal affections towards her lover Léon" (Rooks 3), I instead see a performative, reactive, attempt on Emma's

part to play the role she is aware society anticipates. While I agree with Rooks when she claims that, “If Emma fails to fulfill her duty as mother to her child, she proves herself able to conform to society’s expectations of maternal nature via her sexual relationship with Léon” (3), I do not see this as a transfer of her true motherly capacity. Instead, Emma hopes to make visible her ability to conform, in an attempt to satisfy society’s expectations. Edward J. Gallagher equally points to Emma’s “surfeit of maternal concern” for the men in her life, notably Rodolphe and Léon. Ironically, this apparent maternal behavior is equally cause for concern in these relationships, as both men are eventually overpowered by her masculine gender.

In contrast to her relationship with Charles, where Emma is depicted as the more experienced sexual partner, she is at first sexually overpowered by Rodolphe. We read:

Elle ne savait pas si elle regrettait de lui avoir cédé, ou si elle ne souhaitait point, au contraire, le chérir davantage. L’humiliation de se sentir faible se tournait en une rancune que les voluptés tempéraient. Ce n’était pas de l’attachement, c’était comme une séduction permanente. Il la subjuguait. Elle en avait presque peur. (241)

The lack of (maternal) attachment in their relationship is markedly different from the nurturing attitude of Charles. After learning that Rodolphe’s mother died twenty years ago, there is a shift in Emma’s behavior:

Souvent elle lui parlait des cloches du soir ou des voix de la nature ; puis elle l’entretenait de sa mère, à elle, et de sa mère, à lui. Rodolphe l’avait perdue depuis vingt ans. Emma, néanmoins, l’en consolait avec des mièvreries de langage, comme on eût fait à un marmot abandonné, et même lui disait quelquefois, en regardant la lune:—Je suis sûre que là-haut, ensemble, elles approuvent notre amour. (240-241)

Although she consoles him, the relationship does not reach the level of attachment between mother and child, but instead that of an adult to an abandoned child in passing. The timeline of Emma’s relationships is significant because, as she attempted with Charles before, she feigns feminine submission in the nascent stages of her *liaisons*. While her femininity here is deliberately performative, it is also clumsy and in some way incomplete. Like her gauche attempt

at seducing Charles, first by sewing, then by sharing curaçao, her try at consoling Rodolphe comes off as awkward and insincere. Emma's inability to fulfill the feminine role manifests itself in her often taking control in her relationships, focused more on her own personal gain than on any emotional attachment. For instance, with Rodolphe, Emma becomes more demanding:

Outre la cravache à pommeau de vermeil, Rodolphe avait reçu un cachet avec cette devise: Amor nel cor⁵²; de plus, une écharpe pour se faire un cache-nez, et enfin un porte-cigares tout pareil à celui du vicomte, que Charles avait autrefois ramassé sur la route et qu'Emma conservait. Cependant ces cadeaux l'humiliaient. Il en refusa plusieurs; elle insista, et Rodolphe finit par obéir, la trouvant tyrannique et trop envahissante. Puis elle avait d'étranges idées:—Quand minuit sonnera, disait-elle, tu penseras à moi! Et, s'il avouait n'y avoir point songé, c'étaient des reproches en abondance, et qui se terminaient toujours par l'éternel mot: M'aimes-tu? (269)

Originally, Emma savored the feeling of humiliation through sexual pleasure, of being weak and submissive to Rodolphe. The shift in the relationship leaves Rodolphe the humiliated one, causing him to see Emma as tyrannical and invasive. While this is not indicative of any cultivated masculinity, it does show a failure at an attempted feminine identity.

Unlike Charles, who became “another man” after marriage, Emma finds no confirmation of her identity in any of her relationships. In fact, the opposite is truer. When discussing her sadness with Félicité, she admits: “— Mais, moi, reprenait Emma, c'est après le mariage que ça m'est venu” (155). Her internal gender conflict, I contend, is the cause of her eventual suicide. With Charles, Emma experiences varying degrees of disgust and attention, often reflecting external interference. Up to this point, I have discussed characters who, whether normative or not, display mature and stable gender identities. Emma, on the contrary, never achieves the same level of gender stability; or, if she does, she refuses to accept it. In the final part of this chapter, I examine Emma Bovary's failure to conform to the feminine identity that society expects of her

⁵²“Love in the heart”

and that she desperately attempts to internalize. It is her inability to do so that leads to her eventual suicide.

Although in some cases Emma uses social expectations in an attempt to attract suitors, in many of the instances where Emma fulfills the role of the ideal mother it is a mere reaction to an external catalyst. The most obvious example of this occurs when the merchant Lheureux indirectly compares Emma to Mme Homais. The latter is often referred to as the perfect wife and mother, a point on which Rooks comments:

The mother with whom the novel most frequently juxtaposes Emma is the dignified yet odious good wife, Madame Homais. Madame Homais's embodying of the appropriate mother role is further linked to her distinct lack of sexual appeal. The claim that she is the 'best wife in Normandy' is immediately offset by a description of her as 'slow of movement, such a bore to listen to, so common in appearance...'...Further, Léon is said to have 'never thought she might be a woman to anyone, or that she possessed anything else of her sex than the gown. (9)

The de-sexualization of Mme Homais is congruous to her title of the best wife and mother, as the ideal mother figure was virtuous, pure, and feminine, and females were thought to have little to no sexual urges.

Still, her mention causes Emma concern as it points out her inability to conform to the same social standard. Her reaction, then, is to overcompensate for her lack of femininity:

Et il se mit à parler de Mme Homais, dont la tenue fort négligée leur prêtait à rire ordinairement.— Qu'est-ce que cela fait? interrompit Emma. Une bonne mère de famille ne s'inquiète pas de sa toilette. Puis elle retomba dans son silence. Il en fut de même les jours suivants; ses discours, ses manières, tout changea. On la vit prendre à cœur son ménage, retourner à l'église régulièrement et tenir sa servante avec plus de sévérité. Elle retira Berthe de nourrice. Félicité l'amenait quand il venait des visites, et madame Bovary la déshabillait afin de faire voir ses membres. Elle déclarait adorer les enfants; c'était sa consolation, sa joie, sa folie, et elle accompagnait ses caresses d'expansions lyriques, qui, à d'autres qu'à des Yonvillais, eussent rappelé la Sachette de Notre-Dame de Paris. Quand Charles rentrait, il trouvait auprès des cendres ses pantoufles à chauffer. Ses gilets maintenant ne manquaient plus de doublure, ni ses chemises de boutons, et même il y avait plaisir à considérer dans l'armoire tous les bonnets de coton rangés par piles égales. Elle ne rechignait plus, comme autrefois, à faire des tours dans le jardin; ce qu'il proposait était toujours consenti, bien qu'elle ne devinât pas les volontés auxquelles elle

se soumettait sans un murmure;—et lorsque Léon le voyait au coin du feu, après le dîner, les deux mains sur son ventre, les deux pieds sur les chenets, la joue rougie par la digestion, les yeux humides de bonheur, avec l'enfant qui se traînait sur le tapis, et cette femme à taille mince qui par-dessus le dossier du fauteuil venait le baiser au front:— Quelle folie! se disait-il, et comment arriver jusqu'à elle? Elle lui parut donc si vertueuse et inaccessible, que toute espérance, même la plus vague, l'abandonna. (150-151)

Reminded of how the ideal mother and wife acts, Emma responds with her own silence, a consistent mark of the devoted wife. Her portrait-like behavior of the ideal wife and mother is purely reactive, having been provoked by Lheureux's comment about Mme Homais. Her activities are confined to feminine space, such as the church and the home. Even the textual description accentuates the homeliness of Emma's state. Her attention to her husband is coupled with her physical attachment to him. Through the eyes of Léon, the image of Emma is de-sexualized: she exists only as part of her family. Contrary to before, Emma no longer objects to her husband's wishes, marking a transformation that is also noted by the shift from Emma to Madame Bovary. Indeed, whereas Emma was speaking with Lheureux, now that she has projected the image of the sanctified mother and wife, her name is relinquished. The switch from Emma to Madame Bovary underscores the fact that, as Mother, Emma exists only for her husband and child.

She also displays a strong attachment to her daughter, who, upon birth, had been sent to a wet-nurse. Contrary to Charles's mother, however, who sends her son away out of necessity, Emma's daughter is sent to the farthest corner of town, and only recovered during impulses: “Un jour, Emma fut prise tout à coup du besoin de voir sa petite fille, qui avait été mise en nourrice chez la femme du menuisier; et sans regarder à l'almanach si les six semaines de la Vierge duraient encore, elle s'achemina vers la demeure de Rollet, qui se trouvait à l'extrémité du village, au bas de la côte, entre la grande route et les prairies” (129-30). Like her new attachment to Charles, Emma also exhibits closeness with her child. The narrative comparison between her

and “la Sachette de *Notre-Dame de Paris*,” the mother of Esmeralda who pines after her lost child, amplifies the presence of her maternal affection. There is a physical closeness that is also depicted. Emma cannot stop holding her child, undresses her, which intensifies their closeness, and is often attached to her physically, as we see when she is kissing her forehead. Although this newfound affection for her child is symptomatic of her reactive maternal identity, it is also significant that both scenes are seen through the eyes of Léon. His reaction, I argue, adds another dimension to Emma’s behavior. Not only is her projection of femininity in these moments caused by a reminder that her textual society is judging her, it is also a means of gaining the attention of men.

In both instances where Emma interacts lovingly with her child, Léon is a witness. Léon is both enticed by her demeanor, but also disquieted by her virtue. In the scene with Mme Rollet, Léon is surprised by Emma in such a maternal role: “Léon se promenait dans la chambre ; il lui semblait étrange de voir cette belle dame en robe de nankin tout au milieu de cette misère. Mme Bovary devint rouge; il se détourna, croyant que ses yeux peut-être avaient eu quelque impertinence. Puis elle recoucha la petite, qui venait de vomir sur sa collerette. La nourrice aussitôt vint l’essuyer, protestant qu’il n’y paraîtrait pas” (132). Léon’s reaction is similar to how readers may react, having seen no evidence in the novel thus far of Emma as the conventional “mother.” In the second scene, when Léon sees Emma with her family, he reads her happiness as a sense of fulfillment. Emma becomes inaccessible to Léon because there is, supposedly, no room for him. Emma’s reactive mothering (and wife-ing, for that matter), is fleeting, which distinguishes her gender from the flexible gender of her father. Other examples of Emma’s sudden change in behavior also illustrate this point.

Later in the novel, we see similar a scene as to the ones mentioned above. In an attempt to repent after the failed affair with Rodolphe, Emma:

se livra à des charités excessives. Elle cousait des habits pour les pauvres ; elle envoyait du bois aux femmes en couches ; et Charles, un jour en rentrant, trouva dans la cuisine trois vauriens attablés qui mangeaient un potage. Elle fit revenir à la maison sa petite fille, que son mari, durant sa maladie, avait renvoyée chez la nourrice. Elle voulut lui apprendre à lire ; Berthe avait beau pleurer, elle ne s'irritait plus. C'était un parti pris de résignation, une indulgence universelle. Son langage, à propos de tout, était plein d'expressions idéales. Elle disait à son enfant:— Ta colique est-elle passée, mon ange ?

Mme Bovary mère ne trouvait rien à blâmer, sauf peut-être cette manie de tricoter des camisoles pour les orphelins, au lieu de raccommoder ses torchons. Mais, harassée de querelles domestiques, la bonne femme se plaisait en cette maison tranquille, et même elle y demeura jusques après Pâques, afin d'éviter les sarcasmes du père Bovary, qui ne manquait pas, tous les vendredis saints, de se commander une andouille. (304)

Another compulsive attempt to project the image of the perfect mother results in further confirmation that Emma is conflicted about her gender identity. As much as she tries to mother, it is clear that her own gender does not conform to the maternal role. Her control of the domestic sphere is never successful; she attempts to teach her daughter to read but fails (Charles, however, has better results), just as she knits clothing for orphans but does not repair the rags in her own home. The presence of Mme Bovary, the original model of ideal motherhood, only serves to point out Emma's failures.

If Emma's clumsy attempts at domestic tasks reflect a failure to conform to the image of the ideal mother, the treatment of her daughter only underscores her non-femininity. In one important scene, Emma struggles with her own identity and her dissatisfaction with being a mother and, as a result, physically pushes her child away:

Le jour blanchâtre des carreaux s'abaissait doucement avec des ondulations. Les meubles à leur place semblaient devenus plus immobiles et se perdre dans l'ombre comme dans un océan ténébreux. La cheminée était éteinte, la pendule battait toujours, et Emma vaguement s'ébahissait à ce calme des choses, tandis qu'il y avait en elle-même tant de bouleversements. Mais, entre la fenêtre et la table à ouvrage, la petite Berthe était là, qui chancelait sur ses bottines de tricot, et essayait de se rapprocher de sa mère, pour lui saisir, par le bout, les rubans de son tablier.— Laisse-moi! dit celle-ci en l'écartant avec

la main. La petite fille bientôt revint plus près encore contre ses genoux; et, s'y appuyant des bras, elle levait vers elle son gros œil bleu, pendant qu'un filet de salive pure découlait de sa lèvre sur la soie du tablier. — Laisse-moi! répéta la jeune femme tout irritée. Sa figure épouvanta l'enfant, qui se mit à crier.— Eh! laisse-moi donc! fit-elle en la repoussant du coude. Berthe alla tomber au pied de la commode, contre la patère de cuivre; elle s'y coupa la joue, le sang sortit. Mme Bovary se précipita pour la relever, cassa le cordon de la sonnette, appela la servante de toutes ses forces, et elle allait commencer à se maudire, lorsque Charles parut. C'était l'heure du dîner, il rentrait. —Regarde donc, cher ami, lui dit Emma d'une voix tranquille: voilà la petite qui, en jouant, vient de se blesser par terre. (162-163)

The scene here is set with the contrast between the calmness of the atmosphere and the chaos inside of Emma. Clearly, this chaos represents a variety of things, one of which is the gender conflict she has yet to realize. This conflict is depicted by the calm/calamity contrast, as well as the variation between Emma, “la jeune femme”, non-maternal character who is irritated by her child and Mme Bovary, the part of Emma that wants desperately to conform to the role of mother. In this way, we see “Emma” constantly pushing her daughter away, refusing to accept the maternal role, and Mme Bovary, who tries with all her might to get help for her suffering child. The symbolism connected to children and the birthing process, which biologically makes one a mother, is represented by the saliva dripping from Berthe's mouth and the cord Emma breaks trying to call for help. The reality of her role as mother strikes as the child's drool makes contact with her apron. The breaking of the cord further underscores this, because, unfortunately for Emma, her biologic status as mother is disconnected from her gender identity. This scene symbolically highlights the gender struggle going on inside of Emma: although biologically a mother, Emma cannot conform to the gendered expectations of the role.

I have been careful to not refer to Emma Bovary as a “bad mother”. Further, I have also abstained from deeming her masculine, just because she may lack femininity as it is established in this novel. Although the majority of the characters in *Madame Bovary* displays a mature, stable gender identity, and can therefore be qualified as masculine or feminine, Emma eludes

such a determination. She is in limbo, but not between masculinity and femininity. Emma exists in a state of uncertainty; plagued by a lingering desire to fulfill the role that society expects of her, that is, the perfect wife and mother that Mme Bovary mère, Mme Homais, and Charles all embody. Still, there is evidence throughout the narrative that Emma, along with the reader, is aware that her gender lies outside of this social norm. What her gender identity is, however, remains unknown, because the conflicting desire to conform and the incapacity to succeed leads Emma to suicide before developing a mature gender identity. While many critics will argue that Emma is clearly masculine, her embodiment of masculine behaviors, most often displayed in her romantic affairs, never reaches a point of internal acceptance. Her gender identity, I contend, remains perpetually immature.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have discussed not only how genders are defined in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* but furthermore how the characters within the narrative create, display, and embody them. The image of the Mother is prominent in this work, and it makes sense, then, that it is through these parental roles of mothering and fathering that the characters in the novel construct their own gender identities. In spite of biological limitations, some characters actively choose to enact a parenting style, and by extension, gender identity, that differs from their sex. In the case of Emma's father, Rouault clearly takes on the maternal role in the private sphere but chooses to act the fatherly role in public. Charles, however, fully adopts the maternal role and actually brings the public sphere into the domestic space. For Emma, however, her inability to find happiness conforming to the motherly role, nor accepting a gender different than what is

expected of her, nor finding ways to “moderate” her masculinity, leads to a case of gender confusion that results in her death.

This chapter on Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* has allowed me to elaborate my own interpretations of a gender theory I will continue to use throughout this dissertation. My analysis has demonstrated a focal shift from gender as a result (or compilation) of gendered qualities to how literary characters work through gender as a developmental process. By detailing the relationship between parental roles and gender identities I saw illustrated in this novel, I was able to offer a new reading of Emma Bovary, in particular. Her suicide, according to my reading through her character’s gender development, is the result of an internal gender conflict that results from her inability to reconcile her own gender with the story’s expectations of her as a mother and wife. Her erratic behavior, especially in regard to her relationship with Berthe, is explained by this internal struggle between a (masculine?) gender identity she would like to cultivate and the social pressure for her to conform to a maternal femininity.

Chapter 2

UNVEILING GENDER IN *SALAMMBÔ*

INTRODUCTION

Although chronologically following *Madame Bovary* in Flaubert's literary corpus, the subject matter of *Salammbô* takes up an historical period long before the 19th century: ancient Carthage. The historical elements in the work allow for a new reading of gender identity that helps to elaborate arguments made in the first chapter. For instance, my first chapter details parenthood as a means of manifesting gender identity, but ignores, to some extent, how gender identity penetrates, or emanates from, the core of the character. While I conclude that certain characters in *Madame Bovary* are masculine and/or feminine, I focus much more on instances where such a conclusion is unobtainable, predominantly in the case of Emma. My reading of *Salammbô* delves into what can be read as the "original story" of gender in the Flaubertian imaginary. Indeed, the temporal setting of this novel begs a reading of history. Although the novelization of ancient Carthage provokes a sense of distance or "exoticism" in the reader, this tale of gender origins has connections to the other works in Flaubert's corpus. As much as Flaubert detaches this novel from his readers, both through language and subject matter, my reading peels away these poetic layers in order to expose the Flaubertian gender identity in its rawest form.

This second chapter is divided into three parts, each looking at how gender permeates through Flaubert's writing in *Salammbô*. In the first part, I examine the "exotic" language used in the novel, which, for some critics, complicates the understanding of the text. Paradoxically, an underlying theme of this novel is the quest for knowledge. The question of what "knowledge" means, and if it does indeed exist, becomes a significant part of this chapter and will be at the heart of the last chapter of my dissertation.⁵³ It is in reference to *Salammbô* that Flaubert first discusses the genre of "fantaisie scientifique." This almost oxymoronic classification explains, in fact, a large component of Flaubert's corpus. Indeed, creative processes, such as literary writing and gender development, share elements with scientific goals (as acquired through the scientific method). The critique of science that is made in Flaubert's *Salammbô*, however, is that a "real" origin does not always exist. Indeed, if Salammbô fails in her quest for knowledge, it is because she is convinced that what she seeks lies beneath the zaïmph. Like the readers who look for a decisive representation of Carthage, the literary characters presented within the text partake in a quest for a knowledge that does not exist.

After decoding Flaubert's exoticizing language, I show how the veil, like the knowledge it is purported to hide, is a social construction. The constant references to biblical origins and the medieval quest trick the reader into expecting a source of knowledge that, in reality, is purely manufactured. Trying to understand the idealized gender identities of Mâtho and Salammbô, the so-called holy grail of gender knowledge, is ultimately revealed to be itself a fabrication. Even when stripped to their core, the origins of gender are revealed to be externally and not internally fabricated.

⁵³In *Salammbô*, the "knowledge" that both protagonists search for is their "natural" origin, that is, the origin of the gender identities they incarnate. In *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, the focus of my fourth chapter, knowledge becomes much more complex, referencing not only how gender is originated but also how it is displayed.

Although this ideal gender may not exist, the idea of its existence takes on many forms throughout *Salammbô*. The physical layers of the two protagonists, the divine forms of Moloch and Tanit, and the multi-faceted zaïmph all represent textual manifestations of normalized gender identity. These elements all share fragility, however, that makes their existence precarious. As much as these symbols protect the institution of distinctive masculine and feminine genders, beneath their shielding layers hides the “origin” of these genders: that is, that they are mere constructions. The risk of uncovering this secret is, in fact, manifested by the zaïmph and instigates the narrative’s action. The high priest Schahabarim⁵⁴ acts as the protector of the zaïmph, and consequently as the guardian of social gender norms. His character works behind the scenes to ensure the preservation of distinct genders, which involves both the creation and destruction of Mâtho and Salammbô. Ultimately, my reading looks at *Salammbô*’s narrative inversely, that is, from the end to “beginning”, in order to expose how masculinity and femininity, as embodied by Salammbô and Mâtho, are born from nothing and, consequently, how these characters are as fragile as the gender identities they represent despite the seeming absolutes of their gendered beings as played through Flaubert’s use of symbolism.

⁵⁴Mary Orr has given a convincing argument to this effect: “Schahabarim knows only too well that he guards the zaïmph’s deeper secret and sacred form... Thus in the name of the Zaïmph (the phallus), he guards the secret by sacrificing those who might usurp his power... What has been read as his defection from female goddess Tanit to the male order of Moloch can now be seen as a move within the two facets of one Patriarchal Phallic Order” (“Cloaks” 29). Orr connects the zaïmph as phallus to the male/masculine authority. I add to this reading by examining the phallus (and its various manifestations in addition to the zaïmph) as a representation of patriarchal customs, and thus distinct from biological sex. These customs, however, clearly include the normative gender identities assigned to Salammbô and Mâtho. This helps explain why both Salammbô and Mâtho are punished at the “end” of the novel.

1. FLAUBERT'S TRAP

In considering Flaubert's *Salammbô*, it is important to address the interpretative difficulties the text presents. Often cited for its disorienting nature, the copious amount of description and detail the author uses to create his literary Carthage has led many critics to call the work inaccessible to readers. Lawrence Schehr famously deemed the work to be the novel of alterity, remarking the author's ability to construct "an alterity that has never been encrypted in a known world" (332), and, consequently, his entrapment of readers through a sense of false verisimilitude. This act of playing with readers' expectations emerges as well from the exotic elements Flaubert includes in the work. Indeed, the topic of exoticism and its subversion in the novel figures as the subject of many books, including Anne Mullen Hohl's *Exoticism in Salammbô: The Languages of Myth, Religion, and War*, and Jennifer Yee's *Exotic Subversions in Nineteenth-century French Fiction*. As Hohl explains, "Since *Salammbô* is situated in the Orient of Antiquity the concept of the exotic will include literary themes and clichés associated in the French sociolect with the Orient of that period" (2-3). These clichés, however, are soon exposed to be deceitful landmarks for the reader.

Equally important, therefore, is to resist falling victim to the textual trap Flaubert has woven into his novel. If, as literary scholarship has alluded, the author endeavors to effectuate a sense of alienation in the reader, this foreignness stems from the poetic form of the work itself. Critics have discussed the difficulty associated with the reading of this novel. In his "Considérations sur *Salammbô*", Joachim Küpper summarizes some of these critiques:

Bloc erratique dans l'œuvre de Flaubert, *Salammbô* ne se laisse pas non plus intégrer dans le contexte des autres œuvres écrites à la même époque: ce roman semble décidément échapper à toute tentative de catégorisation... Les messages plus ou moins dissimulés que l'on s'évertue à lui attribuer, se laissent dégager bien plus aisément d'autres textes de Flaubert, et la part du roman dont ces différentes thèses ne parviennent pas à rendre compte dépasse à chaque fois celle qu'elles parviennent à couvrir. (731)

Indeed, Flaubert suggests an intention to distance the text from his contemporary readership. As Gisèle Séginger asserts, “L’incompréhension est rassurante pour l’écrivain qui tient à sa différence: « Je déteste fort mes semblables, écrivait-il dès l’époque de *Madame Bovary*, et ne me sens pas leur semblable. » Pendant la rédaction de *Salammbô*, il se rassure donc en pensant à l’échec qui l’attend” (18). At first glance it appears that Flaubert succeeds in veiling the meaning of his novel. Alain Toumayan, in his article on “Violence and Civilization in Flaubert’s *Salammbô*”, touches on this point, claiming:

However, several more recent studies suggest that assessments of the novel in terms of remoteness, reconditeness, alienation, unknowability, and inaccessibility are very appropriate and criticism of the novel on this score is strangely off the mark to the extent that Flaubert’s very purpose in this work is to present characters, geographical settings, historical situations, and actions that are not only foreign but depicted scrupulously in their essential foreignness, in other words, which are represented in a manner such that the fact and manner of their representation do not diminish but maintain, even accentuate, their foreignness, distance, and inaccessibility. (52)

Indeed, Flaubert himself describes *Salammbô* as, “Une chose qu’on n’avait jamais vue: de la fantaisie scientifique!” (42), a novel genre that further underscores the foreignness of the work to its reader by claiming it to be “something no one had ever seen”. In combining these two elements, Flaubert suggests a criticism of both. As much as Flaubert researches in preparation for writing this novel, he maintains this knowledge at a distance from his readers, as if to expose the futility of true comprehension. The belief that knowledge is fully comprehensible is part of the fantasy. The exotic elements of the novel are meant to tantalize the senses as much as they are intended to further obstruct grasping the text at hand. In some ways, then, science and fantasy are constructed like an oppositional binary but prove to be one and the same.

Also woven into this textual fabric is the reader’s quest for understanding the novel; that is, its “essential” meaning, if one does indeed exist. Sima Godfrey notes:

Like the sea that joins with the sky in this flat seascape, descriptions of landscape bring together “le sol” and “le soleil” in a similar fusion of surfaces to create a pictorial effort of lack of depth... Many of the visions in *Salammbô* involve incoherent and fragmented forms, but as they relate to the undulating movement of the novel’s surface (“les plis de terrain” p. 319), these forms represent not the simple “tachiste” method of a painter of oils, but rather a play of light and dark, visibility and concealment, that is woven into the gentle folds of a vibrant, monumental tapestry. (1008)

The search for knowledge becomes central to both the external and internal forces of the novel, and literary critics have labored over the historical accuracy of the plot, the linguistic accuracy of its exotic language, and the author’s faithfulness to ancient mythology. Again, the tension between the familiar and the foreign surfaces as one attempts to trace the genesis of Flaubert’s creation. If, however, as Toumayan suggests, the author’s purpose were to maintain the essential foreignness of these items, effectively resisting any sort of comprehension, such efforts would be futile and end much like the quests of both Salammbô and Mâtho in the novel. It will be my contention that the science of this novel is intrinsically linked to the quest for an essential gender identity that is consistently unknowable and inaccessible, and that, like the pursuit of the veil, striving for such unreachable ideals is equally futile.

Like many binary relationships, science and fantasy are often considered oppositional. While science privileges reason, fantasy evokes a more emotional, sensual response. Within this work, science is understood as knowledge, as the motivation to obtain this knowledge, and as the belief that obtaining this knowledge is reasonable. The setting of the narrative reflects how the author defines his science. He writes of his choice to represent Carthage in a letter to Léon Hennique: “Me croyez-vous assez godiche pour être convaincu que j’ai fait dans *Salammbô* une vraie reproduction de Carthage [...]? Ah! non! mais je suis sûr d’avoir exprimé l’idéal qu’on en a aujourd’hui” (374). Although the Carthage portrayed in *Salammbô* is born from the imagination, it is important to know that Flaubert researched the true Carthage in order to ultimately reject

it.⁵⁵ Isabelle Daunais, in a review of Gisèle Séginger's *Flaubert, Une poétique de l'histoire*, summarizes Séginger's conclusions in this regard:

« Production » du temps, l'histoire par contre serait elle-même improductive ou intransitive, ce que dit le sujet même de *Salammbô*. Choisir Carthage plutôt que Rome ou l'Égypte, explique Gisèle Séginger, c'est choisir, dans l'histoire, ce qui n'a pas eu de suite, ce qui est sans lien avec le présent, sans explication pour le présent. Civilisation privée d'avenir, Carthage constitue l'exemple même d'une victoire du temps sur l'histoire ou, pour le dire autrement, d'une déshistoricisation du temps. (190)

Science, as it is commonly understood, implies progress in the form of advancement, or forward momentum. By choosing Carthage, a representation of a static moment in history, Flaubert actively resists any sort of historical or civilizational progress. With the quest for knowledge impeded by the novel's limited textual space, it is the imagination that must surpass science.

In *Salammbô* Flaubert artistically intertwines foreign terminology, sensorial images, and religious allusions with the scientific quest of the heroine. The only mention of the word science occurs when Salammbô begs her mentor to show her to the veil, to which he responds, “satisfais-toi avec la science que tu possèdes!” (111) The alliterative effect in this line further encapsulates the science already known to Salammbô between the two verbs, urging her to be content with the knowledge she already has. Although the word may only appear once in the novel, its presence is significant. This moment is arguably the most proleptic for Salammbô, as it is her desire to possess the zaimph that leads to her eventual death and provokes the action of the novel. In this way, the veil, vehicle of the science Salammbô seeks, provides the momentum of the narrative. This object of science, though, is quickly juxtaposed with fantasy.

The fantastical element of the novel is presented primarily through the cosmological deities that motivate the narrative's tension. Although fantasy is often the antithesis of science, in

⁵⁵This practice of consultation/rejection will be explored more in-depth through my reading of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* in chapter 4.

Salammbô the contrast between the two is blurred. Before I turn to a discussion of the gods and goddesses present in the novel, I would like to first discuss the biblical elements scattered throughout Flaubert's text. The repetition of the 's' sound in the passage above evokes the serpentine image of the snake in the Garden of Eden who tempted Eve to eat from the tree of Knowledge. Although Schahabarim recounts this story to Salammbô "pour la distraire par des perspectives plus hautes" (111), his teachings incite her search for the veil. The mortal fate brought on by seeking the zaimph alludes to the biblical story of Adam and Eve. As Agnès Bouvier claims, "La Bible est une des sources majeures de *Salammbô*" (41). The points of comparison between the two are numerous and range from the cast of a male and female who are punished after coming in contact with a forbidden object, to the more tacit influence on linguistic elements from a specific edition of the bible.⁵⁶ My reason for mentioning the biblical influences present in *Salammbô* is to underscore the scientifically fantastic elements of the narrative. The use of specific biblical language proves a scientific basis for the creation of the novel, but the subject matter of the bible seems to contrast this, as Bouvier points out: "L'accès à un dire primitif a donc été frayé par le développement concomitant des sciences du langage et de l'exégèse biblique" (51). Again, this combination of linguistic and biblical knowledge, of science and non-science is categorized as an unusual combination. Yet the unison of the two generates the driving force of the novel itself.

In addition to the biblical references in *Salammbô*, the text features its own origin story. Within the tale told by Schahabarim, I argue, rests a complete reversal of Flaubert's own narrative. According to the priest:

⁵⁶« Je laboure la Bible de Cahen », writes Flaubert in July of 1857 when he begins the composition of *Salammbô* (*Correspondance*, op. cit., t. II, p. 740, lettre à Ernest Feydeau).

Avant les Dieux, les ténèbres étaient seules, et un souffle flottait, lourd et indistinct comme la conscience d'un homme dans un rêve. Il se contracta, créant le Désir et la Nue, et du Désir et de la Nue sortit la Matière primitive. C'était une eau bourbeuse, noire, glacée, profonde. Elle enfermait des monstres insensibles, parties incohérentes des formes à naître et qui sont peintes sur la paroi des sanctuaires. Puis la Matière se condensa. Elle devint un œuf. Il se rompit. Une moitié forma la terre, l'autre le firmament. Le soleil, la lune, les vents, les nuages parurent ; et, au fracas de la foudre, les animaux intelligents s'éveillèrent. Alors Eschmoûn se déroula dans la sphère étoilée; Khamon rayonna dans le soleil; Melkarth, avec ses bras, le poussa derrière Gadès; les Kabyrim descendirent sous les volcans, et Rabbet, telle qu'une nourrice, se pencha sur le monde, versant sa lumière comme un lait et sa nuit comme un manteau. (110-11)

By working through the text of this origin tale, I will show how Schahabarim presents the ideal “model” for the scientific fantasy that Flaubert strives to compose. The high priest is a mouthpiece for the patriarchal society that constructs the masculinity and femininity embodied by Mâtho and Salammbô. He, we discover, singularly possesses the knowledge of this origin story, because “Personne, à Carthage, n'était savant comme lui” (246). His presence at two pivotal moments in the text, the scene mentioned above and the sacrifice of Mâtho at the story's end, reflects his goal to preserve gender distinction. As I have already suggested, although the tale he recounts to Salammbô provokes her quest for the veil, its intention was rather to prevent it. Further, the tale recounts a story of something born from nothingness, similar to the nothingness that remains at the end of *Salammbô*. The gradual decomposition of the protagonists from the beginning of the novel to its end traces an inversion of Schahabarim's tale, effectively rendering it the origin of *Salammbô*. Like the choice of ancient Carthage as a self-contained moment in history, the narrative progress of *Salammbô* is equally self-sufficient, fueling the cyclical and symbiotic relationship between science and fantasy, between male and female, between socially and individually constructed gender.

Although the bible is a marked reference for the composition of *Salammbô*, genetic criticism has yet to trace the loci of Schahabarim's origin story. Bouvier explains: “Les sources

de Flaubert pour ce passage ne sont pas attestées par les notes de lecture actuellement disponibles mais peuvent être établies de manière conjecturale” (np). *Salammbô*'s origin, then, is not purely scientific or based on research, but at least in part the product of the imagination.

Bouvier suggests this as well, stating:

Il pourrait s'agir d'une récréation savante sans rapport direct avec l'écriture du roman. Mais l'influence des idées de Félix Pouchet⁵⁷, qui ont pu d'ailleurs atteindre Flaubert bien avant la lecture de son grand œuvre (le docteur Pouchet était l'élève du père de Flaubert et l'ami de la famille) est si visible dans l'élaboration de la cosmogonie phénicienne de *Salammbô* qu'on est amené à penser autrement la coïncidence des « lectures puniques » et des lectures « spontanéistes ». (np)

The hesitation Bouvier exhibits in mentioning the potential influence of external sources echoes my claim earlier regarding the rejection of models. Even if the genesis of this novel can be traced back to various historical sources, the finished product resists any conclusive comparison to historical accuracy. Indeed, we are again exposed to Flaubert's trap. The true origin of *Salammbô* is contained within the text itself. Just as genetic criticism reveals the symbiotic relationship of scientific fantasy, the characters Salammbô and Mâtho elaborate a poetic of contrasts that, ultimately, decomposes the long standing gender conflict between masculinity and femininity.

2. THE POETICS OF CONTRAST

Classifying this work as “scientific fantasy” supports Gisèle Séginger's designation of the novel as containing a poetics of contrasts. She writes:

⁵⁷Félix Archimède Pouchet is most known for his work *Hétérogénie* in which he details the process through which living organisms can result from chemical processes, such as fermentation and purification. This process was termed spontaneous generation (“la génération spontanée” in French). The existence of spontaneous generation was eventually disproven by Louis Pasteur, whose experiments demonstrated the reproductive capabilities of microorganisms.

le désir amoureux se convertit donc en pulsion de mort et Mâtho apaise son désir dans la violence de la guerre, dans les massacres et les supplices, tandis que le feu d'Astarté brûle Salammbô de désirs mystico-érotiques. Roman d'amour et de haine, roman du matérialisme et du spiritualisme, Salammbô mêle puissamment des tonalités différentes, des tons contrastés, le sang et l'encens. (22)

Nevertheless, as much as these opposing elements remain present throughout the novel, as the story progresses the line that once delimited the two poles becomes increasingly blurred. I question if the same is true for science and fantasy, and what precisely is the result of their interaction. It is my argument that, by juxtaposing these two seemingly contradictory components, Flaubert purposely plays with the force of the literary imagination in order to disarm the reader's expectations. If the seemingly inevitable bond between Salammbô and Mâtho, female and male, comes to fruition by the end of the novel, it is only to show that the separation, not the fusion, of these two characters as distinct entities, and as representing contradicting gender identities, is the process that should be called into question.

Salammbô and Mâtho, at first glance, appear to be literary creations of femininity and masculinity. As Mary Orr describes in "Costumes of the Flesh: The Male Body on Display in Flaubert's *Salammbô*":

Readers of *Salammbô* from the time of its first publication until the present have been constantly fascinated by its exoticism, eroticism and orientalism, centred primarily on the fictional person of Salammbô, the eponymous heroine. If critical responses make of her either a fictional reworking of mythical or religious models, or an unfortunate Romantic anachronism in what is a failed historical novel, Salammbô remains ultimately a refraction of images and gender stereotypes, imprisoned within patriarchal morality and value systems epitomized by her famous 'chaînette,' or as elusive as her multi-layered garments. (169)

And if Salammbô is ultimately a refraction of feminine gender stereotypes, Mâtho is presented as her counterpart, incarnating the heroic qualities often associated with masculinity. Their idealized femininity and masculinity are further highlighted by their associated deities, Tanit and Moloch respectively. As Simy Godfrey remarks:

The private action of the novel involves a similar tension of masculine and feminine forces...and Salammbô's private chamber is the ambiguous locus of difference [between] masculine and feminine deity and their respective luminaries in the sky (Moloch, the sun and Tanit, the moon). The climactic action of the novel involves precisely a struggle of the masculine and feminine power that centres about an exchange of veils—the veil of Tanit being exchanged for Salammbô's veil of chastity in a violent act of profanation. (1009)

Indeed, the tension between the masculine and feminine is another driving force of the novel, just as is the tension between science and fantasy, between the factual and the imaginary. Like these other apparent oppositions, the contrast between the masculine and feminine is also decomposed.

As I mentioned earlier, my textual analysis of *Salammbô* uses the end of the novel as its point of departure. There are two reasons for this. For one, it is at the end of the novel that the two characters are stripped down to their most vulnerable essence, Mâtho physically and Salammbô figuratively. The second reason is that I read the nothingness that remains at the end of the novel as the beginning of the gender identities elaborated in this work. Although the quest for knowledge that “progresses” throughout the narrative seeks a primordial source of gender identity, the cyclical nature of the narrative prevents the existence of any such discovery.

The end of *Salammbô* is rather abrupt. It reads: “Ainsi mourut la fille d’Hamilcar pour avoir touché au manteau de Tanit” (414). Salammbô's death is as abrupt as this final sentence, where her identity also disappears. Stripped of her person, she is reduced to metonymical references to her status as Hamilcar's daughter and to the act that leads to her demise. Her existence becomes that of patriarchal objectification, signaling the “chaînette” Orr mentions. A mere puppet of her new husband, she acts only in tandem with Narr'Havas:

Narr'Havas, enivré d'orgueil, passa son bras gauche sous la taille de Salammbô, en signe de possession ; et, de la droite, prenant une patère d'or, il but au génie de Carthage. Salammbô se leva comme son époux, avec une coupe à la main, afin de boire aussi. Elle

retomba, la tête en arrière, par-dessus le dossier du trône, blême, raidie, les lèvres ouvertes, et ses cheveux dénoués pendaient jusqu'à terre. (414)

If Salammbô is, as I suggest, absent at the end of the novel, it is the result of social institutions. There is here a sense of order that has been noted by other critics, such as Orr: “On the surface, then, the ending of *Salammbô* appears to return the reader to the oppositional orders of the clothed and unclothed as a variant of the text’s much-explored binaries—civilized-barbarian, male-female, sun-moon, mind-body, raw-cooked—to highlight the *unio oppositorum* of Mâtho and Salammbô in death” (“Costumes” 170). This order is yet another manifestation of Flaubert’s trap, however, because it is entirely artificial. In this moment, when Salammbô embodies the socially ideal feminine image, she is also represented as a puppet even before the expiration of her physical body. The suddenness of Salammbô’s death, as well as the language used to reflect her status as a possession of the restored patriarchal supremacy, underscores the artificial construction of ideal femininity.

The figurative exposure of Salammbô as possession is also highlighted by its parallel to the physical nakedness of Mâtho in the same moment. Orr describes it as “almost unprecedented in Flaubert’s works for uncovering beautiful male flesh and putting it so visibly on (homo)erotic display...Mâtho the supreme warrior-hero and enemy walks to his death naked, to be publically vivisected first by the crowds before being sacrificed to the male sun god, Moloch...” (“Costumes” 170). Although this is the ending of the novel, I argue that the sacrifices of both Salammbô and Mâtho represent the incipit of socially constructed gender norms. Reading the novel inversely, then, reveals how their femininity and masculinity are constituted of artificial layers. The supposed source of original knowledge, that is, the *zâïmph*, is in fact representative of the layering effect of gender norms.

3. GENDER LAYERING

The exoticism discussed earlier in regard to the historicity of the novel also applies to its representation of gender. Indeed, the idealistic depiction of Salammbô's femininity and Mâtho's masculinity masks the veritable foreignness of their genders. In order to elaborate this exoticization of gender, I would like to introduce Victor Segalen's entry regarding the exoticism of the sexes in *L'Essai sur l'exotisme*: "Two oppositions: the frantic search for a mystical purity by way of Huysmanian vice, and of vice by way of an imagined purity. Are these not two examples of the play of opposites? Those who transformed the act of the flesh into a hygienic act lost everything in doing so; all they gained was that peaceful homogeneity in which the flavor of Diversity dies out" (36). Segalen's reading of the sexes as a process of "scientification" echoes the cyclic nature of *Salammbô*'s play of opposing elements. The "frantic search" is yet another iteration of the knowledge quest that occupies the majority of the novel's action. The purification of the sexual act of the flesh, the precursor to gender norms, is also reflected in the narrative, as a sequence of layers both physically, through the adornment of clothing, and figuratively, through giving Mâtho the patriarchal phallus.

Physically, the social construction of normalized masculinity and femininity is expressed through the pieces of clothing donned by the characters in *Salammbô*. Mary Orr summarizes how clothing veils the most erotic moments of the novel:

As also the most erotic and 'feminine' scenes of the text, intended to relieve the descriptions of male conflict, they have maximum effect on her audience and reader, but reveal little uncovered female flesh. At the outset, Salammbô is swathed in robes and even wears a white shift to bathe in; the zaïmph covers both lovers' bodies in the tent from the reader's gaze; and Salammbô's dramatic death in the final moments of the text is 'covered' by the famous final line: 'Ainsi mourut la fille d'Hamilcar pour avoir touché au manteau de Tanit'". ("Costumes" 169-70)

I have mentioned above that clothing, especially the pieces worn by Salammbô, is often physically restrictive. I will now expound upon this point, showing how the parallel drawn between clothing and being “civilized” can also include being “gendered”, but only if that gender corresponds to societal expectations of masculinity and femininity.

If, as I suggest, Salammbô disappears at the end of the novel, her introduction at the beginning of the narrative paradoxically foreshadows her dissolution into the shackles of the patriarchal society. During the feast in the opening chapter, Salammbô, although not yet named, makes her first appearance:

Le palais s'éclaira d'un seul coup à sa plus haute terrasse, la porte du milieu s'ouvrit ; et une femme, la fille d'Hamilcar elle-même, couverte de vêtements noirs, apparut sur le seuil. Elle descendit le premier escalier qui longeait obliquement le premier étage, puis le second, le troisième, et elle s'arrêta sur la dernière terrasse, au haut de l'escalier des galères. Immobile et la tête basse, elle regardait les soldats. Derrière elle, de chaque côté, se tenaient deux longues théories d'hommes pâles, vêtus de robes blanches à franges rouges qui tombaient droit sur leurs pieds. Ils n'avaient pas de cheveux, pas de sourcils. (68)

Nameless, Hamilcar's daughter enters the dining hall clothed in black, a figurative shadow surrounded by the contrasting white eunuchs that follow her. Her namelessness is emphasized by her mysterious presence, as it is told that, “Personne encore ne la connaissait. On savait seulement qu'elle vivait retirée dans des pratiques pieuses” (69). Although the scene introduces the character of Salammbô, nothing of her person is understood. The soldiers know nothing of her character, nor can they understand when she speaks. As Mary Orr points out in “The Cloaks of Power: Custom and Costume in Flaubert's *Salammbô*”: “Sight takes precedence over sound as she bedazzles and arraigns all the senses...Described without a face, apart from her gimlet eyes, her image arrests the male gaze (and by extension the male reader)” (25). Again, Salammbô is presented without a unique identity. She exists only as costume and, by extension, through the gaze that processes her clothing.

The individual articles she adorns further underscore her captivity: “Elle portait entre les chevilles une chaînette d’or pour régler sa marche, et son grand manteau de pourpre sombre, taillé dans une étoffe inconnue, traînait derrière elle, faisant à chacun de ses pas comme une large vague qui la suivait” (68). Although some critics have attested to the erotic elements of Salammbô’s costume, what are more pronounced are the elements of modesty and erasure. Indeed, the chain that the princess wears reflects both chasteness and her symbolic attachment to the male gaze. Orr remarks on the oriental symbolism of Salammbô’s attire: “It is an all-enveloping garment which denotes the modesty of a woman who has left her private inner space to go out into the public (male) space of the street. . . . Indeed the train itself is a further signifier of modesty, whereby the woman in the public space may symbolically erase her footsteps” (“Cloaks” 26). More than modesty, however, these garments prohibit the Carthaginian princess from creating her own gender. The emphasis placed on the soldier’s gaze suggests that Salammbô exists purely for visual consumption. At this point in the novel, we as readers are meant to believe that there is a woman there underneath the layers of rich fabrics. Or, perhaps, we are simply distracted, like the mercenaries, by the only exposed parts of her body, both adorned with glittering, shiny objects that reflect attention away from the form hidden underneath: “Sa chevelure, poudrée d’un sable violet, et réunie en forme de tour selon la mode des vierges chananéennes, la faisait paraître plus grande. . . . Ses bras, garnis de diamants, sortaient nus de sa tunique sans manches, étoilée de fleurs rouges sur un fond tout noir” (68). The glittery purple powder in her hair and the glimmering diamonds on her bare arms are not only the two areas of Salammbô not covered in black or deep purple cloth: they are also the only two elements of her description revealed to be uniquely crafted in the author’s imagination.⁵⁸ What is expected

⁵⁸See Mary Orr in “The Cloaks of Power: Custom and Costume in Flaubert’s *Salammbô*”. Orr explains

to be a representation of Salammbô's distinctive character is instead textual sleight of hand. As the novel progresses, what is eventually revealed is that, when removed from the context of the patriarchal gaze, Salammbô's femininity is nonexistent.

Later in the novel when Salammbô accepts the mission to retrieve the zaïmph from Mâtho's camp, Schahabarim recommends that she be elegantly attired. The result is as follows:

Sur une première tunique, mince, et de couleur vineuse, elle en passa une seconde, brodée en plumes d'oiseaux. Des écailles d'or se collaient à ses hanches, et de cette large ceinture descendaient les flots de ses caleçons bleus, étoilés d'argent. Ensuite Taanach lui emmancha une grande robe faite avec la toile du pays des Sères, blanche et bariolée de lignes vertes. Elle attacha au bord de son épaule un carré de pourpre, appesanti dans le bas par des grains de sandrastrum ; et par-dessus tous ces vêtements, elle posa un manteau noir à queue traînante ; puis elle la contempla, et, fière de son œuvre, ne put s'empêcher de dire : Tu ne seras pas plus belle le jour de tes noces! (256)

As Taanach fulfills the request of Schahabarim and Salammbô, she meticulously adds layer upon layer of fantastical adornments. The dressing of Salammbô is symbolic of her social construction. As a result, if, as Orr suggests, in this moment Salammbô is "The personification of Womanhood, of Female Deity, she is Princess, Priestess and Goddess" ("Cloaks" 27), this is a reflection of Taanach's *oeuvre*, of Schahabarim's advice, of patriarchal, mandated gender norms. Just as in this scene Salammbô loses her subjectivity, becoming a mannequin, dressed by Taanach, when she encounters Mâtho, he confuses her body with her clothing.

Delivered to Mâtho's tent, Salammbô demands the zaïmph. Mâtho's response echoes the textually constructed male gaze of the mercenaries when Salammbô first enters the dining hall.

Again, Salammbô's words go unheard, and she exists only as a vision:

Mâtho n'entendait pas; il la contemplait, et les vêtements, pour lui, se confondaient avec le corps. La moire des étoffes était, comme la splendeur de sa peau, quelque chose de

that Flaubert's description of Salammbô's hair is the only "real item of poetic license", citing his research of authentic attire worn by ancient Carthaginian royalty; however, given the conscious effort made to describe the concealment of her body, the exposed arms, I believe, also warrant hesitation from the reader as poetically anachronistic.

spécial et n'appartenant qu'à elle. Ses yeux, ses diamants étincelaient; le poli de ses ongles continuait la finesse des pierres qui chargeaient ses doigts; les deux agrafes de sa tunique, soulevant un peu de ses seins, les rapprochaient l'un de l'autre, et il se perdait par la pensée dans leur étroit intervalle, où descendait un fil tenant une plaque d'émeraudes, que l'on apercevait plus bas sous la gaze violette. Elle avait pour pendants d'oreilles deux petites balances de saphir supportant une perle creuse, pleine d'un parfum liquide. Par les trous de la perle, de moment en moment, une gouttelette qui tombait mouillait son épaule nue. Mâtho la regardait tomber. (264)

As processed by Mâtho's gaze, Salammbô's person is confounded with her layers of clothing, not only physically but as all of the senses are muddled by her adornments. The uniqueness of Salammbô's attire (which is, again, equated to the uniqueness of her character) methodically guides Mâtho's gaze, from her dazzling eyes, to the hooks of her tunic that accentuate her breasts, leading his sight to the emerald pendant dangling between them. Taanach's masterpiece, it would appear, was successful in inciting the desired reaction. Salammbô's sexualized femininity, completely fabricated by Taanach's choice of clothing, is exploited to recover the zaïmph from Mâtho. Textually, the reader's gaze equally exploits the character of Salammbô. Literary critics have been able to read the heroine in *Salammbô* as an overly sexualized femme fatale, as a manifestation of exchange within a patriarchal society, and as a representation of Orientalized modesty. Her multifaceted character, poetically written from the Flaubertian imagination, hides no inner secrets, however. The zaïmph, then, is not the only empty signifier within the novel: the character of Salammbô portrays a vessel that, through an ornate and fastidious layering process, is presented to us as the personification of ideal femininity.

The last costume donned by Salammbô comes at the end of the novel, when she is wedded to Narr'Havas. I have argued that it is in this moment that Salammbô reverts to her original state as nothingness, stripped of her socially constructed layers, but it is important to note that her marriage is also alluded to in the scenes I quoted above. During the feast, we learn of her betrothal to Narr'Havas: "C'était par hasard qu'il se trouvait au festin, son père le faisant

vivre chez les Barca, selon la coutume des rois qui envoyaient leurs enfants dans les grandes familles pour préparer des alliances. Depuis six mois que Narr'Havas y logeait, il n'avait point encore aperçu Salammbô" (72). Although promised to the Numidian chief, she did not exist for him until the moment when he first sees her. In the scene where Taanach dresses Salammbô, she remarks that she would be dressed in equally beautiful attire for her nuptials. The preparation of the princess for her mission to retrieve the veil is thus paralleled to the preparation of her as wife, as a possession of Narr'Havas, and as a product of socially constructed femininity.

Indeed, when Salammbô appears before the people of Carthage on the day of her marriage, she is depicted as a statuesque vision of pure femininity. In this final scene of the novel, Salammbô is placed center-stage to be publically consumed by the audience's gaze: "au milieu des Anciens, couronnés de tiaras d'or, sur une litière que surmontait un dais de pourpre, on aperçut Salammbô" (371). The narration rejects Salammbô to the end of the passage, again emphasizing the perception of her by others. Further, the new bride is positioned atop a sedan chair, elongated and immobile. The description continues:

Des chevilles aux hanches, elle était prise dans un réseau de mailles étroites imitant les écailles d'un poisson et qui luisaient comme de la nacre : une zone toute bleue serrant sa taille laissait voir ses deux seins, par deux échancrures en forme de croissant. Des pendeloques d'escarboucles en cachaient les pointes. Elle avait une coiffure faite avec des plumes de paon étoilées de pierreries ; un large manteau, blanc comme de la neige, retombait derrière elle, et les coudes au corps, les genoux serrés, avec des cercles de diamants au haut des bras, elle restait toute droite, dans une attitude hiératique. (372)

The words used to describe Salammbô here underscore her immobility. Her legs are completely encased in a scale-like vestment, her waist bound, and her arms pinned against her body. In this moment Salammbô is utterly motionless and powerless. Orr describes the irony of her costume here: "Significantly, in spite of its most resplendent, multicoloured and 'zāimph-like' costume, where she is potentially most uncovered, most like a courtesan, she and her attire attract little attention... She and Mātho are sacrificed... to higher Patriarchal Orders... her splendour and

indomitable power are not here, but when she was most covered, secret...” (“Cloaks” 28).

Power, as I read it, is synonymous with the idealized femininity she wore during her first appearance in the novel. In this final entrance, however, Salammbô is both at her most exposed and at her most restricted, the gender that had been created for her now sacrificed to a higher authority. It would be wrong, however, to read Flaubert’s *Salammbô* as a critique of only idealized femininity. The character of Mâtho, I will show, also exposes a similar artificiality of socially constructed masculinity.

Parallel to Salammbô’s metaphorical disappearance at the end of the novel, Mâtho is quite literally torn apart. As his punishment, Mâtho must walk through a crowd of Carthaginians, who take turns ripping flesh from his shackled body. In a rather gruesome scene, we read:

Un enfant lui déchira l’oreille; une jeune fille, dissimulant sous sa manche la pointe d’un fuseau, lui fendit la joue; on lui enlevait des poignées de cheveux, des lambeaux de chair; d’autres avec des bâtons où tenaient des éponges imbibées d’immondices lui tamponnaient le visage. Du côté droit de sa gorge, un flot de sang jaillit: aussitôt le délire commença. Ce dernier des Barbares leur représentait tous les Barbares, toute l’armée ; ils se vengeaient sur lui de tous les désastres, de leurs terreurs, de leurs opprobres. (389)

This violent passage also displays the deterioration of the supposedly civilized Carthaginians, who, as means of punishment, resort to the most heinous and barbaric acts. Mâtho, for his part, represents the entirety of the barbarian army as well as the epitome of the masculine gender. As his flesh is stripped away, both he and the Carthaginians shed the socially constructed layers that clothed them. The decomposition of the Carthaginian civilization, however, marks a return to an original state before such social constructions ever existed. Critics have argued that the narration of *Salammbô* traces the devolution of civilized behavior, so that the line that once distinguished the Carthaginians from the Barbarians no longer subsists. Orr comments that the final act of sacrificing Mâtho may be the most barbaric act of the novel: “The sacrifice of Mâtho by the eunuch turncoat High Priest of Carthage, Schahabarim, then arguably reveals the most shocking

of the barbaric acts of Carthaginian ‘civilization’, ritual slaughter” (“Costumes” 170). The thematic present in this final scene is surely one of violence and barbarism, but it also underscores the arbitrary fabrication of what constitutes a civilized people. In the same way, the evisceration of Mâtho by the Carthaginians signifies a gender construction, that is, ideal masculinity, which is destroyed by its very creator. He too, like Salammbô, is consistently layered with masculine symbols that attempt to hide the empty vessel that remains at the novel’s end.

Contrary to ideal femininity, which is expressed through restrictive garb, Mâtho’s masculinity is constructed through his brute strength. Consequently, it is his lack of restriction, his nakedness, which marks his pure masculinity. Indeed, there are many moments throughout the narration when Mâtho’s nudity is emphasized. At the feast, when violence erupts over who will win Salammbô’s hand, Mâtho is left weaponless: “Le javelot siffla entre les coupes, et, traversant le bras du Libyen, le cloua sur la nappe si fortement, que la poignée en tremblait dans l’air. Mâtho l’arracha vite; mais il n’avait pas d’armes, il était nu; enfin, levant à deux bras la table surchargée, il la jeta contre Narr’Havas tout au milieu de la foule qui se précipitait entre eux” (19). Not only is Mâtho weaponless, and therefore ‘naked’, he also resorts to his physical force to retaliate against Narr’Havas. The javelin, and weaponry in general, marks an exchange of the phallus. Mâtho, however, has no need for the phallic spear because he has been made into a personified phallus himself.

The construction of Mâtho as essential masculinity is indeed tantamount to his incarnation of the phallus, the symbol of patriarchal authority. As such, he is able to penetrate the female space, private chambers where men are often prohibited from entering. The first example of this is Salammbô’s chambers. The princess’s room is distinguishable for its almost

impenetrable red door, which Mâtho attempts to enter by force: “On le vit courir entre les proues des galères, puis réapparaître le long des trois escaliers jusqu’à la porte rouge qu’il heurta de tout son corps. En haletant, il s’appuya contre le mur pour ne pas tomber” (20). The play of opposites present in Flaubert’s *Salammbô* is often depicted through a struggle of the sexes. However, as personifications of idealized gender identities, both Salammbô and Mâtho represent social constructions; their resistance in the beginning of the novel reflects the apparent naturalization of masculinity and femininity in ‘civilized’ societies. If Mâtho is unable to break through the red door at this point in the narrative, it is because the respective masculine and feminine genders are at their strongest. As the novel progresses, however, the delineation between masculine and feminine ceases to be as clear.

I mentioned above that the choice of this historical time period reflects a conscious effort to create a contained, cyclical narrative. According to Gaston Bachelard in *Poétique de l’espace*, circular dimensions mark protection or refuge:

La grâce d'une courbe est une invitation à demeurer. On ne peut s'en évader sans espoir de retour. La courbe aimée a des puissances de nid; elle est un appel à la possession. Elle est un coin courbe. C'est une géométrie habitée. Nous sommes là à un minimum du refuge, dans le schéma ultra-simplifié d'une rêverie du repos. Seul le rêveur qui s'arrondit à contempler des boucles tonnait ces joies simples du repos dessiné. (173)

The circularity of the tale, as well as the objects it describes, parallels the suppleness of the fabric zaimph, and, as Godfrey argues, the text(ure) of the novel. All of these elements, however, are misleading. The cyclical nature of the narrative, represented by the various enclosed spaces within the text, provides a false sense of security. It is Mâtho, as the incarnation of the phallus, who succeeds in penetrating these supposed refuges. The temple of Tanit, goddess of the Moon and supernatural doppelganger of Salammbô, is one such example of feminized, protected space. The temple’s architecture is figuratively suggestive of a female’s womb:

L'appartement où ils entrèrent n'avait rien qu'une peinture noire représentant une autre femme. Ses jambes montaient jusqu'au haut de la muraille. Son corps occupait le plafond tout entier. De son nombril pendait à un fil un œuf énorme, et elle retombait sur l'autre mur, la tête en bas, jusqu'au niveau des dalles où atteignaient ses doigts pointus... Douze globes de cristal bleu la bordaient circulairement, supportés par des monstres qui ressemblaient à des tigres. Leurs prunelles saillaient comme les yeux des escargots, et courbant leurs reins trapus, ils se tournaient vers le fond, où resplendissait, sur un char d'ivoire, la Rabbet suprême, l'Omniféconde, la dernière inventée (137-138)

The overabundance of circular images in this description highlights the feminine presence in the temple. Also of note is the egg that hangs from the navel, echoing Schahabarim's tale and the primitive matter. Clearly, this temple depicts a feminine space, and one that is thus infiltrated by two men. Flaubert notes this aggression; "Alors ils pénétrèrent dans une petite salle toute ronde, et si élevée qu'elle ressemblait à l'intérieur d'une colonne" (139). Although the inner sanctum is meant to be a refuge for the feminine gender, the masculine phallus succeeds in infiltrating the sacred space.

As much as this scene depicts the power relations of the patriarchy, the superiority of the masculine over the feminine, it exposes the dangers of this protective space for the masculine gender as well. This space that is meant to protect is also constructed to trap and to deceive.

When Spendius and Mâtho first enter the temple, they are overcome by the architecture:

Alors ils errèrent, perdus dans les complications de l'architecture. Tout à coup, ils sentirent sous leurs pieds quelque chose d'une douceur étrange. Des étincelles pétillaient, jaillissaient; ils marchaient dans du feu. Spendius tâta le sol et reconnut qu'il était soigneusement tapissé avec des peaux de lynx ; puis il leur sembla qu'une grosse corde mouillée, froide et visqueuse, glissait entre leurs jambes. Des fissures, taillées dans la muraille, laissaient tomber de minces rayons blancs. Ils s'avançaient à ces lueurs incertaines. Enfin ils distinguèrent un grand serpent noir. Il s'élança vite et disparut. Fuyons! s'écria Mâtho. C'est elle! je la sens; elle vient. (137)

The temple traps the two men in its labyrinth-like structure and tempts them, first with a strange softness, the lynx skins delicately lining the walls and the serpent weaving through their legs.

Both genders are in play, and rather than one usurping the other, the fabric of the text is

intertwining them together as one. Like the text, which is both fantasy and science, and like the zaïmph, which is both the known and unknown, this space is both protective and dangerous, both enclosing and inviting to the two male intruders. Again, the poetics of contrast that Séginger suggests becomes even more apparent. However, it is the presence of these contrasts that also deteriorates as the novel progresses, or, inversely, the construction of these binaries is reinforced as the narration regresses. Indeed, the weaving of these two gender identities that we witness in this scene marks an obstacle that social ideals must overcome.

4. VEILING GENDER

If there is one presence in the novel that resists a comprehensive reading, it is the zaïmph. Jacques Neefs, in his influential essay “Le parcours du zaïmph” discusses the multifaceted nature of the zaïmph:

Le livre de Flaubert rôde ainsi autour des nœuds archaïques : origine du pouvoir, origine du désir sexuel. Aussi, la série mythique et cosmologique qui traverse le récit et sur laquelle le zaïmph a une place privilégiée, n'est-elle pas simple connotation d'époque, ornement, ou recherche documentaire sur les religions et les croyances... Par les contaminations qui vont d'un niveau du texte à l'autre, la transivité du mythique est assurée, les structures thématiques peuvent être référées à un savoir mythologique qu'elles accomplissent, de même que la disposition narrative effectue l'organisation mythique qui s'y propage... le symbolique hante la représentation narrative, et, en retour, l'histoire des hommes se projette sur une surface mythique et cosmologique où elle s'amplifie et se diffuse. (236-37)

The zaïmph becomes not only a unifying object amongst the characters within the text, but a connecting force of the text itself. And yet, the very fabric of the text is based on the unknown, a knowledge that is inaccessible and unobtainable. The language used to describe the zaïmph reinforces its inaccessibility. When Spendius and Mâtho succeed in entering the goddess's temple, it is the imperceptible quality of the veil that dominates the text: “Nulle part on ne l'apercevait. Où donc se trouvait-il? Comment le découvrir? Et si les prêtres l'avaient caché?

Mâtho éprouvait un déchirement au cœur et comme une déception dans sa foi...C'était là le manteau de la Déesse, le zaïmph saint que l'on ne pouvait voir" (139). The use of the 'pouvait' here refers not only to their prior inability to find the zaïmph, but also to the mysticism surrounding the veil that forbids mortals to possess it. Like the novel itself, which was described by its author as something no one had yet seen, the veil of Tanit is the materialization of the unknown within the narrative.

As much as it is unknown, however, it is also the embodiment of everything. When Mâtho first holds the zaïmph, it is described as "un nuage où étincelaient des étoiles : des figures apparaissaient dans les profondeurs de ses plis : Eschmoûn avec les Kabires, quelques-uns des monstres déjà vus, les bêtes sacrées des Babyloniens, puis d'autres qu'ils ne connaissaient pas...tout à la fois bleuâtre comme la nuit, jaune comme l'aurore, pourpre comme le soleil, nombreux, diaphane, étincelant, léger" (99). The zaïmph, consequently, veils the text as much as it interweaves the narrative elements. It, too, is a false refuge, feigning to protect the gender identities of Mâtho and Salammbô, when in reality it is hiding their fragile construction. The status of the veil in *Salammbô* is fluid. As Orr writes: "Its [the zaïmph] many ambiguities are contained in its veil and cloak status, its exotic name, and who wears it. As one of the several 'unisex' costumes, its interchangeability yet ritual significance speak of ironic or fetishistic status in the fabric of cultural, sexual and economic exchange" ("Cloaks" 24). Indeed, although the zaïmph is purported to maintain the distinction of the two genders, it is significant for its ability to merge them.

The exchange of veils Godfrey mentions can be further elaborated to include the many instances of donning veils in the novel. Although seemingly representative of womanly dress—"à dix pas, on lui voyait le fond de sa gorge, et il [Hannon] se savait tellement hideux qu'il se

mettait, comme une femme, un voile sur la tête” (286)—there are countless examples of both sexes wearing veils and headpieces. Rodolphe Gasché, in *The Stelliferous Fold: Toward a Virtual Law of Literature’s Self-Formation*, remarks on this very point, listing the following examples from Flaubert’s *Salammbô*:

But there is an abundance of many other sorts of veils and occurrences of veiling and unveiling (dévoiler or dérober) to be found in the novel. As a piece of cloth, a veil—le voile—also serves to cover one’s head: “veiled women silently watched the Barbarians go by [les femmes, la tête couverte d’un voile]” (33), or to disguise oneself as when Hamilcar’s servant arrives “swathed to the heels in ample blue veils” (108). Veils of all colors covering faces are to be found throughout the narrative: in his own sanctuary devoted to Tanit, Hamilcar hides his face under a saffron colored veil (107), and so too did the high priest when, with a veil over his face, he offered a black cock to the Sphinx. By contrast, Hanno “knew himself to be so hideous that, like a woman, he wore a veil over his head” (203). But a veil is a garment as well, such as the “blue, yellow and white veils” worn by the priestesses of Tanit in Sicca (39). (340)

As this critic’s work demonstrates, the wearing of veils is not limited to one sex. Again the veil is established as having unifying properties, being used to cloak imperfections or hide one’s sex.

The veil can also, on the other hand, portray the exact opposite.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in “The Character of the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel” concludes that:

The veil itself, however, is also suffused with sexuality...the veil that conceals and inhibits sexuality comes by the same gesture to represent it both as metonym of the thing covered and as a metaphor for the system of prohibitions by which sexual desire is enhanced and specified. Like virginity, the veil that symbolizes virginity in a girl or a nun has a strong erotic savor of its own, and characters in gothic novels fall in love as much with women’s veils as with women. (258)

The zāimph, too, is a force of temptation in *Salammbô*. Although the veil is a relic never to be touched nor seen by man, it serves as a means of exchange between the social binaries in the novel: male and female, civilized and barbarian. The veil is intended to maintain these binaries, as we can infer from Schahabarim’s warning: “Elle est l’âme de Carthage, continua le prêtre; et bien qu’elle soit partout épandue, c’est ici qu’elle demeure, sous le voile sacré...Ne sais-tu pas

qu'on en meurt? Les Baals hermaphrodites ne se dévoilent que pour nous seuls, hommes par l'esprit, femmes par la faiblesse. Ton désir est un sacrilège" (111). The goddess, although ubiquitous, manifests herself in Carthage, beneath the veil. As the soul of the epicenter of civilization in the novel, the zaïmph becomes a symbol of this civilization, which includes the maintenance of gender norms. To gaze upon the veil risks its fragile shrouding of civilization's superficial construction. When he urges Salammbô to be satisfied with the science she has, his heading speaks more to the possibility of unveiling her (true) identity as a production of pure femininity. Further, as the preserver of patriarchal gender norms, he forces Salammbô to retrieve the veil, even at the risk of her life: "Il faut que tu ailles chez les Barbares reprendre le zaïmph!... Mais si la Rabbet triomphait, si le zaïmph était rendu et Carthage délivrée, qu'importe la vie d'une femme! pensait Schahabarim" (249-50). For Schahabarim, the sacrifice of one woman would conserve "woman" as a category, as a possession of the patriarchy. Clearly, the missing zaïmph worries the priest because its exposure would lead to the breakdown of these normalized gender identities. As much as the veil serves to protect the artificial source of masculinity and femininity, it also embodies the risk of uncovering the lacuna that lies beneath.

Even if it is an empty signifier,⁵⁹ the suggestion of the veil is what eventually leads to the decomposition of the 'knowledge' it hides. Rather than maintaining the distinction between masculinity and femininity, the zaïmph, once taken from its holding place, recovers (and recovers) an intertwined gender identity. Indeed, when he first takes the zaïmph, "Mâtho posa la main dessus; puis il entra sa tête par l'ouverture, puis il s'en enveloppa le corps, et il écartait les bras pour le mieux contempler... Mais si j'allais chez elle? Je n'ai plus peur de sa beauté. Que

⁵⁹See Jacques Neefs in "Le parcours du zaïmph" in *La Production du sens chez Flaubert* : "[le zaïmph] ne valant jamais pour lui-même, n'ayant ni forme propre ni identité, mais valant toujours par l'effet de son déplacement, dans l'activité de son retrait" (231).

pourrait-elle faire contre moi? Me voilà plus qu'un homme, maintenant" (140). In placing the zaïmph over his head, Mâtho's gender becomes shrouded. He is no longer man, but more than wo/man. With the veil, Mâtho surpasses the gender binary. It is no wonder that to Spendius, he seems almost superhuman, "Sa voix tonnait. Il semblait à Spendius de taille plus haute et transfigurée" (140). Contrary to protecting the distinct oppositional genders, beneath the zaïmph the true, mythical nature of the gender binary is revealed. Mâtho's obsession to possess Salammbô parallels his desire to obtain the zaïmph: "Une envie terrible dévorait Mâtho. Il aurait voulu, en s'abstenant du sacrilège, posséder le voile" (133) and a few pages later: "Puis la pensée de Salammbô l'obsédait, et il rêvait dans les plaisirs de sa beauté, comme les délices d'une vengeance qui le transportait d'orgueil. C'était un besoin de la revoir, âcre, furieux, permanent" (157). Again, the veil fails in its intended purpose to shroud the fragile line between masculine and feminine gender. The zaïmph acts as a catalyst for the compulsive desire Mâtho feels to revisit Salammbô. As much as he wishes to recover her person, he also seeks to (re)cover her with the veil:

Le zaïmph étincelait tout couvert de rayons. T'en souviens-tu ? disait Mâtho. La nuit, tu apparaissais dans mes songes; mais je ne devinais pas l'ordre muet de tes yeux! Elle avançait un pied sur l'escabeau d'ébène. Si j'avais compris, je serais accouru; j'aurais abandonné l'armée; je ne serais pas sorti de Carthage... Noie mon âme dans le souffle de ton haleine!...Mâtho la contemplait, ébloui par les splendeurs de sa tête, et tendant vers elle le zaïmph, il allait l'envelopper dans une étreinte. Elle écartait les bras. Tout à coup elle s'arrêta, et ils restèrent béants à se regarder. (144)

As manifestations of socially constructed gender norms, both Mâtho and Salammbô are at risk of destruction. Indeed, the veil that feigns their protection is also the key to their decomposition. We already witnessed the fused gender hidden beneath the veil, and should both characters find themselves clothed in the veil, their fusion would reveal the fictitious "natural" genders they were made to embody. Yet, it is the same zaïmph that engenders their mutual attraction.

The magnetic force between Mâtho and Salammbô is depicted from their initial meeting: “Mâtho le Libyen se penchait vers elle. Involontairement elle s’en approcha, et, poussée par la reconnaissance de son orgueil, elle lui versa dans une coupe d’or un long jet de vin pour se réconcilier avec l’armée” (73). The emphasis placed on Salammbô’s involuntary movements, a continuing theme throughout the text, underscores the external forces bringing her closer to Mâtho. Indeed, this initial reaction circles back as the novel ends, where the reader once again finds Salammbô and Mâtho synchronized, as if being controlled:

Mâtho regarda autour de lui, et ses yeux rencontrèrent Salammbô. Dès le premier pas qu’il avait fait, elle s’était levée ; puis, involontairement, à mesure qu’il se rapprochait, elle s’était avancée peu à peu jusqu’au bord de la terrasse; et bientôt, toutes les choses extérieures s’effaçant, elle n’avait aperçu que Mâtho. Un silence s’était fait dans son âme, un de ces abîmes où le monde entier disparaît sous la pression d’une pensée unique, d’un souvenir, d’un regard. Cet homme qui marchait vers elle l’attirait. (376)

Throughout the novel, an involuntary force that can only be explained by their formerly fused state intertwines both Mâtho and Salammbô. It is the *zâïmph*, in the end, that would bring them together.

Once in possession of the veil, the two characters constantly exchange traits. We see Mâtho imitating the voice of Salammbô: “Puis Mâtho chanta: Il poursuivait dans la forêt le monstre femelle dont la queue ondulait sur les feuilles mortes, comme un ruisseau d’argent. Et en traînant la voix, il imitait la voix de Salammbô, tandis que ses mains étendues faisaient comme deux mains légères sur les cordes d’une lyre” (91). He also becomes possessed by her: “Je suis sans doute la victime de quelque holocauste qu’elle aura promis aux dieux?... Elle me tient attaché par une chaîne que l’on n’aperçoit pas. Si je marche, c’est qu’elle avance; quand je m’arrête, elle se repose! Ses yeux me brûlent, j’entends sa voix. Elle m’environne, elle me pénètre. Il me semble qu’elle est devenue mon âme!” (90) The textual weaving of both characters, physically, figuratively, and even specifically in regards to their exchange of gender

traits, leads the reader to infer a non-physical connection between the two that surpasses their social, gender, and historical differences. As I detailed above, read inversely *Salammbô* narrates a process of artificial layering, a practice used on both Salammbô, through her lavish yet restrictive garments, and Mâtho, through his personification of the phallus. In the presence of the veil, however, the characters begin to shed these coats, only to be re-covered by the zaïmph. In the moment when the two carnally intertwine, the shrouding of their physical genders leads to a mutual confusion of divine proportions.

When Mâtho and Salammbô's bodies fuse, cloaked by the zaïmph beneath them and the tent above, their lovemaking signals a fusion beyond the physical connection of their bodies.

Mâtho first experiences this compulsion when he lightly makes contact with Salammbô's chest:

Une curiosité indomptable l'entraîna; et, comme un enfant qui porte la main sur un fruit inconnu, tout en tremblant, du bout de son doigt, il la toucha légèrement sur le haut de sa poitrine; la chair un peu froide céda avec une résistance élastique. Ce contact, à peine sensible pourtant, ébranla Mâtho jusqu'au fond de lui-même. Un soulèvement de tout son être le précipitait vers elle. Il aurait voulu l'envelopper, l'absorber, la boire. (264)

Although the physical contact is slight, it provokes a strong, psychic urge to absorb Salammbô.

The language marking the gentleness of the touch contrasts the deepness of his emotional reaction, as if to parallel the fragility of their physical form and the dire consequence of their synthesis. Their fusion is further derailed by a supernatural confusion. Both Salammbô and Mâtho mistake each other for the gods they are meant to personify: Mâtho with Moloch and Salammbô with Tanit. When Salammbô accuses him of stealing the zaïmph, Mâtho protests: "Non! non! c'était pour te le donner! pour te le rendre! Il me semblait que la Déesse avait laissé son vêtement pour toi, et qu'il t'appartenait! Dans son temple ou dans ta maison, qu'importe? n'es-tu pas toute-puissante, immaculée, radieuse et belle comme Tanit! Et avec un regard plein d'une adoration infinie: à moins, peut-être, que tu ne sois Tanit?" (265-6). The blurring of

Salammbô and Tanit is present in other parts of the novel⁶⁰, but it is in this scene that Mâtho realizes the comparison. His intention of relinquishing the zaïmph suggests his conviction that Tanit and Salammbô are one and the same, and, by consequence, that Salammbô is indeed the personification of pure femininity.

Likewise, Salammbô remarks in this same scene an external force bringing her to Mâtho's tent: "Mais comment se trouvait-elle près de lui, dans sa tente, à sa discrétion? Quelqu'un, sans doute, l'avait poussée? Elle n'était pas venue pour le zaïmph? Ses bras retombèrent, et il baissa la tête, accablé par une rêverie soudaine" (265). Whereas in their first exchange Salammbô opens her arms, here she lets them fall, succumbing to the supernatural force at hand. She, too, confuses Mâtho with the god Moloch, exclaiming, "Moloch, tu me brûles! Et les baisers du soldat, plus dévorateurs que des flammes, la parcouraient; elle était comme enlevée dans un ouragan, prise dans la force du soleil" (268). It would seem that in this scene, physically and divinely intertwined, Salammbô and Mâtho would succeed in shedding their restrictive genders. Indeed, in this moment all obstacles appear to have vanished: "Car il parlait comme si la guerre était finie, des rires de joie lui échappaient; les Mercenaires, Hamilcar, tous les obstacles avaient maintenant disparu. La lune glissait entre deux nuages. Ils la voyaient par une ouverture de la tente" (269). Salammbô, however, resists the deterioration of her constraint. Although during her stay with Mâtho "elle s'aperçut que sa chaînette était brisée", she quickly redresses her ankles with the broken chain: "On accoutumait les vierges dans les grandes

⁶⁰Tanit is also represented by the night and by the moon (as symbols of femininity, c.f. Godfrey). Salammbô is described as praying only at night, and is often illuminated by the light of the moon: "C'était la lune qui l'avait rendue si pâle, et quelque chose des dieux l'enveloppait comme une vapeur subtile" (69) and "Salammbô l'entoura autour de ses flancs, sous ses bras, entre ses genoux; puis le prenant à la mâchoire, elle approcha cette petite gueule triangulaire jusqu'au bord de ses dents, et, en fermant à demi les yeux, elle se renversait sous les rayons de la lune. La blanche lumière semblait l'envelopper d'un brouillard d'argent" (254).

familles à respecter ces entraves comme une chose presque religieuse, et Salammbô, en rougissant, roula autour de ses jambes les deux tronçons de la chaîne d'or" (270). The Carthaginian princess remains gender-bound and is ultimately transformed into possession through marriage. In spite of their efforts, the patriarchal society survives.

The ultimate victory of the patriarchy is symbolized by the sacrifice of Mâtho. Not only is he literally flayed by the Carthaginians, his heart, the core of his existence, is taken (back) by Schahabarim. Mâtho's existence, as a living example of masculinity, is a product of social construction. As such, Schahabarim's ritualistic removal of Mâtho's heart is the ultimate display of patriarchal power: sacrifices must be made to maintain the gender norms:

In the most ritualised of undressings, the actual masceration and laceration of the male body behind the skin, comes the public, overt, vivisection and penetration of the male body. Except for his eyes (matching the burning gaze of Salammbô), Mâtho is no longer a human, but a long red form, a living corpse...a ritual knife at his waist, its handle culminating in a golden (phallic) spatula, the celebrant rips open Mâtho's chest, plucks out the heart in a ritual cardiechtomy and offers it to the sun. (Orr "Cloaks" 31)

Although both Salammbô and Mâtho are reduced to nothing by the novel's end, the void that remains only accentuates the power of the society that will (re)create them. It both ends and begins with Schahabarim, who details the origin of the world and controls its disintegration. It is in this final scene that he takes the phallus, here in the form of the spatula, once infused into the character of Mâtho, punishing him for his disobedience and maintaining the patriarchal order.

As it is told, Schahabarim's story recounts various stages of separation and condensation, but ultimately posits the world as a multitude of contrasting binaries. The plot of *Salammbô*, however, presents these elements in a more interconnected way, and as the novel progresses, the opposing sides gradually begin to break through the boundaries that were once clearly marked. The breach of these walls does not signify a union of two essentially similar parts, but instead the weaving together of two genders that were essentially differentiated. To cite once again

Toumayan, “In other words, what Flaubert establishes in *Salammbô* is the equivalency of two cultural systems whose essential differences are maintained and underscored rather than an equality or identification of two systems ultimately shown to be essentially similar” (55). Although their differences may be maintained, it becomes evident in reading the novel as a reversal of Schahabarim’s tale that these differences are socially conditioned.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the interweaving of various oppositions throughout Flaubert’s *Salammbô* underscores the fragility of culturally conditioned boundaries. Although the language used by Flaubert in this novel seems to prohibit any complete understanding, it eventually should be understood as a metaphor for the futility of discovering “natural” origins of gender. In reading the novel from end to beginning, I have shown how the characters of Mâtho and Salammbô are, in fact, social constructions. With no internal nature, they exist only through their external manifestations of quintessential masculinity and femininity. Mâtho is constructed as the ideal masculine phallus, constantly depicted by his heroic brute force. On the other hand, Salammbô is portrayed as a layering of restrictive garments that build her feminine identity. It is in the beginning of the novel where these genders are most rigidly expressed. However, like other binaries present in the novel, the lines between masculine and feminine are progressively blurred.

The zaïmph becomes an important symbol of these aforementioned contradictions: science and fantasy, masculine and feminine, the known and the unknown, restriction and protection. Not only is the physical manifestation of the veil a uniting factor within the text, its weaving throughout the novel helps to connect the fragmented aspects of gender that yearn to

reveal their artificial nature. The zāimph also exposes the contradictory element of veils themselves. As clothing, the veil is genderless,⁶¹ and is often used to hide one's sex rather than distinguish it. The veil also serves as a source of protection, clouding the novel's eroticized moments. However, the zāimph is equally as fragile and superficial as the genders it hides. It is beneath the veil that the fusion of gender is to occur, and although this process is not successful in *Salammbô*, it does expose the exploitation of gender norms by the patriarchal, "civilized", society represented by ancient Carthage.

Although this chapter reflects a very different reading of gender than I gave in my first chapter, I see my analysis of Flaubert's *Salammbô* as having an important role in connecting the chapters of this dissertation. As I have shown, gender identity is in fact a driving force in this novel, not only because of the male/female protagonists, but also in relation to the critique of society and civilization at large. Gender, as it has been constructed throughout much of Western history, is resilient. The social codes that have written the definitions of masculinity and femininity exist, at all costs, to protect their fragile states. Both Mâtho and Salammbô, who came precariously close to revealing the emptiness veiled by their gender identities, are punished for their crime against the patriarchy. And, in the end, it is the priest Schahabarim, who destroys them both in order to protect the knowledge of their origin.

⁶¹ Although I focus primarily on the characters of Salammbô and Mâtho as textual embodiments of "pure" femininity and masculinity, the character of Hannon, who also dons a veil, can also be analyzed for his gender-fusing qualities. In this regard, Mary Orr, in "The Male Body in *Salammbô*" dedicates a lengthy portion of her argument to Hannon: "Such overt feminization, however, makes of Hannon more than a grotesque parody of Salammbô veiled for her love trust with Mâtho. This 'veiled man' is now clearly marked as both un-masculine and as a visible threat to establishment values encapsulated in their symbols of deadship: leaders wear crowns and helmets even if their once strong healthy bodies can no longer be put on public display to signify their vigor. Hannon's veil signifies that his male cover is now blown, and inexorably from within" (175). The deterioration of the 'establishment' is paralleled by his diseased body, which also provides an additional reason for his veil. Another reading could examine how his nonconformative gender identity is manifested physically by his illness, which then spreads: "Plusieurs étaient rongés au visage par des dartres rouges; cela leur était venu, pensaient-ils, en touchant Hannon" (360).

The dangers of alternative gender identities will be further explored in my next two chapters. In the chapter to follow, where I treat Flaubert's two *Éductions sentimentales* I elaborate upon a process of resisting gender maturity. The fluctuating tendencies of gender formation, less evident in my previous chapters, further crystalizes the connection between gender and the creative writing process. In my fourth and final chapter, I examine gender experimentation as a process of trial and error. Through the characters of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, I will further comment on the risk of knowledge and the force of the imagination in regards to surpassing restrictive gender norms.

Chapter 3

LES ÉDUCTIONS SENTIMENTALES: ROMANS DE FORMATION GENRÉE?

INTRODUCTION

« La lorette est devenue châtelaine (...) Mme Moreau au contraire, par l'abus de la vertu a tout renié. (...) Prendre garde au Lys dans la vallée. Mais s'il y a parallélisme entre les deux femmes, l'honnête et l'impure, l'intérêt sera porté sur le jeune homme. (Ce serait alors une sorte d'Éducation sentimentale?) Tout le livre (c'est alors un autre livre) ne serait que cela (...) avec tous les personnages secondaires de chacun de ces deux mondes et comme lien le mari et l'amant trempant dans les deux sociétés »⁶²

This citation, taken from the author's manuscript notes, demonstrates the complex position of Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* in both his own *œuvre* and, consequently, in this dissertation. My previous chapters show how Flaubert's literary characters create gender identities in relation to how gender is defined in the text's unique world. On a larger scale, however, the chronological order of the works treated in this dissertation reflects a relationship between gender and the entire Flaubertian corpus. As such, the presence of two different *Éductions*, one written in 1845, and the other, better known text published in 1869, problematizes the placement of the chapter. By choosing to write this chapter after *Salammbô*, chronologically, I am not privileging the second *Éducation*, but instead underscoring the existence of the first as an important stage of Flaubert's creative process. Indeed, the creative process will be a main focus of this chapter, as I elaborate my theory of gender identity creation

⁶²Folio 36 (recto) of *L'Éducation sentimentale* of 1869, taken from: Drury, Marie-Jeanne. *Flaubert et ses projets inédits*. Paris: Nizet, 1950 (156).

as an experimental process. To this end, Flaubert's creative method will serve as a parallel to how gender is represented in both of his *Éductions*.

Before beginning my textual analysis, I will first present some contextual history about the development of both works that carry the name *L'Éducation sentimentale*. I will then supplement this context with theories of genetic criticism in order to elaborate the status of Flaubert's first *Éducation* as a significant source in the development of the Flaubertian imaginary. My argument stems from the final work of Alan Raitt, entitled *Flaubert's First Novel: A study of the 1845 Éducation sentimentale*, released in 2010, where Raitt concludes that the earlier *Éducation* neither is an early draft of the second, nor can it be disregarded as insignificant to its successor. His conclusion supports my earlier statement that the presence of the earlier text complicates to some extent my approach to this work: should I look at the novels individually? If so, is there still some connection between the two? Can I even refer to the first as a "novel"? Fortunately, literary critics such as Raitt and Claudine Gothot-Mersch have already provided answers to these questions, and I often refer to their work to support my reading of these two works.

Another discussion in which I intervene is what exactly is meant by *L'Éducation sentimentale*. Again, other critics have already discussed the classification of this text as a *Bildungsroman*, and to what extent it follows in the sentimental literary tradition. Both of these perspectives serve to elaborate my own discussion of gender identity. Unlike the former works treated in my previous chapters, *L'Éducation sentimentale* presents a protagonist whose biological maturity is detailed within the pages of the text. Although in *Madame Bovary* the reader meets Charles as a young boy, there is a narrative gap between his days as a schoolboy and his first marriage that does not permit a textual analysis of his gender development. While

we can see how Charles creates his feminine identity through his maternal tendencies, there is little evidence of how this femininity was processed through the character's mind. Indeed, it is precisely this process of gender formation that I examine in *L'Éducation sentimentale*, where the protagonists are represented in these "formative" years.

It is fitting that I would discuss the formation, or learning, of gender as a process occurring in tandem with biological ageing. The sentimentality that is depicted in the novels is also strongly linked with both gender learning and the creative writing process, as, especially in the first *Éducation*, sentimentality is garnered through romantic literature and its associated femininity. The eventual abandonment of both the romantic writing style by the artist and the sentimental identity by the protagonist, I argue, has strong implications for the potentiality of a failed gender identity.

Although this chapter will feature ample contextualization of Flaubert's writing process, its significance lies solely in elaborating my idea of gender identity as an active process, and one that involves experimentation and creativity. In turning to Flaubert, as author, there is always the risk of quoting authorial intent as evidence of interpretative analysis. In order to avoid this, my mentioning of Gustave Flaubert's direct speech, whether through his correspondence or personal notes made on manuscript documents, will be used only to reflect the procedural practice of creative writing. If gender construction and creative writing are similar it is due to the imaginative dimension of both processes, not any intentional traces left by the author in his work.

1. *LES ÉDUCTIONS SENTIMENTALES?*: DISCUSSING TWO WORKS OF THE SAME NAME

As mentioned above, this third chapter, which discusses two works by Gustave Flaubert both titled *L'Éducation sentimentale*, suffers (or, for my analysis, gains) from a unique chronological complexity. Although the completed, and better known, *Éducation* was published in 1869, seven years after *Salammbô*, the juvenile *Éducation* was written in 1845, seven years prior to *Salammbô*'s publication. Due to the subject matter, it will be important to juxtapose the two *Éductions*, not only to distinguish them as unique works, but also to insist upon the connection between them. The former is easily accomplished, as access to the 1845 *Éducation* came thirty years after Flaubert's death, and, as a result, critical attention privileged—and arguably still does today—the later *Éducation*. Many critics discount the earlier *Éducation* as simply a record of Flaubert's developing style, rejecting any comparison between the two other than the title.⁶³

It was not until the early 2000s that critical attention brought the value of the 1845 *Éducation* to light. The publication of Flaubert's *œuvres de jeunesse* as the first volume of the 2001 *Œuvres complètes* offers editor Claudine Gothot-Mersch the occasion to justify the study of this transitional work:

Du point de vue technique, la grande invention de *L'Éducation sentimentale*, c'est la scène flaubertienne, ce moment du récit où, l'échelle du temps s'étant modifiée, le lecteur assiste au déroulement d'un événement, présenté dans tous ses aspects à la fois, grâce à un savant découpage et à un entrelacement constant des registres traditionnels : narration, description, dialogue, analyse. (1530)

Although still claiming the work to be a reflection of a developing writing style, Gothot-Mersch does attribute to the work the status of *oeuvre*, even if it is “une œuvre bavarde,” and “une

⁶³“Of the critics who turn their attention to the early novel, however, many discount any connection beyond the shared title or claim that a comparison with the second only underscores the shortcomings of the first. For some, the early novel is simply an unpolished, inadequately finished, or only marginally useful record of Flaubert's developing aesthetic ideas and stylistic practices” (Anderst 335).

œuvre où l'invention, généralement pauvre, procède trop souvent par parallèles et antithèses mécaniques" (1530). For all its shortcomings, the 1845 *Éducation* continues to garner some attention, due in part to Alan Raitt's posthumous publication, *Flaubert's First Novel: A Study of the 1845 Éducation sentimentale*. Raitt's bold title claims that, contrary to popular belief, the 1845 *Éducation* constitutes Flaubert's first novel. Not only does this confirm the status of the work as more than an inferior draft, it also legitimates it as a text worthy of critical attention. As Raitt writes in the introduction:

The reputation of the 1845 *Éducation sentimentale* has to some extent suffered from the inevitable comparison with the great 1869 novel of the same title. But, while it is far from being on the same plane as novels of Flaubert's full maturity, it is a fascinating if problematical text, often misunderstood, and fully deserving of attention in its own right, regardless of any connection with the later masterpieces or any other of Flaubert's publications. (2-3)

Although Raitt himself argues against any comparison to later novels, any mention of Flaubert's 1845 *Éducation* incites a reaction to the later novel of the same name, even if by way of noting the years of publication to distinguish the two. Further, although the 1845 was written well before the 1869 *Éducation*, perhaps due to the chronology of their publication, the earlier edition is also seen as "less than" the later, rather than the later as a "better than" the first.

This relationship echoes in many ways how the characters in *Salammbô* react to gender, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Rather than examining the 1845 *Éducation* as the original text, it can only be viewed as already having the 1869 *Éducation* in mind. Consequently, I reject any attempt to further distinguish the two texts as unrelated, as such a distinction is inherently impossible. I also reject, however, the argument that the 1845 version is a prequel to the 1869 *Éducation*, or that the creation of the second was only a means of rectifying the failure of the first. Instead, I will posit these two novels as markers of Flaubert's creative process, equal in status to any of the other works that are found within the same creative space. However, given

the relationship the two *Éductions*, due primarily to the fact that they share the same name, these two works give me the opportunity to look even more in depth at Flaubert's unique creative mind, providing gender as a lens into this dissected piece of the timeline. Thanks to this new perspective on Flaubert's two *Éductions*, I will be able to elaborate my theory of gender development as a creative process further and to examine it as both experimental and stylistic, stemming from the intense personal relationship between the Flaubertian character and his/her textual world.

Discussing creative writing as a process brings to mind work in genetic criticism that has been an important component of the literary field. Although genetic criticism, as it has been translated from the French *critique génétique*, only began to gain momentum in the Anglophone circle of literary criticism with the 2004 publication of *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-texts*, its French origins date back to 1985 when Louis Hay coined the term. According to Hay (we can note): "La différence entre le *Texte* (achevé, entendons: publié) et l'avant-texte réside en ceci que le premier nous est offert comme un tout fixé dans son destin tandis que le second porte en lui et révèle sa propre histoire" ("Le texte n'existe pas" 146). If, as Hay suggests, the published text reflects a certain finality of the writing process, the status of Flaubert's first *Éducation* is further put into question, since Flaubert never intended to publish it. Moreover, not only was the first *Éducation* never intended for publication, Flaubert later refers the work as a trial: "J'ai fait depuis des progrès en esthétique, ou du moins je me suis affermi dans l'assiette que j'ai prise de bonne heure. Je *sais* comment il faut faire. Oh mon Dieu! si j'écrivais le style dont j'ai l'idée, quel écrivain je serais!...l'*Éducation* avait été un essai" (*Correspondances* 154-155, emphasis in the original). The text, to be distinguished from the manuscript version, that critics have available to them was published posthumously, and thus reflects an editorial selection of what

the destiny of this work was to be. In this sense, what Hay claims to be the purpose of genetic criticism, that is, the exploration of textual possibilities, seems all the more apt. The existing *l'Éducation sentimentale* of 1845 is representative of only one possibility that could have been. As Hay writes: “L’écriture ne vient pas se consumer dans l’écrit. Peut-être faut-il tenter de penser le texte comme *un possible* nécessaire, comme une des réalisations d’un processus qui demeure toujours virtuellement présent à l’arrière-plan et constitue comme une troisième dimension de l’écrit” (158). If Flaubert never intended to release his first *Éducation* to the public, its eventual publication is precisely the *possible nécessaire* that Hay suggests. Whatever its relation to the later *Éducation*, these criticisms are only made possible by the publication of the 1845 text. Although the work was known to exist, it was not until its publication in various editions of Flaubert’s complete works that critical attention was given to this work of juvenilia.

I have already touched upon how some critics approach the two *Éductions*. Raitt succinctly but appropriately summarizes the two camps of thought thusly:

There are two diametrically opposed views about the relationship between the *Éducation sentimentale* of 1845 and the *Éducation sentimentale* of 1869. One was formulated by Maxime du Camp when the text of the work was still unpublished: “Gustave avait écrit un roman: *l'Éducation sentimentale*, qui n’a de commun que le titre avec celui qu’il a publié en 1870.”... The other view is that rather more tentatively advanced by the title under which the novel appeared in the Garnier-Flammarion edition, *L'Éducation sentimentale première version*. This view seems to be supported by René Dumesnil who regards it as an “ébauche” of the later novel. (103)

Raitt himself strives to find a compromise between these two views, concluding, “So two unconnected works or two versions of the same novel? In fact neither solution is fully tenable and the truth lies somewhere between the two” (105). Amidst these oppositional views, it is important to clearly address the connection between the two works before beginning any textual analysis. While I agree with Raitt that we can neither call the 1845 *Éducation* a first version of the later novel, nor can we ignore a relationship between the two, a mediating compromise seems

to undermine the literary significance of both works. Although Hay, in his theorization of “la critique génétique”, argues that the entirety of a writer’s corpus could constitute the writing process, in examining the two published *Éductions*, I would like to further isolate the process as it relates to only these works. This is not to say that there are no communal elements between these novels and Flaubert’s other texts, and critics have already made connections between the 1845 *Éducation* and the works that follow⁶⁴. However, by limiting my genetic scope to these two works both titled *L’Éducation sentimentale* I will be able to further elaborate how the creative genesis of the texts parallel the experimental nature of their protagonists’ gender identities.

Consequently, my own textual analysis will juxtapose both *Éductions* within the Flaubertian imaginary all while maintaining the distinction between their unique literary worlds. Rather than looking at the 1869 *Éducation* as a rewriting of the earlier text, I will instead study it as a re-imagining of the 1845 novel. Because, although Flaubert remark, “Conclusion: *Novembre* suivra le chemin de *l’Éducation sentimentale*, et restera avec elle dans mon carton indéfiniment” (*Correspondance*, 28-29 octobre 1853), he ends up returning to the novel, if only in title, for the 1869 incarnation, confirming his earlier hesitation: “Mon ‘éducation sentimentale’ n’est pas achevée, mais j’y touche peut-être” (*Correspondance*, 1845). Although the content may remain sealed indefinitely, at least for the author, its existence remains in the writer’s imaginary, available for future recollection. To make one final remark about the citation that opens this chapter, if Flaubert names his 1869 novel *L’Éducation sentimentale*, it is the result of the work’s

⁶⁴See Timothy Uwin’s *The Cambridge Companion to Flaubert*, which notes that themes and characters of the early *Éducation* feed into the later novel of the same title but also into others of Flaubert’s late works. Henry’s father in the first *Éducation*, for example, speaks in clichés, and Unwin identifies this figure as a precursor to Homais, the pharmacist of *Madame Bovary*, and as a foreshadowing of the clichés and platitudes of the *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* (40–41); and also Raitt: “there is no doubt that *L’Éducation* [of 1845] is a reservoir of themes, scenes and expressions of which the author, knowingly or not, will make extensive use in his later writings” (111).

evolution and not the intention of the author to remake its earlier rendition. For Flaubert, it is the natural progression of Frédéric's relationship with Mme Arnoux in the text that calls forth the idea of a sentimental education, which then incites the memory of the earlier novel. Although a distinct result, this could be seen as evidence of how the 1869 *Éducation* is indeed another possible text from the same imaginative seed that produced the first *Éducation* almost fifteen years earlier.

By comparing gender development with the creative writing process, the presence of both *Éductions* provides the ideal context for seeing how variable the gender process can be. If we accept an imaginative connection between the text of 1845 and the publication of 1869, the progress from one to the other is far from linear. Similarly, we can examine the sentimental educations that take place within the works as following a comparable pattern of discontinuity, jumping from Henry to Jules to Frédéric, from romantically sentimental to complete detachment. It is through this lens of discontinuous progress that I will further complicate notions of gender identity that follow rigid patterns of choice (masculine or feminine) and development, that is to say that gender maturity does not always coincide with biological maturity. In doing so, this chapter will serve as a significant transition from the more transparent, although often misunderstood, representations of gender and sex that featured in the first two chapters to the more subtle manifestations of gender that will be present in this chapter and, most especially, the next. Gender, like writing, is subject to a multitude of possibilities. Just as we can separate the writing process from the written text, through Flaubert's two *Éductions sentimentales*, we can also distinguish a gendering process from the gendered identity.

2. À QUOI BON L'ÉDUCATION SENTIMENTALE?

I have already discussed how the significance of Flaubert's two *Éductions sentimentales* exceeds the fact that they share a title. Indeed, the second text was originally drafted under the name *Mme Arnoux*;⁶⁵ only after realizing that the plot followed Frédéric's sentimental education did the author recycle the title used for his 1845 work. What, however, is meant by a sentimental education? By refining how I interpret the sentimental education that takes place in the novels, I will be better equipped to explore the learning of gender that occurs concurrently with this *éducation sentimentale*. In this section, I will first define the term sentimental as it has been used in the literary realm of the 19th century. I will then briefly examine the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, or coming of age novel, to explain the plurality of educations present in Flaubert's *Éductions sentimentales*. Both sentimentality and education, I argue, play an active role in the creation of, albeit experimental, gender identities for the main protagonists in both novels.

Sentimentality, as a literary subgenre, experienced a popular surge in the late 18th to early 19th centuries in France. As Margaret Cohen explains in *The Sentimental Education of the Novel*:

The paradigmatic sentimental plot is a plot of double bind. The sentimental novel catches its protagonists between two moral imperatives, each valid in its own right, but which meet in a situation of mutual contradiction. Collective welfare, which constitutes one term of the double bind, is aligned with an unstable cluster of Enlightenment abstractions including the public good, manners, society, reason, and other people's wellbeing. Against this imperative, the sentimental novel asserts the imperative to individual freedom, which it associates with happiness, choice, nature, the private, sentiment, and erotic love. (34)

The implication of the sentimental novel, then, presents its protagonist with a series of contradicting binaries. We can notice elements of the sentimental predicament in Flaubert's other

⁶⁵See Marie-Jeanne Drury's *Flaubert et ses projets inédits*.

novels I discuss in the previous chapters: Emma Bovary is internally conflicted with the social expectations of her role as wife and mother and her desire for individual happiness; likewise, Salammbô is drawn to two objects that risk her moral obligation to her people, the zaïmph and Mâtho. The death of both these women, however, belies the morality of the sentimental novel, which privileges the legitimacy of individual freedom. Still, the gendered inferences of the sentimental moral dilemma are strong.

April Alliston asserts that: “The virtue of eighteenth-century heroines...does not consist, like manly virtue, in the performance of good deeds or serviceable actions, but rather in the avoidance of fault...The classical virtues of agency comes to be replaced by a feminine virtue of suffering” (86). In succumbing to their desires, then, both Emma and Salammbô are punished for having effectively broken the feminine ideal of silent suffering, which is perfectly embodied by Charles’s mother, the first Mme Bovary. In both *Éductions* we shift from a female to a male protagonist. The sentimental dilemma, however, remains essentially the same. In many ways, the sentimental virtue “is simultaneously the passive imperative to avoid fault and the active imperative to promote the moral order,” and thus “the sentimental virtue crosses gender lines” (Cohen 35). We have seen evidence of this gender crossing in my previous chapters outlining how gender identities can experience fluctuations brought on by situational elements. Due to the intimate nature of the sentimental virtue, the personal development depicted by the protagonists in both *Éductions* allows me to elaborate how gender identity fluctuations can also occur from internalized interpretations of masculinity and femininity. I contend that this internalization reflects a form of gendered education implied by the title *L’Éducation sentimentale*.

Education is a word that incites a plethora of interpretations in its own right. In both *Éductions*, as well as in the other novels studied in this dissertation, formal education is a

significant portion of the protagonists' early formation. In *Madame Bovary*, Charles is sent to study medicine; Emma is remarked for the less than impressive education she received at the convent; Salammbô is instructed by the priest Schahabarim; and Bouvard and Pécuchet, as I will explore in the next chapter, are constantly seeking to master new subjects. If education is unsuccessful in these examples, it is not so strongly abandoned as it is in Flaubert's first *Éducation*. Indeed, a great deal of the first part of the novel is devoted to Henry's studies in Paris, where he slowly loses interest in erudition and eventually flees to America with his professor's wife. It may be seen as an ironic twist that the novel called *L'Éducation sentimentale* portrays both a failed education and a failed love affair, but it should also call into question the type of education expected based on the title.

In his preface to an English translation of Flaubert's *First Sentimental Education*, Gerhard Gerhardi claims the following definition: "education—a word which for Flaubert has the almost existential meaning of becoming oneself through action" (xiv). In contrast to a more scholastic education, then, education in *L'Éducation sentimentale* reflects a personal development of one's own identity. The eventual abandonment of formal studies for Henry, as for Charles in *Madame Bovary*, also exposes a more complete understanding of the self⁶⁶. This Flaubertian education is also strongly linked with romantic exploration, as Gerhardi continues:

The experience of love represents, for Flaubert, a kind of schema for the future development of the personality. It provides a model to which all subsequent experiences tend to conform and upon which it leaves an indelible stamp. Love is a paradigm for all the lessons of life; and education is almost synonymous with "sentimental" education (xvi)

It becomes clear that education refers to much more than the scholastic acquisition of knowledge. Further, the emphasis on emotion and sentiment as a model for personal

⁶⁶If we recall, for example, Charles's satisfaction with being an *officier de santé*, only attempting more advanced medical procedures at the request of his wife.

development underscores the significance of learning as a process of internalization. Although I find the attribution of all subsequent experiences to one experience of love limiting, it does expose the important connection that exists between the romantic interactions of Flaubert's characters and their gender formation. That Flaubert's second novel *became L'Éducation sentimentale* attests to the subject matter; the text presents Frédéric's journey of becoming him/herself, a process, as I will show, that is neither linear nor finite.

3. AN EXPERIMENTAL NOVEL: FLAUBERT'S FIRST *ÉDUCATION SENTIMENTALE*

As I have discussed above, my approach to Flaubert's *Éductions sentimentales* is contextualized by knowing 1) that Flaubert himself abandons the first text and never sought to have it published, and 2) that it is impossible to look at one without acknowledging the other, if only to distinguish the dates of their composition. Rather than see the presence of two novels with the same title as impeding my study, I argue that examining these texts in relation to each other allows a more clarified elaboration of gender creation as both an imaginative and fluctuating process. With this in mind, as I begin my reading of these two works, I will first provide a summary of the 1845 *Éducation*, which remains relatively unknown outside of those critics working directly with the novel. I will then comment on the character of Jules, who, although occupying the majority of the second half of the novel, offers insight into the creative process. Furthermore, even if the protagonistic duo of Henry and Jules from the first *Éducation* is superficially resurrected in Frédéric and Deslauriers from the second, the character of Jules is unique, and his intense artistic sentiment is only mildly reprised by Pellerin in the 1869 text. My attention will then turn to Henry, whose sentimental education is undoubtedly the main focus of the work. His development throughout the novel provides significant landmarks of gender

formation, through his maternal attachment, his affair with *Émilie*, and his eventual abandonment of it all. What is left at the end is, I argue, an unfinished gender identity in an unfinished text, both abandoned by their creators. After a brief summary of the 1869 *Éducation sentimentale*, I will then focus on the journey taken by Frédéric. Although similarities exist with that of Henry, the development of Frédéric's education is more complex, if only because the consummation of any adulterous affair between him and Mme Arnoux never occurs. Instead, the course of his sentimental education is wrought with abortive efforts and contradicting virtues. Ironically, perhaps, the written text that results from the writing process of the second *Éducation sentimentale* confirms the uncertain potential of gender creation. What many critics consider to be the masterpiece of the author, and which, unlike the first, was deemed acceptable for publication, depicts the incomplete sentimental education of its main protagonist.

The 1845 *Éducation sentimentale* opens with a presentation of its main protagonist, Henry, who is moving to Paris to begin studies and reside with a private tutor. As Henry's interest in his legal studies wanes, his romantic interest in *Émilie Renaud*, his teacher's wife, intensifies. The plot quickens as the relationship between Henry and *Émilie* materializes, and the two eventually abandon Paris and sail to America to begin a new life together. They arrive in New York where Henry aspires to make his fortune. For the majority of the first part of the novel Jules only exists through correspondence with Henry, him lamenting his lack of artistic inspiration and wanting to live vicariously through Henry's love affair. Growing apart and not finding success in New York, Henry and *Émilie* return to Paris, where they abruptly separate and eventually end any contact with one another. Henry completes his studies and enjoys his bachelor lifestyle in Paris, ultimately gaining both social and financial success.

In the later part of the novel, Henry's character is almost completely abandoned and focus shifts to Jules. Inspired by the Romantic Movement, Jules composes a play of his own that is performed by a traveling theater group. He falls in love with the troupe's main actress, Lucinde, and is tricked into lending her money after which the theater group skips town. Near the end of the novel, an abandoned, injured dog follows Jules. The encounter, one of the most critically commented scenes of the novel, reminds him of the dog he gifted to Lucinde. This also seems to inspire Jules, as the novel then closes with a lengthy discussion of his new take on artistic principles, claiming: "Il entra donc de tout tout cœur dans cette grande étude du style... Le monde étant devenu pour lui si large à contempler, il vit qu'il n'y avait, quant à l'art, rien en dehors de ses limites, ni réalité, ni possibilité d'être (1033-38). As if to tie up any loose ends, the novel's narrator offers a small conclusion about each of the main characters: "que ce soit promptement fini. Rangeons en rond tous les personnages au fond de la scène. Les voici qui se tiennent par la main, prêts à dire leur dernier mot avant qu'ils ne rentrent dans la coulisse, dans l'oubli—avant que la toile ne tombe et que les quinquets soient éteints" (1075), before closing with the ominous line, "Ici, l'auteur passe son habit noir et salue la compagnie" (1080).

Although a brief summary, we can see the disjointed narrative that switches from one protagonist to the other. This may be attributed to the author's delayed decision to add the character of Jules⁶⁷, but the disconnected narrative, and thus broken chronology, also underscores the very different educations experienced by the two characters. Henry's education is mostly represented through his actions, whereas Jules receives a more passive sentimental education. Indeed, Jules's presence in the first part of the novel is limited to his epistolary voice.

⁶⁷From a letter to Louise Colet in 1852, Flaubert writes: "Je n'avais d'abord eu l'idée que de celui d'Henry" (*Correspondances* 16 janvier 1852).

Still, even through his letters Jules asserts a certain aesthetic sentimentality. In his first textual appearance in the novel, Jules writes:

Ah! Henry, qu'elle est belle la vie d'artiste, cette vie toute passionnée et idéale, où l'amour et la poésie se confondent, s'exaltent et se ravivent l'une de l'autre, où l'on existe tout le jour avec de la musique, avec des statues, avec des tableaux, avec des vers, pour se retrouver le soir, à la clarté flamboyante des lustres, sur les planches élastiques du théâtre, au milieu de tout ce monde poétique qui rayonne d'illusion, ayant des comédiennes pour maîtresses, contemplant sa pensée vivre sur la scène, étourdi de l'enthousiasme qui monte jusqu'à vous, et goûtant à la fois la joie de l'orgueil, de la volupté et du génie. (7)

His initial perception of the artistic life is full of optimism—and full of sentimentality. Love, the dominating obligation of the sentimental virtue, is described as fuel for art, mixing different art forms with the senses, passion, and erotic desire. Ironically, at this point in the novel, Jules has yet to experience love. The vision Jules has of art is imagined, just like his vision of love and desire. If the two are confused, it is because they are both creations of his mind. It is significant, however, that his conception of desire is presented through a first person narrative; unlike in *Madame Bovary*, where we learn of Emma's desires through impersonal flashback, Jules's thoughts are presented in the moment. Critics have argued that the lack of impersonal narration in the first *Éducation* is the most distinctive stylistic difference between this work and Flaubert's more mature compositions.⁶⁸ If the style is indeed representative of an immature aesthetic, so too are Jules's initial thoughts about his own artistic vision.

⁶⁸See Leah Anderst in "Reading Flaubert's First and Second *Éducation sentimentale*" :

Flaubert's style is famous for its "impersonality," for the invisibility of its narrator, and this impersonality distinguishes the first *Éducation* from the second. Flaubert's impersonality expresses itself most clearly in his descriptions and in the way he positions his narrator vis-à-vis his characters. In the late *Éducation*, Flaubert's nearly invisible narrative voice, a voice that describes scenes and situations in a disinterested manner, is presented as an alternative, at times even an opposing perspective to that of Frédéric. Frédéric's often fanciful ideas and perspectives cause him to see differently than the narrator of Flaubert's realist works. These two voices, then, are distinct, and the narrator stands apart from the character, keeping distance. (339)

Indeed, his initial confounding of love and art manifests itself when Jules is approached by Bernardi in concerning the play he is composing. After reading a scene, the theater troupe leader offers to perform the piece: “Voulez-vous que nous le donnions ici? me dit-il, c’est Lucinde qui fera Dona Isabella. Voyons, décidez-vous, hardi! lisez-nous ça ce soir, après le spectacle” (71). In offering to perform the play Bernardi is quick to refer to Lucinde, with whom Jules is smitten, merging once again art and love. Jules later learns that the proposal was insincere and that Bernardi merely seized the opportunity to take advantage of the earnest playwright. This naivety is later attributed to his immature and feminine character:

Nature nerveuse et féminine, son cœur se déchirait à tout, s’accrochait à tout, il était joyeux sans cause, triste sans raison, rêveur à propos de n’importe quoi; il avait de grandes haines pour des misères, et du fanatisme pour certains mots; il désirait ardemment des choses médiocres, regrettait des futilités et se mettait de nouveau à adorer des niaiseries. (101)

Drawing from previous definitions of femininity we have seen in Flaubert’s works, the attachment of love to art parallels to some extent the maternal attachment seen in characters like the first Mme Bovary. Mixing emotions and art, something that Jules now regrets, represents a certain acceptance of mediocrity. Just as Mme Bovary lived in a stoic silence, Jules “était toujours gêné comme quelqu’un qui étouffe” (102).

His vision of his role as an artist is quickly broken as he realizes the indifference he experienced in muddling his emotions with his art. As much as maternal femininity is linked to attachment, the true nature of Jules’s emotions is expressed through a total lack of foundation. His lifestyle is paralleled to his stylistics, processing his mediocre reality through an imaginative filter to convince himself of his successes: “il s’exaltait en écrivant, devenait éloquent à force de parler, s’attendrissait lui-même, et s’aimait parce qu’il se sentait bon. Il considérait la rhétorique comme une chose grave; quand il faisait du style, l’hyperbole l’emportait au-delà de sa pensée, et

il employait des expressions magnifiques pour des sujets assez pauvres” (101). The emphasis here is placed on the immaturity of Jules’s art, but this reflects the immaturity of his gender identity as well. If education is based on experience, Jules’s initial vision of love and art as a symbiotic force reflects his lack of both. After experiencing love, and subsequent heartbreak, Jules immediately realizes the error of his juvenile vision of the world. His life, in fact, “jusqu’à présent, avait été une vie plate et uniforme, resserrée dans des limites précises, et il se croyait né pour quelque large existence, toute remplie d’aventures et de hasards imprévus, pour les combats, pour la mer, pour des voyages perdus, pour des courses énormes à travers le monde” (101). Although at this moment Jules realizes the platitude of his reality, he is unable to identify what precisely is lacking: “il souffrait toujours de quelque chose qui lui manquait, il attendait sans cesse je ne sais quoi qui n’arrivait jamais” (101). Even in this moment in the narrative Jules’s character is passive. He remains immobile, suffering internally as he watches the world go on around him. He is aware that something is missing, but waits rather than actively seeking it.

A turning point occurs, however, when Jules rejects his unsatisfactory art. After seeing Bernardi and Lucinde embrace as they leave the city, confirming his suspicion of being duped, Jules writes to Henry:

Tout m’a manqué, cette femme s’est jouée de moi, une autre avant elle avait fait de même. Te souviens-tu aussi de Madame Herminie, cette lingère chez laquelle, au collège, vous alliez tous et qui se cachait toujours quand je passais devant sa boutique? Je suis maudit! tout m’a manqué, l’art et l’amour, la femme et la poésie, car j’ai relu mon drame et j’ai eu pitié de l’homme qui l’avait fait; cela est faux et niais, nul et emphatique. Qu’importe l’art, après tout? c’est un mot vide de sens, dans lequel nous plaçons tout notre orgueil et qui nous crève dans les mains dès qu’on le pressure. (120)

Not only does Jules reject his writing, but he rejects the writer, distancing himself from his former identity. The Jules we first meet in the novel, who purports the melding of poetry and

love, is no longer. I have suggested earlier that gender identity, like writing, can experience fluctuations and this is only one example presented in this novel. The complete abandonment of his former principles marks a shift not only in his aesthetic ambitions, but also his gender identity. In discarding his play, Jules also discards the feminine identity associated with the playwright. And, in doing so, Jules becomes a genderless vessel. We read: “C’était à cette période, que j’appellerai le désespoir réfléchi, qu’était vite arrivé l’ami d’Henry, le pauvre Jules, dont, en un seul jour, le malheur avait ravi toutes les amours, toutes les espérances, comme en une nuit un loup affamé emporte tout un troupeau” (142). The despair that Jules feels is not reactive, but instead reflexive. Rather than the passive artist, who accepted emotion without understanding its reason, Jules becomes contemplative. The evacuation of his identity is active and conscious, and the emotional lack is later substantiated by a physical one, “Jules, au contraire, s’habillait d’une façon stupide, il portait des habits sans boutons et des chapeaux trop larges” (147), the largeness of his vestments reflecting a space to eventually be filled.

Having discarded his immature femininity, Jules is conscious of his efforts to create a new identity. The scene where a stray dog follows him is a significant point of departure for Jules’s maturation. As I have also mentioned, many literary critics, all with varying interpretations, have analyzed this scene.⁶⁹ Extant readings vary from calling this scene a hallucination, to an authorial detour, to foreshadowing the death of Lucinde. While my own reading differs greatly from these interpretations, one conclusion that remains consistent is the significance of the scene. As Marianne Bonwit concludes, “To produce such a radical change in Jules, his encounter with the mangy dog must have a significance far beyond its immediate

⁶⁹See Marianne Bonwit’s “The Significance of the Dog in Flaubert’s *Éducation Sentimentale*” for a summary of interpretations of this scene. My reading of the scene is only superficially in dialogue with these interpretations, however, as my focus is on the abandonment of one identity for another, and not so much on the representation of the animal.

impact” (518). For my own reading, this scene’s importance does not reside in the image of the dog but in Jules’s actions in the aftermath of the encounter:

Ce fut son dernier jour de pathétique ; depuis, il se corrigea de ses peurs superstitieuses et ne s’effraya pas de rencontrer des chiens galeux dans la campagne... Il dit un adieu sans retour à la jeune fille chargée de son innocence et au vieillard accablé de son air vénérable, l’expérience lui ayant vite appris qu’il ne faut pas toujours reconnaître quelque chose d’angélique dans les premières ou de patriarcal dans les seconds. (255-6)

If Jules had realized the error of his past identity, it is in this moment that it is completely erased. His past naivety is infantilized and feminized, and his ambitious expectations are masculinized. What remains is the genderless adolescent, armed now with experience, and thus an education, to serve as the model for his future. This model, however, comes from within Jules himself. This realization is reflected in his final meditation regarding aesthetic style:

Ce qu’il aimait à trouver, c’était le développement d’une personnalité féconde, l’expansion d’un sentiment puissant, qui pénètre la nature extérieure, l’âme de sa même vie et la colore de sa teinte. Or il se dit que cette façon toute subjective, si grandiose parfois, pourrait bien être fautive parce qu’elle est monotone, étroite parce qu’elle est incomplète, et il rechercha aussitôt la variété des tons, la multiplicité des lignes et des formes, leur différence de détail, leur harmonie d’ensemble. Auparavant sa phrase était longue, vague, enflée, surabondante, couverte d’ornements et de ciselures, un peu molle aux deux bouts, et il voulut lui donner une tournure plus libre et plus précise, la rendre plus souple et plus forte. (257)

The shift from external superficiality to a stronger, more precise and internalized style is emphasized in this passage.

Again, writing here is linked to the process of gender creation. Jules strives to find, in his stylistics, the development of a fecund personality, the word “féconde” relating both to creativity and procreation. Indeed, this part of the novel depicts a rebirth of Jules, the genesis of a new, creative identity that remains nascent at the end of the work. Even so, the narrator gives us some proleptic insight earlier: “Plus tard, quand il fut un homme, il y repensa souvent avec une indulgence facile, de même que les peuples vieillissent prennent plaisir à revoir dans l’Histoire les

temps éloignés où ils vivaient du gland des chênes et dormaient sous les tentes” (144), seemingly to imply that the Jules in the novel is not yet a man, but will become one. Although Jules appears to have been an afterthought in the authorial imagination, his presence in the novel shifts drastically from passive to active. His attention to literary aesthetic is also significant as it parallels this transition from passivity to activity, from feminine naivety to a state of “désespoir réfléchi” that may leave him without a finite gender identity but armed with the experience needed to create one. My reading of Jules’s transformation also follows the progression of the narrative, with his role in the novel augmenting along with his self-awareness. Henry, however, experiences a very different path.

To the difference of *Madame Bovary*, in *L’Éducation sentimentale* we, as readers, are exposed to the development of a protagonist during the formative years of adolescence. As much as Charles’s mother’s attachment to her son was significant in my first chapter, motherly affection is all the more significant in this analysis, since we can see the resulting effect in Henry’s developing gender. Early in the novel we witness, in a rather lengthy scene, the relationship Henry shares with his mother:

Quand sa mère fut restée huit jours avec lui, qu’elle l’eut installé, nippé et emménagé, quand ils furent allés ensemble deux fois au musée de Versailles, une fois à Saint-Cloud, trois fois à l’Opéra-Comique, une fois aux Gobelins, une fois au puits de Grenelle, une trentaine de fois dans divers passages pour acheter divers objets, la bonne femme songea à se séparer de son fils ; elle lui fit d’abord mille recommandations sur beaucoup de choses qu’elle ne connaissait pas, puis l’engagea au travail, à la bonne conduite, à l’économie. Le jour du départ arrivé, ils dînèrent en tête à tête dans un restaurant, près de la cour des Messageries, mais ils n’avaient faim ni l’un ni l’autre et se parlèrent peu. Au moment de se séparer et dès avant qu’on fit l’appel, elle s’attendrit, et quand il fallut se quitter, ce fut en pleurant qu’elle baisa son pauvre Henry sur les deux joues. Henry alluma de suite un cigare et prit une tenue impassible ; mais à peine la voiture s’était-elle ébranlée que le cigare l’étouffait, il le jeta avec colère : « Adieu, pauvre mère, se dit-il, adieu, adieu », et dans son cœur il la couvrit de bénédictions et de caresses. Il aurait voulu l’embrasser tout à son souïl, l’empêcher de pleurer, lui essuyer les yeux, la consoler, la faire sourire, la rendre heureuse ; il se trouva lâche et s’en voulut d’avoir été presque humilié de sa tendresse tout à l’heure, devant trois bourgeois qui composaient le public ; il enfonça ses mains dans ses

poches, son chapeau sur ses yeux, et continua à marcher sur le trottoir, d'un air brutal. (3)

In the first part of this passage, the similarities between Henry's mother and the first Mme Bovary are striking. Henry's mother, like Charles's, intervenes in almost every aspect of her son's installation in Paris. The repetition of their outings accentuates the difficulty his mother has in leaving him, which is equally present in the tearful goodbye depicted in the second paragraph. Henry's reaction is made even more significant, however, by the narrator's commentary. In contrast to the unfeeling façade Henry presents, nonchalantly lighting a cigar as if to assert that he is not a child, the narrator reveals his internal desire to return his mother's affection. Consequently, rather than masculine detachment, Henry demonstrates an immature and reactive identity, later regretting the public eye catching his apparent humiliation. As much as Jules's immature aesthetic is depicted through his artistic vision, Henry's immature identity is expressed through his actions. In lighting the cigar he negates the attempt to appear more mature than he really is.

Henry's immaturity is expressed in the early stages of his relationship with Émilie Renaud. At first, Mme Renaud is established as a maternal character:

Mme Renaud, du reste, était une excellente femme, une femme charmante, dont les manières maternelles avaient quelque chose de caressant et d'amoureux. Elle n'avait pas le bonheur d'une mère, mais elle adorait les enfants; s'il en venait quelquefois chez elle, c'étaient des caresses, des chatteries et des bonbons à n'en plus finir. Mariée fort jeune à M. Renaud, sans doute qu'elle l'avait aimé, ne fut-ce qu'un jour, ne fut-ce qu'une nuit; mais, à l'époque où commence cette histoire, il y avait déjà longtemps qu'elle ne regardait plus l'amour que par derrière l'épaule, en souriant un peu, il est vrai, et en lui envoyant de tristes adieux. (13)

Although not a mother herself, she fulfills the role almost exactly as Mme Homais does in *Madame Bovary*. Not only is her femininity expressed through her maternal characteristics, and the figure of showing affection through candy, but also in her silence. Like Mme Bovary mère, Mme Renaud also remains in a loveless marriage. Although she once loved her husband, her

affections for him now are distant and superficial.

The relationship between *Émilie* and Henry, then, is one of fulfillment. For Henry, *Émilie* fills the void left by his mother's departure and for *Émilie*, Henry represents the youthful admiration that has been lost in her marriage. The transference is mutual, and *Émilie* quickly takes on the maternal role in her interactions with Henry: "Enfant!—elle l'appelait toujours enfant—ta folie t'emporte. Pourquoi te faut-il plus que mon cœur? Je n'ai rien à te donner au-delà. Aimons-nous d'un chaste et pur amour, à quoi bon ces liens de la chair où se prennent les natures viles?" (65). More than maternal affection, though, *Émilie*'s role as mother also becomes one of educator. Just as his mother earlier "lui fit d'abord mille recommandations sur beaucoup de choses qu'elle ne connaissait pas", *Émilie* instructs Henry about love, a sentiment that is presently lacking from her life. The role of Mme Renaud as instructor is also reflected in his gradual abandonment of his formal studies as his relationship with *Émilie* intensifies: "Henry avait quitté toute étude, celle du Code civil et des Instituts comme celle de l'histoire et de la littérature, il ne songeait plus à rien, il n'enviait plus rien" (63). Unlike when Jules abandons his play, here Henry merely replaces one education with another, lacking the intermediary period of reflection that his friend experiences. Much of the novel, then, shows the education of Henry through his experience with *Émilie*, who herself lacks experience. Indeed, both characters have expectations of the other that they are incapable of attaining. Like the immature Flaubert who abandons this novel, deeming it a mere "essai", the affair between *Émilie* and Henry is exposed as exploratory at most.

Signs of the relationship's tentative status abound from their early interactions. When Mme Renaud urges Henry to dance with her he admits, "Certes, je regrette de ne pas avoir appris...mais ce n'est pas avec vous que je veux faire un coup d'essai" (82). What is their

relationship if not a clumsy waltz, Émilie at first leading—“Pourquoi pas? je suis un bon maître” (82)—but with a constant back and forth of dominant and subordinate roles. Indeed, while Mme Renaud takes on a dominant role in the early stages of their affair, when they decide to flee Paris we see a complete reversal: “Tu penses à tout, tu prévois tout, tu es fort et doux, il me semble que j’ai en toi un père et une mère. Où donc as-tu appris tout ce que tu sais? Est-ce que tu t’es jamais trouvé dans des circonstances pareilles? moi, qui suis plus vieille que toi, si j’eusse été à ta place, je n’aurais jamais réussi” (167). Émilie infantilizes herself, referring to Henry as both a mother and father, both affectionate and knowledgeable, and also exposes her own lack of experience. Although older, she admits to being lost without Henry. This confirms that gender maturity and physical or biological maturity do not always occur simultaneously. By noting the fact that Émilie was married very young, the narrative voice attempts to justify her moral deviation in pursuing Henry. This also creates disconnect, however, between her state of physical maturity and state of emotional immaturity. Qualifying her emotional attachment to her husband as perhaps only having lasted one day or one night further accentuates the impulsiveness of her sentimentality. As one final piece of evidence confirming Émilie’s immature gender identity, although she exhibits maternal/parental tendencies, the narrative voice insists upon the fact that she has not yet had a child. I discussed in my first chapter the significance of having a child as a turning point for a character’s gender identity,⁷⁰ often provoking the literary parent to internalize wholly a gender identity, or at least, as was the case with Emma, suffer from the pressures of social norms vis-à-vis the gendered parental role. The boldness of Émilie’s confession to Henry, then, can be explained by the lack of certain social restrictions that not having children affords

⁷⁰I would like to insist that this is not sex nor gender specific. *Madame Bovary* presented characters of both biological sexes who enacted various gender identities through their parenting; it is not *birthing* a child that motivates gender maturation, but more so the responsibility of a child, or, as we will see in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, the desire to share the gendering process.

her.

Henry's place as the dominant force in the relationship continues as they sail to America.

He promises to Émilie:

C'est moi qui arrangerai ta vie, je te choisirai un coin de la terre, je le travaillerai comme un nid pour y poser mon amour, je le tapisserai de dentelles et de velours, je le meublerai de tes couleurs, des miennes; il sera à nous, personne n'y mettra les pieds, je te protégerai et te défendrai; si quelqu'un t'outrage, j'aurai le droit de le tuer, notre bonheur n'aura plus besoin de lâchetés pour le couvrir, il s'étalera au soleil et s'épanouira tout à l'aise. (172)

The passage doubly serves my reading of Henry's gender identity as both inconsistent and juvenile. As much as Henry's active proclamations portray him as the masculine, heroic, almost archetypal knight in shining armor, the use of the future tense underscores the uncertainty that these actions will actually be realized. The metaphor comparing their love to harvesting the earth also emphasizes the developmental stage of their relationship, and by consequent their emotional identities. This heroic, masculine identity is merely imagined, however. Similar to Jules who believes himself to be a profound artist, "parce qu'il se sentait bon," Henry, "se sentait fier et fort comme le premier homme qui a enlevé une femme, qui l'a saisie dans ses bras et qui l'a entraînée dans sa tanière" (183). As this is Henry's first experience running away with a woman, he can, perhaps, imagine how it would have felt for the first man who had ever done the same, but the exaggeration given here actually reinforces the inexperience associated with the affair between Henry and Émilie. The success of their relationship together exists only cerebrally, as both characters are too inexperienced to successfully cultivate anything more than a clumsily planned affair. Further, Henry's self-constructed masculinity is only supported by his imagining of Émilie as feminine: "il se plaisait à penser qu'elle était faible et sans défense au monde, qu'elle avait tout abandonné pour lui, espérant tout trouver en lui, et il se promettait de n'y pas manquer, de la protéger dans la vie, de l'aimer encore davantage, de la défendre toujours" (183).

The reality of the situation is that both Henry and Émilie use each other as means to fulfill a certain lack they feel in their own lives. And, if education is only substantiated by action, the activity of their journey to America contradicts Henry's illusory role as the strong, dominant force.

If we trace Henry's actions throughout the novel as they are presented to us by the narration, he is either passively inactive, or maintains a façade that the narrative voice quickly discredits. For all the self-purported heroism that Henry feels in the beginning of their voyage to New York, his sickly state for the majority of the voyage disproves any "true" masculine identity: "Henry était malade, il supportait mal la mer; les premiers jours, on avait cru qu'il s'y accoutumerait, mais lui-même commençait à voir qu'il fallait se résigner à souffrir encore longtemps; Émilie le soignait comme un ange, ils couchaient dans la même cabine, la nuit elle se relevait et lui donnait à boire. Le pauvre enfant!" (186). The timeline of his illness uncannily parallels the fleeting aspect attributed to Émilie's love for her husband. She was only able to maintain her affections for a day; Henry, in turn, is only able to withstand the illusion of his masculine dominance for the first few days of the trip before succumbing to his weakness. Émilie's maternal tendencies surface once again, as does Henry's infantile disposition.

I have already revealed certain signs that show that the relationship between Henry and Émilie is doomed from its onset. Although the two arrive in New York and attempt to start a life together, when they finally decide to return to Paris it comes as no surprise to either party: "Je ne sais pourquoi ils désiraient tous deux y revenir, ni lequel en parla le premier, mais ce projet de retour fut adopté avec autant de joie que, dix-huit mois auparavant, l'avait été le projet du départ" (231). This complete turnaround recalls the artistic revelation of Jules in the novel, who, after realizing his past naivety, uses the same words to renounce his art that he used in the

beginning to extoll it. Similarly, the same sentiment that both Henry and Émilie felt when they decided to leave Paris is relived when they decide to return, negating the entire trip as a failed test. Not only are their sentiments the same, but they also revert to the characters we met at the novel's incipit:

L'idée leur vint de s'en retourner en France, dans cette bonne patrie où l'on avait été si heureux; Henry y reverrait sa famille, il embrasserait sa mère, il lui en prenait quelquefois d'immenses envies durant lesquelles, perdant la tête, il s'acheminait vers le port afin de regarder les navires qui arrivaient ou qui allaient partir; Émilie aussi avouait qu'elle reverrait Paris avec plaisir. (230-1)

As readily as they left Paris to begin a new life, now they look back upon their homeland with nostalgia and longing. The imagined happiness they expected to find in New York is broken by the reality of their previous situation. That Henry's first thought is to return to his family and embrace his mother confirms his immaturity. He, like Jules, comes full circle and once again finds himself at a point of departure, with no mature gender identity. The experience with Émilie, however, does hold significance as part of his sentimental education. Indeed, we learn at the end of the novel that:

Il était revenu fort instruit et très expérimenté, les hommes mûrs admiraient la rectitude de son jugement, les jeunes gens la grâce de ses manières; il était d'une élégance exquise, sa simplicité n'avait rien de commun et elle ne sentait pas la recherche; on voyait qu'il avait vu le monde, car il se conformait à ses convenances; on eût pu s'apercevoir qu'il voulait l'exploiter, car il n'en froissait pas les préjugés et se courbait sous ses tyrannies. (282)

In this description, there is little evidence of a gendered identity, whether it be masculine or feminine, but instead an emphasis placed on the formation of his mind. Despite the fact that his gender identity remains incomplete, his experience serves as a continuation of his education. There is also a level of consciousness that was not present earlier. Henry is now aware of the world, but is prepared to exploit it. The cultivation of his mind has prepared him to now create a mature gendered identity, even though this process never occurs in the novel.

Although his affair with Émilie is undoubtedly a failure, the significance of Henry's experienced state in its wake is profound. Even more important is the lack of action in the conclusion of Henry's narrative, accentuating his satisfaction with his genderless state. A parallel can be drawn between this and Flaubert's own acceptance of the fate of this early text, as he admits in 1852 in a letter to Louise Colet:

L'Éducation sentimentale a été, à mon insu, un effort de fusion entre ces deux tendances de mon esprit (il eût été plus facile de faire de l'humain dans un livre et du lyrisme dans un autre). J'ai échoué. Quelques retouches que l'on donne à cette œuvre (je les ferai peut-être), elle sera toujours défectueuse ; il y manque trop de choses et c'est toujours par l'absence qu'un livre est faible. Une qualité n'est jamais un défaut, il n'y a pas d'excès. Mais si cette qualité en mange une autre, est-elle toujours une qualité? (16 janvier)

Flaubert admits that his first novel is a failure. An experiment that was attempted, but did not succeed. It is important to note also that the author recognizes fault only in the lack of something. The "je ne sais quoi" that Jules is missing, but endeavors to find, echoes the meditation of his creator. As such, it is not wrong to call Flaubert's *Éducation* of 1845 a failure, but it would be incorrect to conclude that it is insignificant. A similar conclusion must, therefore, be made in regard to Henry's abortive affair: while no mature gender identity, no complete sentimental education was achieved, the journey remains a significant part of his progressive development.

4. THE FATE OF *L'ÉDUCATION SENTIMENTALE*

Although we have established that Flaubert's 1869 *Éducation* was not a supplemental version of the first, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the author had, at one time, the idea to rewrite the novel: "En résumé, il faudrait pour *l'Éducation* récrire ou du moins recaler l'ensemble, refaire deux ou trois chapitres et, ce qui me paraît le plus difficile de tout, écrire un chapitre qui manque, où l'on montrerait comment fatalement le même tronc a dû se bifurquer,

c'est-à-dire pourquoi telle action a amené ce résultat dans ce personnage plutôt que telle autre” (Flaubert, *Correspondance*, 16 janvier 1852 np). Still, it was not until he had already begun composing the novel that was to become *L'Éducation sentimentale* that the ancestral title reappeared in the author's imaginary.

Since many critics have already discussed the stylistic improvements made by Flaubert in the 1869 text, I do not wish to belabor the point here. I will just point out that, due to the advent of the typical Flaubertian impersonal narration, the internal dialogue present in the 1845 *Éducation* that allowed an analysis of the characters' imagined reality versus their actual reality is lost to some extent. That being said, the sentimental virtue present in the 1869 text is much stronger than it is in the 1845 text, with Mme Arnoux resisting any adulterous relation until the very end of the novel. Consequently, the physical and emotional failure that is so transparent in the earlier *Éducation* manifests itself more subtly in the second, through a series of trials and failures. Gender, I argue, is also represented in a very different way. As I will show, as Flaubert's writing style has refined, so too has the progress of Frédéric's gender identity, which presents a more nuanced experience than we see in the 1845 *Éducation*.

First, a brief summary of Flaubert's 1869 *L'Éducation sentimentale* will provide context for comparison between the plots of the two novels. In the second *Éducation*, Frédéric Moreau and Charles Deslauriers take the places formerly occupied by Henry and Jules as the novel's duo of protagonists. Frédéric, however, largely takes on the role of the novel's main hero. He, like Henry, leaves the provinces for Paris to study law while Charles takes up, and suffers under, his clerkship. Frédéric can be seen as an amalgam of Henry and Jules of the 1845 novel. He is at once Henry's privileged but indifferent law student pursuing women in Paris and Jules's aspiring

Romantic writer. While both protagonists in the 1845 text come to some sort of revelation at the end, Frédéric's consistent indifference prevents him from truly progressing in a similar way.

After the 1848 Revolution, Frédéric and Charles, like Henry and Jules, grow apart. Frédéric returns to his mother's home where he and Charles, reunited, reminisce about their childhood memories from a time well before the narrative begins. One memory in particular stands out: their first humiliating visit to the local brothel. Carrying the money, but buckling under nervousness, the young Frédéric flees the brothel, and Charles, his pockets empty, can do nothing but follow.

Even in this focused summary, the perpetual indifference of the novel's main character is immediately incongruous with the active experience of Henry in the 1845 *Éducation*. If Henry's sentimental education is left incomplete, there is clearly some development made in his character. In contrast, Frédéric actively resists his own education, and thus his own self-formation, throughout the narrative. The optimistic outlook for the 1845 protagonists is thus completely abolished in the case of Frédéric. The incompleteness of Frédéric's gender identity, however, is accepted, by the character himself, by the author, who deems this text, unlike the earlier one, publishable, and by literary contemporaries. My reading of this *Éducation sentimentale* will examine precisely how this state of constant genderless-ness is preserved, maintained, and ultimately legitimized.

It seems most fitting to begin my analysis of this novel at the closing scene, where Frédéric and Deslauriers reminisce about their childhood. Mary Orr, in "Reading the Other: Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* Revisited", considers this final reunion:

Where our expectations and enjoyment of the 'love scenes' suffer constant disappointment, our judgements of situations and 'correct' analyses of Frédéric's sentimental development at any point are repeatedly undermined through the intrusions of new and contradictory 'facts'. We judge Frédéric's non-achievements in relationships

with women against social/moral and novelistic convention: sexual prowess and success are synonymous with being a hero. In turn, by parody (the penultimate ending) and deflation (the second ending), it is the reader's value systems which the novel in fact then criticizes. The process unfolds before our very eyes not only in the mock-Balzac tying up of many of the loose ends of the lives of the minor characters, but also through the conversation and analysis of their society by Frédéric and Deslauriers. They can hardly be said to have made a great 'success' of their own lives, yet they speak with an authority to judge others which parallels our evaluation of them. (413)

As Mary Orr points out, the criticisms that are perhaps much more transparent in the 1845 text are nuanced in the 1869 novel. Because the narrator no longer offers his judgment, it is the reader who judges the successive failures of Frédéric. While it can be said that no great success was achieved by either of the protagonists, they [still] look back at their childhood as “là ce que nous avons eu de meilleur!” (520). At least in the eyes of Frédéric and Deslauriers their lack of success is legitimated. Where Jules rejects his former identity completely, and even Henry recognizes a certain change in his identity, Frédéric and Deslauriers look back at a time that predates even the beginning of the narrative and rejoice in their abortive trip to a brothel. That being said, if the resulting identity is perhaps even more immature than the character presented at the novel's opening, the progression of the experience that fills its pages becomes all the more significant. Indeed, although the Frédéric at the end of the novel may not differ from the Frédéric at its beginning, there is still a developmental process that works to, at every turn, maintain the character's genderless state.

Unlike other male protagonists in Flaubert's corpus, the relationship between Frédéric and his mother is strained. To once again quote Mary Orr:

The rejection of the mother is, I think, what should be stressed more firmly throughout the novel, for the sentimental education Frédéric undergoes can largely be seen as the battle against the mother, against Madame Moreau's maternal and moral demands on her son to conform to the conventional image she has for him. The mapping of separation from her needs underscoring in 'traditional' readings: for Frédéric's bisexual development and our concomitant reading, it is even more crucial. (415)

In separating from the maternal influence, then, Frédéric would be free to construct his own unique identity. Leaving the infantile state associated with being in the home, then, is symbolic of this effort. As we have seen, however, where Frédéric ends is at his maternal home, reminiscing about his early childhood. Therefore, if as Mary Orr suggests, his sentimental education is reflected in his battle against his mother, it is a battle he does not win.

Although there is evidence of Frédéric's hesitation to see his mother at times, in other moments his childhood home is associated with comfort and protection: "À la fin de juillet, une baisse inexplicable fit tomber les actions du Nord. Frédéric n'avait pas vendu les siennes ; il perdit d'un seul coup soixante mille francs. Ses revenus se trouvaient sensiblement diminués... Frédéric était un peu fatigué ; la province et la maison maternelle le délasseraient. Il partit" (295-6). The textual immediacy between the despair of losing such a large sum and the soothing aspect of the maternal home is only further underscored by the use of the conditional, reflecting his hopeful nature. This is only one early example but it reveals the consciousness of Frédéric's character. As much as he wishes to break free from his mother, to which she herself seems acutely aware—"Un peu de patience, mon Dieu! bientôt tu seras libre !" (113)—he is incapable of avoiding situations of maternal dependency. The conclusion of the novel, which finds Frédéric once again at home, confirms the cyclical fate of the protagonist, but there are many examples of Frédéric reconstructing the same maternal dependency with characters in Paris.

The most obvious example is his relationship with Mme Dambreuse later in the novel. The issue of financial dependency plays a significant role in both his relationship with his mother and Mme Dambreuse, and both hold a certain dominance over him. For example: "Frédéric voulut partir pour Nogent, Mme Dambreuse s'y opposa ; et il défaisait et refaisait tour à tour ses

paquets, selon les alternatives de la maladie” (457). His subservience to Mme Dambreuse, however, is his own choice. Frédéric’s constant reprisal of maternal relationships is not simply happenstance, but a result of his own doing. In regard to Mme Dambreuse, his seduction of her is fueled by his desire to acquire a higher social standing: “Si médiocres que lui parussent ces personnages, il était fier de les connaître et intérieurement souhaitait la considération bourgeoise. Une maîtresse comme Mme Dambreuse le poserait. Il se mit à faire tout ce qu’il faut” (443-444). His sentimental education, then, is more so the struggle between dependency and independence. His dependence on others, however, counteracts any chance of his own maturation as he is constantly reminded of the restrictive maternal space. Even though Frédéric consciously uses Mme Dambreuse as means to an end, he gets caught up in the comfort of the childlike state. Even before the affair, his regular meetings with Mme Dambreuse construct her home as a maternal space within the city of Paris. He feels a parallel sense of relief returning to his mother’s home as he does going to see Mme Dambreuse: “Ce fut un soulagement pour lui, quand les soirées de Mme Dambreuse recommencèrent” (441). Indeed, when Frédéric asks Mme Dambreuse to marry him, his mother expresses her pride in the decision: “On disait que M. Frédéric allait épouser Mme Dambreuse. Enfin, les trois demoiselles Auger, n’y tenant plus, se transportèrent chez Mme Moreau, qui confirma cette nouvelle avec orgueil” (502). The approval of his mother further underscores the parallel between the two characters. Indeed, the Dambreuse home becomes a facsimile of his childhood home within the Parisian city limits. His willingness to enter into a relationship with a character so closely linked to his mother’s figure reveals a tendency to favor his immature role. This inclination is even more visible when Frédéric becomes a parent in his own right.

Another of Frédéric's mistresses, Rosanette, gives birth to a son that Frédéric immediately rejects. His reaction to his son is similar to Emma's reaction to the birth of her daughter, declaring that it would have been better to have not been born: "Puis ses yeux retombaient sur son fils. Il se le figurait jeune homme, il en ferait son compagnon; mais ce serait peut-être un sot, un malheureux à coup sûr. L'illégalité de sa naissance l'opprimerait toujours; mieux aurait valu pour lui ne pas naître, et Frédéric murmurait: « Pauvre enfant! » le cœur gonflé d'une incompréhensible tristesse" (472). The birth of a child, as I have already discussed, is a significant event in the development of the Flaubertian character's gender identity. It is often at this point that characters must come to some conclusion about the future of their own identities in order to successfully fulfill the role of a parent. The relationship that Frédéric anticipates having with his son is, from the start, one of friendship. This can only be explained by his expectation to retain his immature identity, putting him at the same maturity level as his own child. This, however, never comes to fruition as the infant dies shortly after his birth, "Viens donc voir. Il ne remue plus. En effet, il était mort" (488). The death of Frédéric's child confirms his inability to achieve maturity.

Furthermore, the birth itself is a grotesque scene that conforms to his own ideas about fatherhood. When Frédéric learns he is to be a father, his initial thought is described as such: "L'idée d'être père, d'ailleurs, lui paraissait grotesque, inadmissible", and later, when the child is actually born, Frédéric is physically repulsed: "Il écarta les rideaux, et aperçut, au milieu des linges, quelque chose d'un rouge jaunâtre, extrêmement ridé, qui sentait mauvais et vagissait" (470). It would appear that as much as Frédéric is disgusted by the idea of being a father he is attracted to the idea of being himself a child. Although not a physical abortion, Frédéric's chance to be a father, or a parent at all, is clearly aborted by the protagonist.

Indeed, his propensity to abandon parallels the character of Jules from the earlier *Éducation*, who imagines himself to be a great artist with no logical evidence of such. Frédéric's first mention of any poetic proclivity is connected to his confession of love for Mme Arnoux. This tentative, however, is quickly abandoned: "Alors, il composa une lettre de douze pages, pleine de mouvements lyriques et d'apostrophes ; mais il la déchira, et ne fit rien, ne tenta rien, —immobilisé par la peur de l'insuccès" (29). This also recalls a similar scene in the 1845 novel where Henry attempts to compose love poems for Émilie, "Il voulut faire des vers appropriés à son état d'esprit, mais, comme il fut longtemps à attraper la rime du second, il s'arrêta tout court. Il voulut ensuite écrire des pensées détachées, mais il n'en trouva aucune" (6). Inspired by the same enamored state, both Henry and Frédéric turn to poetry to express their love, following the model of Jules who insists, at first, that poetry and love work best together. However, both protagonists quickly cease their attempts at writing, one for lack of creativity and the other for fear of rejection. As I claimed earlier, it is precisely this distinction that makes Frédéric's immature gender identity more permanent than Henry's: his constant inactivity. For all of Henry's faults, his experience with Émilie is at least an active one; Frédéric, on the other hand, contents himself into a sequence of miscarried attempts to win Mme Arnoux's heart. The conviction with which he tricks himself into believing these false impressions, though, also distinguishes him from his literary brethren. At one point, Frédéric contemplates an artistic profession: "Il se demanda, sérieusement, s'il serait un grand peintre ou un grand poète; —et il se décida pour la peinture, car les exigences de ce métier le rapprocheraient de Mme Arnoux. Il avait donc trouvé sa vocation! Le but de son existence était clair maintenant, et l'avenir infaillible" (62). Not only is his sudden interest in art representative of a child-like whimsy, he admits that the reason for such an endeavor would be to get closer to Mme Arnoux. And yet, in

his imagination, this is now his vocation. His delusion regarding this vocation as a painter is comparable to his delusional ambition of independence and maturity. While unbeknownst to our protagonist, those around him are aware of his state of permanent adolescence, specifically his protagonist partner, Deslauriers, who remarks, “Il ne comprenait rien à cet amour, qu’il regardait comme une dernière faiblesse d’adolescence” (69). Indeed, Frédéric’s inability to form lasting relationships, or to correctly identify his own sentiments, is a direct result of his persistent adolescence and immature gender identity. His sentimental education, then, succeeds only in the sense that, through Frédéric’s lack of action, he has resisted the creation of a mature self.

5. *L’ÉDUCATION SENTIMENTALE OF 1869: A SUCCESSFUL FAILURE?*

As I have just discussed, Frédéric’s gender identity never reaches maturity because the protagonist consistently chooses to remain in a state of immaturity. In showing this, I have already presented many of the scenes in the novel where Frédéric backs out of his convictions or chooses to remain inactive. This is a theme that many critics have extrapolated from the protagonist and have applied to the work as a whole. In *A Gustave Flaubert Encyclopedia*, the entry on *L’Éducation sentimentale* of 1869 reads:

The collapse of the revolution, the failure of the characters to achieve their initial high ambitions, the mind’s idleness, and the heart’s inertia all realize their full dimensions in relationship to the novel’s depiction of love and desire. Frédéric’s romantic encounter with Mme Arnoux on the steamer has all the hallmarks of the great defining moment: her beauty, what he perceives as her exoticism, her status as a married woman, and her role as a mother all enable him to place her at a safe remove from himself, a target of dream rather than of love or lust. (114)

Indeed, of all the examples I have cited in the above section, the failure of his idealized romance with Mme Arnoux is the most present and the most indicative of his decision to remain in a state of immaturity.

From their first meeting, Frédéric's impression of Mme Arnoux is rooted more in the imagination than in reality:

Ce fut comme une apparition...Jamais il n'avait vu cette splendeur de sa peau brune, la séduction de sa taille, ni cette finesse des doigts que la lumière traversait. Il considérait son panier à ouvrage avec ébahissement, comme une chose extraordinaire. Quels étaient son nom, sa demeure, sa vie, son passé? Il souhaitait connaître les meubles de sa chambre, toutes les robes qu'elle avait portées, les gens qu'elle fréquentait; et le désir de la possession physique même disparaissait sous une envie plus profonde, dans une curiosité douloureuse qui n'avait pas de limites. (7-8)

The famous line comparing his first vision of Mme Arnoux to an apparition is further accentuated by the exoticizing of her dark skin, the extraordinary aspect of her accessories, and the complete lack of physical desire. His desire for her is deeper, linked to his curiosity and his desire to know things about her. Indeed, his attraction to Mme Arnoux is purely cerebral. Just as Henry imagines his life with Émilie as perfect in the beginning, as Jules sees the success of his first play and first love before having finished composing the piece, so too does Frédéric follow on a similar path of disillusion.

His image of Mme Arnoux is continually linked to exotic or artistic elements, such as the palm trees in the Jardin des Plantes, or to paintings in the Louvre. He even imagines traveling with her, much like Henry actually does with Émilie: "Ils voyageaient ensemble, au dos des dromadaires, sous le tendelet des éléphants, dans la cabine d'un yacht parmi des archipels bleus, ou côte à côte sur deux mulets à clochettes, qui trébuchent dans les herbes contre des colonnes brisées" (84). These imaginings are only that; because he sees no reason to attempt to confess his love: "Quant à essayer d'en faire sa maîtresse, il était sûr que toute tentative serait vaine" (85). As active as this romance is within his own imagination, the physical effect of this admiration is quite the opposite: "Une angoisse permanente l'étouffait. Il restait pendant des heures immobile, ou bien, il éclatait en larmes" (85). The physical immobility reflects the passive choices he

makes throughout the novel. Much later in the novel, when it appears that the romance between Mme Arnoux and Frédéric will at least be consummated, Frédéric suffers from a similar sensation of anguish: “Sans doute, elle avait un empêchement, et elle en souffrait aussi. Mais quelle joie tout à l’heure!—Car elle allait venir, cela était certain! « Elle me l’a bien promis! » Cependant, une angoisse intolérable le gagnait” (339). This anguish would seem to contradict his apparent certainty that Mme Arnoux would come, but what I see is rather his fear that she would present herself.

The image of Mme Arnoux that Frédéric has obsessed over since the day he first saw her is an unrealistic ideal that she could never possibly fulfill. We, the readers, are aware of this, but so is Frédéric. As I argued before, his choices are indeed conscious; his failures are purposeful in that they preserve the idealistic Mme Arnoux that exists solely in his imagination. Such fantasy, however, is impossible to maintain in reality. Consequently, Frédéric chooses to maintain his child-like fictitious vision of life, rejecting any potential occasion for his illusion to be broken. It is for this reason that, while waiting for Mme Arnoux, Frédéric hides from the eyes of his revolutionary friends: the political situation would be far too real and completely shatter this idealized moment of romance: “Les amis de Frédéric étaient là, bien sûr. Ils allaient l’apercevoir et l’entraîner. Il se réfugia vivement dans la rue de l’Arcade” (338). A revolution is going on all around Frédéric as he waits for a woman who will never appear; for even if Mme Arnoux had come, this individual would not be the same Mme Arnoux Frédéric is expecting.

This can only be true, because when Mme Arnoux and Frédéric finally do meet again years later, our protagonist can only look at her with repulsion and pity. I will present the scene in its entirety, as the counterpoint between Frédéric’s disgust and Mme Arnoux’s affections are especially vivid:

Frédéric soupçonna Mme Arnoux d'être venue pour s'offrir; et il était repris par une convoitise plus forte que jamais, furieuse, enragée. Cependant, il sentait quelque chose d'inexprimable, une répulsion, et comme l'effroi d'un inceste. Une autre crainte l'arrêta, celle d'en avoir dégoût plus tard. D'ailleurs, quel embarras ce serait!—et tout à la fois par prudence et pour ne pas dégrader son idéal, il tourna sur ses talons et se mit à faire une cigarette. « Adieu, mon ami, mon cher ami! Je ne vous reverrai jamais! C'était ma dernière démarche de femme. Mon âme ne vous quittera pas. Que toutes les bénédictions du ciel soient sur vous! » Et elle le baisa au front, comme une mère. Mais elle parut chercher quelque chose, et lui demanda des ciseaux. Elle défit son peigne; tous ses cheveux blancs tombèrent. Elle s'en coupa, brutalement, à la racine, une longue mèche. « Gardez-les! Adieu! » Quand elle fut sortie, Frédéric ouvrit sa fenêtre, Mme Arnoux, sur le trottoir, fit signe d'avancer à un fiacre qui passait. Elle monta dedans. La voiture disparut. Et ce fut tout. (514-515)

In this penultimate conclusion, all the evidence presented from Frédéric's initial idealization of Mme Arnoux is made transparent. Now that she is offering herself, he cannot accept so as not to destroy the ideal he had imagined and retained to this day. Furthermore, he is recognizant of the maternal affiliation he had created between Mme Arnoux and himself, that he had created in most of his relationships with women, to the point that to be physical with her would feel like incest. The greyness of her hair, this physical representation of ageing, is the greatest cause of discomfort for Frédéric. He notices this physical change right away: "Quand ils rentrèrent, Mme Arnoux ôta son chapeau. La lampe, posée sur une console, éclaira ses cheveux blancs. Ce fut comme un heurt en pleine poitrine" (513). In a sort of poetic irony, this is also what she offers him as a final souvenir of their love. Frédéric, who is incapable of moving past his imagined vision of Mme Arnoux, who is incapable of developing himself through action, who remains wholly satisfied with the immature mindset of a child: this same Frédéric is given a lock of grey hair from his once idealized love. Again, this view of Mme Arnoux, aged, matured, is too real for Frédéric. As a final sign of his obstinate immaturity, Frédéric puts a cigarette in his mouth, achieving the same, child-like stubbornness we saw in the young Henry who places a cigar in his mouth to hide his emotional reaction to his mother's departure. It is no surprise that he returns,

once again, to his childhood home, finds himself in the companionship of his childhood friend, reminiscing about their infantile misadventures and proclaiming, “C’est là ce que nous avons eu de meilleur!” This ending marks no disappointment, however; indeed, the failure of Frédéric is a textual success. The idealization of the imagined reality is successfully maintained by our protagonist, until the very end.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, more than the previous ones, I drew from Flaubert’s personal correspondence referring to the writing of the two *Éductions sentimentales*. The purpose of this contextualization was to further elaborate the comparison I see between the creative writing process and the process of gender creation. The presence of two novels that share the same title presented me with a perfect opportunity to explore the ideas of gender maturation as a process, as well as the significance of failure and fluctuation. Indeed, we can see a significant parallel between Flaubert’s decision to abandon his first *Éducation sentimentale* and its protagonists’ decisions to abandon their immature identities to attempt the creation of more mature genders. If the authorial writing process parallels the development of the characters within the text, it is not due to any intentional fallacy so much as it is a result of the interconnectedness between creator and creation. As Louis Hay asserts, the writing process persists from the moment the idea is sparked in the author’s imaginary. The text we are given, through publication, is only representative of one potential creation from this writing process. The delayed publication of the 1845 *Éducation* only makes the potentiality contained within the written space more obvious because it is nearly impossible to know when (if it is even the case) the idea of the second *Éducation* become distinct from the first. By comparing the writing process to gender

development, we can see gender identity as a creative space as well. Rather than looking at the finished product, a point against which Hay protests in his theorization of genetic criticism, the literary critic can examine gender through its various trials and elaborations.

I coupled this comparison between the writing process and the gendering process with my textual analysis. By putting the second *Éducation sentimentale* in dialogue with the first I show how, although the theme of failure is perhaps more stressed in the second, it is the 1869 text that is regarded as successful. The apparent paradox of a successful failure is, in fact, the root of Frédéric's state of genderlessness, or persistent gender immaturity. He both stubbornly resists and willingly succumbs to maternal dominance, choosing in the end to retain the illusion of an imagined reality that stems from a childhood that exists even outside of the narrative. Although it was not a major focus of the chapter, in citing Flaubert's own remarks about his works being "trials" I was able to introduce the idea of literary "experimentation". This is especially true for the first *Éducation*, which Flaubert himself calls an "essai" and discards with no intention of publishing it.

The notion of gender immaturity gained new elaborations in this context. When characters in the first *Éducation* discard their gender, they equally demonstrated a more mature mindset. Whereas they do not attempt further creative processes, the potential for their new, mature genders is linked to the fortitude of their imagination after their respective sentimental educations. In contrast to the incomplete gender identities present in the 1845 *Éducation*, the later novel offers an example of complete immaturity. Frédéric also goes through various "trials" throughout his sentimental education, but, unlike Henry and Jules, chooses not to discard his immature gender. Rather, what he gains from his education is a sense of contentment with his lack of complete gender. Flaubert's two *Éductions* allowed me to establish further my idea of

gender as a creative process. As such, it is equally susceptible to the obstacles Flaubert recounts regarding his literary writing. Flaubert's creative space is shown to be a veritable "laboratory" where subjects are tested, discarded, recycled, renewed but ultimately result in the creation of something new. Gender, I argue, experiences similar experimentation. This idea of gender experimenting will serve as a dominant theme of my next chapter, which will look at Flaubert's final, yet unfinished, novel, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

EXPERIMENTING WITH GENDER IN *BOUVARD ET PÉCUCHET*

INTRODUCTION

In my previous chapter, I traced a similarity between the creative writing process and the formation of gender identity in Flaubert's *Éductions sentimentales*. These two novels provide evidence of intense individual character development in the forms of Henry and Frédéric. While these characters allowed me to elaborate my theory regarding the fluctuating aspect of gender identity, both cases represent a singular experience. Even if Henry largely abandons his experimental, immature gender identity, the novel closes before we, as readers, learn of any further attempts to generate a new gender. In the case of Frédéric, it becomes clear by the end of the novel that no such attempts will be made, since the protagonist actively accepts his perpetual immaturity. The narrative space of *L'Éducation sentimentale* of 1869 is restrictive in this sense, because our protagonist is incapable of imagining himself as mature. To open up this closed space I turn to Flaubert's posthumously published *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Although the process remains similar, the protagonists in this novel demonstrate the potentiality of multiple genders created from the same imaginary.

This incomplete work provides particularly fruitful grounds to end my interrogation of gender creation in Flaubert's corpus. The novel remained unfinished when the author passed away in 1880, and thus what is presented to us is a combination of the edited pages and remnants from the author's notes, plans, and correspondence. Even more so than the two *Éductions sentimentales* before it, *Bouvard et Pécuchet* only exists as a merging of its product and its

potential. Although this may initially complicate its study, the open-endedness of the novel complements my argument. What I have been addressing through the majority of this dissertation is the potentiality of gender as a field of study, as revealed through literary creativity. Rather than looking at gender identity as something that must manifest into definite masculinity or femininity, my readings of Flaubert's works have used gender instead as a lens through which to examine character development. Even if the end result remains incomplete, it is the gendering process that generates new interpretations of how these literary characters are represented as independently and creatively constructing their own identities.

This gendering process achieves even greater elaboration in Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. I have previously demonstrated how gender maturation is distinct from physical ageing. The protagonists presented in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* are the most physically mature we encounter in his corpus, and yet both characters continually seek to understand their own genders. Although their relationship to science is questionable, it is through their experimentation that both Bouvard and Pécuchet outline the thought-based⁷¹ process of gender creation that I have noted throughout the Flaubertian corpus.

In this chapter, I show how gender identity achieves the height of its literary configuration in Flaubert's unfinished novel. To do so, I first discuss extant criticism of the work, more specifically the conclusion that the novel is the antithesis of a progressive narrative. This discussion, I argue, is tied to the idea of failure that I examined in the previous chapter. I posit that Bouvard and Pécuchet's constant failures underscore the significance of the creative

⁷¹By thought based I mean to emphasize the process of gender construction that occurs in the imagination. Throughout this chapter, my intention is to distinguish gender creation that occurs conceptually (i.e. nonmaterial, nonphysical) from the more "physical" or outwardly visible embodied gender. The characters of Bouvard and Pécuchet, I believe, demonstrate this distinction through their gendering process; however, the limits of language make the differentiation somewhat cloudy.

process, and not the finished product. *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is itself evidence of this: because the novel remains unfinished, it exists only as a trace of the creative writing process. The projected ending of the work, however, has perturbed many literary critics who question, for example, if Bouvard and Pécuchet are destined to “copier comme autrefois”, whether their sequence of failures suggest the inability to escape the human condition. However, as I have shown with *L'Éducation sentimentale* of 1845, the Flaubertian character never returns to a former state without a renewed sense of self, and Bouvard and Pécuchet are no exception. Nonetheless, the mechanics of Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet* do offer exceptional insight into the generation of these new identities.

In a second part of this chapter, I return to a genre Flaubert coins while composing *Salammbô*, the scientific fantasy. Flaubert's critics and contemporaries alike have commented on the massive amount of documentation left behind by the author in his preparation for the composition of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. His own research is made even more evident in this work because the protagonists consult the same manuals and texts as the author. I compare this documented research to the gendering process, showing how gender identity is a practice similar to intertextuality. Just as Bouvard and Pécuchet consult various works as inspiration for their own experimentation, gender identity is often based on social models. The two copyists demonstrate, however, how individual creativity can produce newness, even when working from extant archetypes. This process requires a dismantling of these existing prototypes, which is often marked by the protagonists' rejection of the manuals they consult. Consequently, the creation of a unique gender identity implies a consciousness of current gender models, even if these models are ultimately disassembled or abandoned.

This consciousness, in turn, signals the psychological aspect of gender identity. While I have suggested in my previous chapters the thought-based nature of gender, its mental dimension clearly contrasts with the physicality of sexual desire in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Although many scenes in the narrative allude to a homosexual relationship between the two men, their homosocial companionship is never portrayed as overtly sexual, contrary to their relationship with women. Their strongly cerebral relationship, I argue, further emphasizes the difference between immature eroticism and the mature gender identities they cultivate. Further, when the two protagonists adopt two orphans, their pedagogy privileges mental fortitude over practical trades. Although they attempt to impart their own discoveries regarding the psychic matter imperative for gender creation, they quickly discover that the children lack the imaginative capabilities necessary for their formation.

In the end, many of the questions regarding gender's relationship to parenthood (as in *Madame Bovary*), to science (as in *Salammbô*), and to childhood and im/maturity (as in *l'Éducation sentimentale*) are addressed in Flaubert's final piece of writing, in spite of (or, perhaps, because of) its incompleteness.

1. PROGRESSION/REGRESSION IN *BOUVARD ET PÉCUCHET*

The question of progress is treated at length in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. According to Kate Rees, "The novel reads as a sustained critique of the quest for knowledge and the desire for development" (108). Such themes recall arguments I have made in previous chapters where I offered a new reading for Flaubert's critique of Salammbô's quest for knowledge and for the apparent lack of development depicted by the protagonists in both *Éductions sentimentales*. As much as progress, specifically technological and scientific progress, is present in Flaubert's final

novel, the topic has been consistently represented throughout his corpus. Similarly, the quest for knowledge in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is subject to a gendered reading. Before I begin this reading, however, I will take a moment to discuss how progress is represented in this novel. I draw conclusions in the vein of what other literary critics also note regarding the nonlinear development of the plot. This discontinuity, I argue, parallels the fluctuation of Henry's and Frédéric's gender identities discussed in the previous chapter. Although Bouvard and Pécuchet may not undergo a proper sentimental education, the metaphor of the education process is still present. Indeed, it is at the juxtaposition of this learning process, also referred to as a quest for knowledge by some, and the undulation of the text's structure that my own reading of Flaubert's final encryption of creative gender development finds its point of departure.

One principal aspect of progress is forward momentum. Be it scientific development, biological evolution, or personal situations, to progress implies to advance in some way. In literature, progress is marked most often by the action of the plot,⁷² which moves the reader from one moment to the next. In some ways, then, *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is an antithesis of the traditional novel because the forward momentum of the plot is not driven by a succession of actions but rather by the lack of progress the two characters make. Indeed, many literary critics have pointed out the lack of progression in the novel. According to Franck Evrand, the novel represents a sort of regression, or deterioration, as the failures of the protagonist culminate with the (anti)climactic pedagogical experiment attempted in the final part of the novel. Victor Brombert makes a similar claim when he writes: "it would be a mistake to believe that the novel describes a progression" (265). Noting the strong contrast between the protagonists and the

⁷²Peter Brooks describes plot as "the principle of interconnectedness and intention which we cannot do without in moving through the discrete elements — incidents, episodes, actions — of a narrative" (Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1984, xiii).

Chavignollais, Louis Rossi concludes that “the failure of Bouvard and Pécuchet, the only disinterested and nobly enthusiastic persons among the inhabitants of Chavignolles, is proof that human stupidity is incorrigible, that any attempted amelioration is futile” (111). Given these conclusions, it is easy to see why Kate Rees asserts, “Critical debate is divided as to whether the quest for knowledge enacted by Bouvard and Pécuchet is shown to be progressive or otherwise, but the consensus is that, for the most part, the characters are created to emphasise futility, the exhaustion of knowledge and the overall impossibility of any means of moving forward” (109). While this portrayal of the futility of human progress is perhaps the clearest illustration of human incompetence, the latter is a common element in Flaubert’s art. Fittingly, then, the failures of Bouvard and Pécuchet coincide, to some extent, with the failures of his other protagonists. The most noticeable difference is the profusion of experiments attempted and abandoned by the two copyists. Whereas in the other novels treated in this dissertation readers are presented with a single, in-depth display of personal experimentation, the repetitive, “undulating”⁷³ quality of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* provokes a more intent critical eye.

If there is no progress in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, what leads readers and critics to continue its discussion? Jonathan Culler offers some insight into the interest in this novel by arguing that, rather than a complete lack of progress, Bouvard and Pécuchet practice a consistent pattern of progression and degression that, in the end, cancel each other out. He writes: “It is not that extremes meet; far from it. It is rather that oppositions take one nowhere” (128). Similar arguments have been made in regards to the cyclical structure of Flaubert’s 1869 *Éducation*

⁷³This “undulating” quality recalls the nontraditional progression of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Rather than linear progression (which would reflect an accumulation of knowledge), the two consistently demonstrate an inability to acquire the knowledge they study. This, however, does not provoke further regression but instead motivates them to tackle a new subject, hoping that it will rectify their previous failures. It is this up and down, wave-like plotline that echoes the nonlinear development of gender.

sentimentale. Comparable to the conclusion of *L'Éducation*, the protagonists of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* also portray a character reversion ending the novel with the decision to return to their former profession, “Bonne idée nourrie en secret par chacun d’eux... enfin, se la communiquent simultanément: *Copier comme autrefois*” (395). Like Frédéric and Deslauriers, who, reminiscing about their failed trip to a brothel, conclude that their childhood was the best time of their lives, Bouvard and Pécuchet also choose to relapse, circling back to the novel’s opening. However, many critics also emphasize the fact that, not only do Bouvard and Pécuchet return to their former profession, they also practice copying *like before*.

This “comme autrefois” is noteworthy in that it underscores the parallel between the beginning and the end of the novel, further questioning the significance of the narrative itself. These words, however, were not written by Flaubert himself, but instead an addition made by his niece after his death. Rather than argue about authorial intention, I would like instead to focus on this addition as a representation of reader expectation. As Elizabeth Rottenberg maintains in *Inheriting the Future: Legacies of Kant, Freud, and Flaubert*, “In this regard, the subsequent addition of ‘comme autrefois’ by Caroline Commanville seems *convincingly* to render the dialectical movement of the quest. In fact, many editions of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* unwittingly reproduced her apocryphal locution” (104, my emphasis). The use of the word “convincingly” suggests that the addition of “comme autrefois” was a logical and natural conclusion for *Bouvard et Pécuchet*; that it was believable, if not expected, that the two would return to their former state as if the entire narrative had not occurred. This gives weight to Jonathan Culler’s claim that the entire plot is a series of cancellations, so that what is left is what was there from the start.⁷⁴ In other words, “the narrative follows a purely dialectical logic whereby its unfolding tells us only

⁷⁴See Culler, Jonathan. “Une marge”. *Bouvard et Pécuchet centaires* (Bibliothèque de l’Ornicar?, 1981).

what was always already there from the start” (Rottenberg 104). Even if this is true, however, there is still an intimately formative process that both protagonists undergo, as I discussed with Frédéric in *L'Éducation sentimentale*, and this process reflects the creative formation of a gender identity. Indeed, as Maxime Du Camp states in his *Souvenirs littéraires*, “Ses deux commis, lorsqu'ils ont pris le parti de se remettre à copier, veulent copier avec intelligence, ‘pour eux-mêmes’, pour s'instruire, et non plus à l'état de machines qu'ils étaient autrefois” (827).

Although most critics agree that *Bouvard et Pécuchet* mocks and even resists the notion of human progress, this progress is often conflated with scientific interpretations of the work. Indeed, the faith the two protagonists have in science as the answer to all their shortcomings is another reason why critical attention to progress in this novel is so strong. As Mary Orr writes: “Bouvard and Pécuchet at every turn re-enact a blind leap of faith in their belief that the written word and its scientific authority match truthfully the reality of the world around them” (169). Science and progress are almost synonymous in some contexts. Further, in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* the quest for science is also the driving momentum of the plot, even if this quest is fueled by consistent failures: “The study of science will prove unsatisfactory, as will the study of history, as will the study of literature, etc. However, each newly discovered lacuna further stimulates Bouvard and Pécuchet in their totalizing quest” (Rottenberg 104-5). While science may not provide the answer they seek, Bouvard and Pécuchet's motivation to fill their lack of understanding is the force that advances the narrative.

Some critics, in turn, have argued that *Bouvard et Pécuchet* represents a nontraditional progression. In her article, “Une tortue avec des ailes: Progressing in Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*”, Kate Rees contends that the cycle of journeys and experiments presented in the novel can be read as a simulation of the cumulative force of human progress. She concludes: “The

hesitant progression made by the bumbling characters suggests that there is space within Flaubert's work for acknowledging the force of human progress, however ambiguously it might emerge" (273). Similar to conclusions I made in regards to Flaubert's two *Éductions*, I am in agreement with Rees that a comparable occurrence is present in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Even though the anticipated ending of the work places the characters—and the readers—right back at the novel's opening, there is a journey that is taken across its pages. Indeed, in my reading of Flaubert's final novel, I will show how the journey taken by Bouvard and Pécuchet portrays their acute awareness of their individual potentiality in constructing their own gendered identities. The cathartic moments experienced by Flaubert's other protagonists result in suicide (Emma), death (Mâtho and Salammbô), or the stasis of the project (Henry and Frédéric). It is in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* that the reader is, finally, exposed to enlightened protagonists who actively experiment with the potential of gender. It is through this gendered lens that Flaubert's final, unfinished work expresses new, creative readings of individual human progress, even amidst a collective where progress seems impossible.

2. "UNE BIBLIOTHÈQUE FANTASTIQUE"

Although unfinished, many critics believe Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet* to be the culmination of the author's literary art, both thematically and aesthetically. As much as this novel is a representation of Flaubert's own œuvre, it is equally a library in and of itself. One critic deems it to be "Ce livre des livres", which, "se nourrit des volumes qu'il démantèle, défigure, en même temps qu'il les représente" (Gleize 195). Indeed, the research completed by Flaubert in order to write *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is an example of the scientific fantasy the author set out to write when composing *Salammbô*. As Jean Gayon writes of Flaubert's writing process,

“La série documentation-expérimentation-évaluation, en effet, s’applique autant à Flaubert qu’à ses personnages. Pour une grande part, la documentation utilisée par l’écrivain pour construire les échecs agricoles de Bouvard et Pécuchet est la même que celle des deux personnages dans le roman” (60). Jacques Neefs also comments on the immense reading Flaubert did in preparation for *Bouvard et Pécuchet*:

Avec Bouvard et Pécuchet, et également avec l’épisode de *Trois Contes* au sein de l’entreprise de ce dernier roman, Flaubert élargit systématiquement le travail de la lecture, de l’absorption dans les livres, en abordant tous les champs de savoirs, en investissant par la fiction le partage des sciences, en réunissant dans la courbe d’une même aventure problématique des théoriques et des disciplines. (“Lire” 53)

This combination of creativity and factual data seems, at first glance, to once again incite the infamous contradiction between the imaginary and reality. However, unlike other examples of books being a source of unrealistic expectations, the enlightened state of Bouvard and Pécuchet provokes a successful blend of their individual creative potential and the static nature of the written model.

As Orr suggests, and as I quoted earlier, Bouvard and Pécuchet turn to books as models, as starting points, for their own, personal experiments. The use of books, however, does not restrict their own interpretations. As Jacques Neefs notes: “Les livres sont un impératif, pour les deux personnages; les livres règnent comme préalables à toute action, même s’il s’agit de les mobiliser pour les négliger, pour s’en débarrasser, pour les jeter” (47). Unlike the imagined realities of Henry and Frédéric, Bouvard and Pécuchet ground their creative enterprise in fact. When it comes to discussion of having their own, personal library, the two copyists conclude:

Il ne serait pas mal, non plus (car on ne peut pas toujours travailler dehors), d’avoir quelques bons ouvrages de littérature;—et ils en cherchèrent—fort embarrassés parfois de savoir si tel livre ‘était vraiment un livre de bibliothèque’. Bouvard tranchait la question. ‘Eh ! nous n’aurons pas besoin de bibliothèque’. ‘D’ailleurs, j’ai la mienne’ disait Pécuchet. (67)

The rejection of a library is marked by both a projection into the future (“We will not need a library”) as well as the reassurance that Pécuchet already has his own. Given the interpretation of books as sources for models, this scene suggests that both copyists will, eventually, be free to create without the use of extant prototypes. Jacques Neefs has a similar interpretation of this scene, “‘Pas besoin de bibliothèque’: cela engage la liberté d’être, d’agir, et présuppose une sorte de ‘connaissance’ naturelle, prise dans l’action elle-même, qu’amplifie l’opposition très active dans la structure du roman entre le cabinet et le plein air, entre la course à l’extérieur et le retrait dans le ‘Muséum’” (48). The process expressed in this scene parallels that of education, as represented especially in Flaubert’s 1845 *Éducation sentimentale*.

Whereas the written word, or the predetermined expectation, serves as a model for the character’s identity creation, it is not until they abandon this model that catharsis is possible and that they can begin to create their renewed identity. If we recall Louis Hay’s description of genetic criticism, it is within the creative process where potential resides; the written text is only one possible outcome of this process. Books, then, contain models that have already been realized. To conform to what is written in a book is to repeat what has already been done. The failures critics witness, then, reflect an inability to discard the model in order to liberate the individual imaginary. When Leo Bersani remarks of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, “The relationship of Bouvard and Pécuchet to knowledge is highly practical; if Flaubert has satirical intentions towards them, it is not because they are intellectually mediocre, but because they would put knowledge *to use*” (“Flaubert’s Encyclopedism” 161, emphasis in original), the practicality of the copyists’ use of books is read as precisely what Flaubert critiques. As their many experiments show, the written is only useful to a certain extent. It is this cutoff point where creativity must take over in order to realize fully individual potential.

The writing of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is so important because it represents a compelling parallel to the activity of its protagonists. Neefs very aptly calls the narrative a trap:

La prose de *Bouvard et Pécuchet* est un piège, par l'absorption complète des textes de référence dans la matière narrative et rythmique du texte, dans l'espace d'une représentation ambiguë. Les personnages et le roman lui-même sont faits de la matière des livres qu'ils consomment, absorbent, redistribuent, cette fiction et cette prose s'alimentent de ce qu'elles démontent dans les livres, mais aussi de ce qu'elles montrent de leur usage et de leur pouvoir dans la lecture. (50-51)

The novel presented to us under the name *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is Louis Hay's definition of "l'écrit" *par excellence*. It represents only one possible outcome of Flaubert's literary substance, which, as critics have pointed out time and again, included the many texts he himself had absorbed. Likewise, each of Bouvard and Pécuchet's experiments demonstrate only one possible outcome, one potential combination or re-creation of extant materials. Although gender makes no overt appearance in this discussion by various critics, there is a strong link between the process Neefs describes and the creation of gender identity.

Bouvard et Pécuchet may be the work in Flaubert's corpus where gender is the least visible, and yet it is in this novel, I argue, that the Flaubertian gendering process is most eloquently expressed. Gender, like literature, is a result of permutable potential. We cannot discuss the elements of intertextuality involved here without mentioning Julia Kristeva, whose works on the term she coined is most useful to what follows. According to Kristeva, intertextuality is "une interaction textuelle qui se produit à l'intérieur d'un seul texte" that allows the consideration of "les différentes séquences (ou codes) d'une structure textuelle précise comme autant de *transforms* de séquences (codes) prises à d'autres textes" (143). Intertextuality has been an important tool of literary studies, and, for some theorists⁷⁵, can be used as a

⁷⁵For example, as intertextuality is interpreted within the work of Michel Riffaterre, Jonathan Culler and Gérard Genette whose approaches are "equally bent on establishing certain limits to the intertextual scope

restrictive element to determine the “literarity” of certain works over others. In practice, however, literary critics have demonstrated that, even given the fact that all texts are, essentially, intertexts, there is potential for new creation to unfold. In an article describing the cult film *Casablanca*, Umberto Eco describes how the film, although constructed entirely from clichéd elements, manages to result in something completely inventive:

Forced to improvise a plot, the authors mixed a little of everything, and everything they chose came from a repertoire that had stood the test of time. When only a few of these formulas are used, the result is simply kitsch. But when the repertoire of stock formulas is used in wholesale, then the result is an architecture like Gaudi’s *Sagrada Familia*: the same vertigo, the same stroke of genius. (465)

Not only does this example, I find, eloquently elaborate the creative potential of intertextuality, it also provides an apt context for my reading of gender identity in the Flaubertian corpus, and, more specifically, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

What is gender if not a model that has, to borrow the words of Eco, “stood the test of time”? I have shown that, in the literary texts written by Gustave Flaubert, definitions of masculinity and femininity are rigidly constructed in societies. However, in spite of these distinct portraits of ideal femininity and masculinity, Flaubert’s literary characters have proven creative in their transformation and absorption of these models. Thus far in my dissertation I have analyzed these literary texts to demonstrate Flaubert’s character’s relationships with gender identity, how it fluctuates, torments, and drives the protagonists’ actions. The evocation of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*’s intertextuality, however, gives me the opportunity to take my analysis one step further by detailing the minutiae of gender’s experimental process, to dissect the process into smaller pieces from which new and creative gender identities are produced. My reading will echo Eco’s conviction: what makes Flaubert’s characters so unique is their use of multiple

of every particular text” (Alfaro, María Jesús Martínez. “Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept.” *Atlantis* 18.2 (1996): 268-85, 278).

formulas and combinations. In this way, the protagonists born from the Flaubertian imaginary resist any “kitschiness” due to the complexity of their gendering process. The laborious and intensely psychological aspects of Bouvard and Pécuchet’s practice, for me, most descriptively reflect gender identity in the Flaubertian imaginary.

3. PHYSICAL GENDERING IN *BOUVARD ET PÉCUCHET*

In spite of the obvious homosocial relationship between the two protagonists in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, gender in the novel has received relatively little critical attention. Mary Orr in her work *Flaubert: Writing the Masculine*, attempts to explain this lack of gender criticism:

There is much in Flaubert’s writing that is violent, monstrous, and obscene as we discovered in *SAL* and *TC*, but there is a distinct coyness across the *oeuvre* when it comes to writing about sex. Critics, too, have either discounted the physical or bodily aspects of *BP* and any hint that Bouvard and Pécuchet are sexual beings to concentrate on the metaphysical, or have sought to recuperate this strange pair within a normalizing heterosexual model of the couple so that their ‘maleness’ and ‘femaleness’ return a sum total. (183)

As noted earlier, Neefs has called the prose of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* a trap. Just as the text is representative of a cyclical process of commenting on material of which it is itself composed, its blatant portrayal of a homocentric pair as protagonists clouds the strong homosexual implications of their relationship. In fact, the two men are more often described as lacking sexuality than having any sexual preference whatsoever. It is important to distinguish sexuality from gender, however, as there is a very murky line that is often lost in critical analysis of one or the other. Although sexuality does not determine, nor is it determined by, gender identity, it is a useful indication of attitudes towards codified gender models. For my own reading of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, just as was the case for my other chapters, the issue of their potential homosexuality will not be a significant factor. Nonetheless, their reflections on sex and sexuality, I argue, attest

to their psychic interpretations of gender. In unearthing spoken/written manifestations of Bouvard and Pécuchet's thoughts about sex and narrative comments about their sexualities, I will be able to better examine the relationship between conceived gender and physically/textually manifested gender identity. Therefore, rather than unravelling the secrets of Flaubert's protagonistic male couple, I will instead look at their discussions of sex and sexuality in order to provide definitions masculinity and femininity in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

Although not officially a part of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*'s narrative, the *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* that figures at the end of its publication provides a contextual point of departure for the duo's views of sex, sexuality, and gender. According to Marie Thérèse Jacquet in *Les mots de l'absence, ou, du Dictionnaire des idées reçues de Flaubert*: "La sexualité qui est, par excellence, lieu de théâtralisation exacerbée des idéologies peut aborder dans *Le Dictionnaire* précisément à partir d'une entrée, femme" (144). It is also possible to do so from the same starting point in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. For the two protagonists, the female represents the Cartesian duality: while the physical, biological body desires female companionship, the mind protests and rejects this need. Early in the novel, Bouvard and Pécuchet report their attitude towards women: "La vue de cette noce amena Bouvard et Pécuchet à parler des femmes, qu'ils déclarèrent frivoles, acariâtres, têtues. Malgré cela, elles étaient souvent meilleures que les hommes; d'autres fois elles étaient pires. Bref, il valait mieux vivre sans elles; aussi Pécuchet était resté célibataire" (3-4). This brief passage gives a summarized portrayal of women throughout the novel. In the end, there is no conclusion at all, simply a stream of thought that posits women as both better and worse than men, essentially negating their existence, which is further underscored by the decision they make to live without them. Nonetheless, later in the

work there is an entire chapter devoted to “l’amour”, where there is a sudden revival of sexual desire.

The seventh chapter of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* exposes the novel’s portrayal of gender, sex, and sexuality. Although in the onset of the narrative both protagonists seem content with their lives without women, at this point in the novel both contemplate relationships and marriage with the opposite sex. It is important to note first, however, what provokes this sudden reawakening of their sexual desire. Essentially, their interest in women is brought on by boredom and dissatisfaction with their current lives. According to Anne Herschberg Pierrot, “Le chapitre 7 est motivé par l’ennui et la mélancolie de Bouvard et Pécuchet, nés des déceptions intellectuelles et politiques, qui leur ôtent l’envie d’entreprendre autre chose, et de la lassitude de leur couple” (np). Already the novel constructs an opposition between sexuality and the imagination, between the physical body and the mind. Jacquet comments on this opposition in *Le Dictionnaire des idées reçues* as one between normality and abnormality:

Par conséquent, il n’est pas, dans *le Dictionnaire* de sexualité vécue dans la normalité : il y a un refus du sexe vécu comme violence, comme agression faite à l’autre ou même subie. Ainsi s’explique l’abondance même des aberrations sexuelles évoquées...qui se révèlent une image multiple de la solitude de l’individu...Pour la femme comme pour l’homme, le sexe est lié à l’anormalité, à la maladie...le vécu du sexe ne peut être que le propre des marginaux. (158-60)

I cite this critique of Flaubert’s *Dictionnaire* to show the extent to which sex and sexuality is seen as an anomaly in this part of the author’s *oeuvre*. It makes more sense, given this perspective, that the revival of their passion is led on by intellectual disappointment. The connection between ennui and sexual desire is significant. The chapter opens, “Des jours tristes commencèrent,” and is immediately followed by the source of this sadness, “Quelquefois ils ouvraient un livre, et le refermaient; à quoi bon? En d’autres jours, ils avaient l’idée de nettoyer le jardin, au bout d’un quart d’heure une fatigue les prenait ; ou de voir leur ferme, ils en

revenaient écoeurés; ou de s'occuper de leur ménage, Germaine poussait des lamentations; ils y renoncèrent" (227). Their depressive state is marked by lacking; they lack interest in what used to unify them as a pair, the quest for knowledge that brought them together in the first place. This quest for knowledge, for Pécuchet, is soon replaced by a quest for love.

Pécuchet, the reader may recall, has remained single his whole life thus far. When he witnesses a lover's quarrel, his response is one of awe:

Ce qu'il venait de surprendre fut, pour Pécuchet, comme la découverte d'un monde, tout un monde! qui avait des lueurs éblouissantes, des floraisons désordonnées, des océans, des tempêtes, des trésors, et des abîmes d'une profondeur infinie; un effroi s'en dégageait, qu'importe! Il rêva l'amour, ambitionnait de le sentir comme elle, de l'inspirer comme lui. (231)

At a moment in his life where there is a severe lack of intellectual interest, an interest in love and emotion provides an occasion to seek fulfillment. These compulsive emotions, however, are linked to infancy and immaturity. Earlier when the pair are discussing women we read: "Chacun en écoutant l'autre retrouvait des parties de lui-même oubliées. Et bien qu'ils eussent *passé l'âge des émotions naïves*, ils éprouvaient un plaisir nouveau, une sorte d'épanouissement, le charme des tendresses à leur début" (5, my emphasis). Clearly certain emotions are associated both with mental and physical immaturity. Given the attitude toward sexual desire noted above, it is not surprising that this comment about naïve emotions arises just after Bouvard makes a sexual comment about a young girl, causing Pécuchet to blush (4). Despite their similar physical age, in regard to women and sexuality there is a disconnect between Bouvard and Pécuchet that is exploited further in the later chapter about love. What to Pécuchet is a "new world" is but a distant memory for Bouvard: "Après la mort de sa femme, rien ne l'eût empêché d'en prendre une autre, et qui maintenant le dorloterait, soignerait sa maison. Il était trop vieux pour y songer" (232). This critique of infantile love is not unlike my reading of Henry's infatuation with Émilie

in the 1845 *Éducation*. For Henry, there was no reflection about his love for Émilie. The failure of their relationship was due, at least in part, to Henry's inability to reconcile reality with his own imagined version of the affair. Again, in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, love, and more specifically, compulsive love, is linked to youth, naivety, and immaturity. After reaching a certain level of maturity, however, such musings are not possible. In *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, then, mature gender identity is privileged over sexual desire, and, to some extent, marked by a lack of the former.

Just as Jacquet argues that sexuality is a disease in Flaubert's *Dictionnaire*, I argue the same thing can be said within the pages of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Sexuality is most prominently displayed through the character of Pécuchet who, blushing and innocent in the beginning of the novel, is tempted for the first time after witnessing the scene between Mme Castillon and Gorju. His affections for the former are not genuine. He admits himself that he wishes to feel love like she does and to inspire it in someone like Gorju does to Mme Castillon. His desire to seduce Mme Castillon, then, is what René Girard terms mimetic desire; Gorju being the mediator who inspires Pécuchet's own desire. The implication of Girard's triangular desire also includes the disease-like status of its contagious nature. According to Girard, desire provokes violence on a large scale because it is contagious. For Bouvard and Pécuchet, sexual desire not only causes physical disease (i.e., the syphilis contracted by Pécuchet), it is also the cause of a temporary disruption to their friendship: "Et ayant fermé la porte, Pécuchet, après beaucoup d'hésitations, confessa qu'il venait de se découvrir une maladie secrète" (239). Although referring to a sexually transmitted infection, the language used in the narrative is ambiguous enough to suggest that desire itself is also the secret malady. This metaphor continues when the two men discuss abandoning women once and for all: "Pécuchet, tout en avalant ses remèdes, Bouvard, en fumant des pipes, et ils dissertaient sur les femmes.— Étrange besoin, est-ce un besoin? Elles poussent

au crime, à l'héroïsme et à l'abrutissement. L'enfer sous un jupon, le paradis dans un baiser ; ramage de tourterelle, ondulations de serpent, griffe de chat ; perfidie de la mer, variété de la lune" (240). That the need for women is questioned once again echoes Girardian desire.

According to Girard, what differentiates desirable objects from necessities such as sustenance or air is that they are not pre-determined. As he declares in *De la violence à la divinité*, "A la différence des appétits et des besoins dont l'instinct détermine les objets, le désir n'a pas d'objet prédéterminé" (3). While ridding themselves of their sexual desires, the two men question if women are indeed a necessity.

Their conclusion is that they are not, just as they had determined earlier in the novel when they first met. Women are also equated to a disease, the cause of violence that Girard will attribute to human desire at large. Indeed, Pécuchet and Bouvard blame women for the distraction from their own relationship and feel a need to be cleansed after their failed attempts to court Mélie or Mme Bordin, respectively: "C'était le désir d'en avoir qui avait suspendu leur amitié. Un remords les prit.— Plus de femmes, n'est-ce pas? Vivons sans elles! Et ils s'embrassèrent avec attendrissement. Il fallait réagir; et Bouvard, après la guérison de Pécuchet, estima que l'hydrothérapie leur serait avantageuse" (240). The abandonment of women is marked by a strong homosocial response. Further, there is an imperative to react, as if they had been manipulated or oppressed in some way. Mary Orr sees this scene as a critique of heterosexuality: "sex is now homosexual in orientation to suggest its 'higher' value above heterosexuality with its malign (sexually transmitted diseases) or procreative outcomes" (189). Although the scene does have strong homosexual insinuations, there is a stark contrast between the physicality of heterosexual lovemaking and the homosocial relationship they share.

The carnality of the (hetero)sexual act is highlighted by the mark it leaves on the flesh, in the form of physical pain. In contrast, their friendly embrace reaffirms the emotional attachment to one another.⁷⁶ Rather than read this passage as a critique of heterosexuality, I argue that it illustrates a critique of physical sexuality at large. This critique is further underscored by the infiltration of the imaginative faculty that occurs during this “love-crazed” state: “Et Bouvard se répandit en descriptions, qui incendièrent l’imagination de Pécuchet comme des gravures obscènes” (233). Bouvard’s experience works against Pécuchet’s imagined ideal, which is then coupled with the transmission of syphilis from a woman who hides her sexual promiscuity. Not only does sex (and sexuality) eventually ruin Pécuchet’s image of love, it also interferes with the relationship between the two men which, as I mentioned above, is strongly tied to the mind. For the two protagonists, women, in the corporeal sense, exist merely as a representation of heteronormative desire. At a time when their mental activity was stagnant, they revert, in a sense, to more normative behaviors. Indeed, if it is idleness that provokes the two men to replicate socially expected desires, it is the reaffirmation of their companionship (and, consequently, a renewed interest in research) that confirms their rejection of social opinion. This is made clear in the final sentence of the chapter where the people of Chavignolles react to the two men bathing together: “Les deux bonshommes, nus comme des sauvages, se lançaient de grands seaux d’eau, puis ils couraient pour rejoindre leurs chambres. On les vit par la claire-voie; et des personnes furent scandalisées” (241). It is only upon personal reflection that they recognize that their lives are better without women. It is important to distinguish woman, as sex, from the feminine

⁷⁶Even if we read these embraces as innuendos of a more physical, homosexual relationship, the distinction I make is readily present in the text. If Bouvard and Pécuchet are, in fact, homosexual, the relationship they share is grounded in a mutual appreciation of emotional and thought-based affection, not the carnal act of sex.

gender, however, because although the two men reject the need for women, this does not imply a rejection of femininity.

Although the conclusion of this chapter on love suggests a dismissal of women, it should only be read in the corporeal sense. In fact, the female body is represented as a vessel of masculinity in *Bouvard and Pécuchet*. Women, according to Bouvard and Pécuchet, provoke violence and heroism, two strongly masculine qualities. When Pécuchet succeeds in seducing Mélie, the description of their sexual interaction exposes the former's inexperience and the latter's attempt to feign inexperience: "Un tas de fagots se trouvait derrière. Elle s'y laissa tomber, les seins hors de la chemise, la tête renversée; puis se cacha la figure sous un bras; et un autre eût compris qu'elle ne manquait pas d'expérience" (238). In acting the shameful, virginal role, Mélie tries to confirm the masculine prowess of Pécuchet. The narrative voice shatters this image, however, by revealing that it is he who is in fact the ignorant party. While the chapter claims to discuss love, it focuses primarily on the physical act of making love. The sexual act, in its carnal, physical form, is reduced to a disease, a distraction, an occupation of the intellectually deprived. We may recall that the two men were compelled to seek female companionship out of boredom and dissatisfaction with their scholarly exploits. Rather than a differentiation between hetero- and homosexuality, I see this chapter as a rejection of physical sexuality in favor of the more thought-based element of gender identity. In many ways, the pair of Bouvard and Pécuchet resemble Mathô and Salammbô, much more so than they do Frédéric and Deslauriers, although they are often compared to the latter. As I detailed in my second chapter, the protagonists of *Salammbô* also seek knowledge as a means of discarding the physical and superficial gender that has been layered onto them. Mâtho and Salammbô, too, are punished for their attempt to uncover the truth of their genders. Where Mâtho and Salammbô do not succeed, however, Bouvard and

Pécuchet use their failures as motivation to continue their quest for knowledge. The paradoxical juxtaposition of failure and continuation, however, poses a problem for some critics who strive to fit the two men into a (hetero)normative paradigm.

I have mentioned above how some critics argue in favor of reading the main characters along the heteronormative model, claiming that, as a couple, Bouvard and Pécuchet fulfill the masculine and feminine roles, respectively. Yvan Leclerc explains this union:

Depuis que Thibaudet a écrit que ‘ce couple ridicule de vieux débutants’ présente une parodie du ‘couple humain, le couple normal, celui de l’homme et de la femme’, la critique bouvardesque cherche la femme. L’opinion la plus commune, après Thibaudet, voit en Bouvard ‘l’homme solide, l’homme à femmes...et l’autre...c’est Pécuchet par défaut et par complémentarité. (np)

Formerly, critics inferred gender from the ways in which the men’s sexual activities are depicted or described. Bouvard’s experience would place him in a more dominant, masculine role, whereas Pécuchet’s innocence and naivety would result in his feminine identity. This conclusion is restricting, however, because sexuality is much more a mark of immaturity in the Flaubertian oeuvre than of gender. Indeed, Frédéric’s many sexual conquests in *L’Éducation sentimentale* demonstrate his lack of a mature gender identity, not any sort of masculine dominance. Further, Bouvard, in his old age, remarks that finding a wife would not be to fulfill sexual needs, but more for companionship and emotional gratification. Mary Orr is one of the few critics to challenge the gender roles assigned to Bouvard and Pécuchet: “Pécuchet’s long, penile, body interestingly puts him in the so-called ‘male’ position to the ‘feminized’ Bouvard (the opposite of the roles normally assigned the two by critics)” (187). This role reversal is only one example of how gender identities fluctuate for both Bouvard and Pécuchet in the novel. Indeed, when the two men later adopt children, a scene I will analyze in detail, it is Pécuchet who takes on a masculine, fatherly role and Bouvard who acts more maternal and feminine towards the children.

Although the mature gender identities of Bouvard and Pécuchet are difficult to determine, it is the process through which they become engendered that is key. Already, we can see the devalorization of sexuality, which is attached to physicality and immaturity. Gender identity, on the other hand, is favored as a result of the cerebral reflection it requires.

As I have shown, the seventh chapter of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is a significant starting point for my own textual analysis as it crystalizes the protagonists' view of sex, sexuality, and gender. The virginal, naïve, inquisitive character of Pécuchet recalls the same characteristics seen in the character of Salammbô. Similarly, Mathô and Bouvard share a certain level of experience and thus portray the physicality of sexual desire. As much as the heterosexual act is parodied in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, in *Salammbô* the description of Salammbô and Mathô beneath the tent is clouded by poetic language and sensory images that reflect the emotional connection between the two over something purely physical and mechanical. It is for this reason, too, that I do not see the seventh chapter of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* as a critique of heterosexuality per se, but instead of the carnal baseness associated with sexuality. None the less, sexuality still represents one of Bouvard and Pécuchet's failed experiments. It is, however, the only experiment completely devoid of any intellectual premise. In my reading of their other experiments, I will thus emphasize how gender is expressed through its strong conceptual attributes.

4. THE POWER OF THE IMAGINATION IN *BOUVARD ET PÉCUCHET*

I have suggested, especially in my last chapter, that Flaubert's characters reflect on their gender identity. Some conflicts have arisen, such as the case of Henry in Flaubert's first *Éducation*, when an imagined identity fails to come to fruition. I would like to pause here to

discuss first how this process of psycho-gendering is enacted by Bouvard and Pécuchet, and second, how it is metaphorically depicted through their procedural experimenting.

“À quoi bon, Bouvard et Pécuchet?” inquires Thierry Poyet’s in *Bouvard et Pécuchet: Le savoir et la sagesse*. He continues, “Pourquoi Flaubert s’ingénie-t-il à proposer à la lecture deux personnages inconsistants et inintéressants auxquels, bien entendu, aucun de ses lecteurs ne pourra – ne voudra – s’identifier? Pourquoi raconter l’histoire de deux hommes dont, au fond, personne n’a rien envie de savoir? Quelle fonction viennent-ils prendre dans le genre romanesque?” (89) The quest for knowledge is a common theme in many of Flaubert’s works, but takes on even greater significance in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Poyet’s question echoes many critics claiming that there is little or no progress, as discussed above. According to Poyet, neither Bouvard nor Pécuchet have a desire for knowledge. In addition, he claims that readers cannot identify with the characters, perhaps because, as readers, we are disturbed by the discrepancy between our progression through the narrative and the lack of progress made by the characters. Also, potentially as a result of an inability to identify with Bouvard and Pécuchet, many critics have had difficulty separating the characters in the novel from the author himself.

References to the amount of reading Flaubert had done in preparation for this novel have already been made. As part of the documentation process, the accumulation of knowledge does indeed translate into the practices of Bouvard and Pécuchet in the novel. Further, just as the two protagonists abandon the majority of these references when they proceed to the experimentation phase, it appears that Flaubert had done the same. According to Guy de Maupassant, in his preface to the 1885 publication of the posthumous work, Flaubert went back to his original data and likely discarded half of it:

Ce dossier de la bêtise humaine formait une montagne de notes démesurées, trop éparées, trop mêlées, pour être jamais publiées en entier. Il les avait cependant classées; mais il

devait revoir cette classification première, la modifier, supprimer au moins la moitié de cet amas de documents. (*Correspondance* 285)

Anne Herschberg Pierrot and Jacques Neefs also comment on the “écrivain érudit”, claiming that, “Flaubert renouvelle le modèle des écrivains chercheurs, et la forme du roman encyclopédique qui fait de l’érudition la matière même de la fiction” (9). Moreover, apparent similarities between the two men and the author have led some to suggest a “dimension autobiographique, nous avons déjà noté combien les deux protagonistes, Bouvard et Pécuchet, ressemblent en bien des traits à Flaubert en personne” (Poyet 82). In my own reading of this final novel, however, I will demonstrate how Bouvard and Pécuchet, rather than personifying the identity of the “écrivain chercheur”, instead embody the creativity associated with the process of gender development. The connection with Flaubert, as author, is concerned with the research he accumulated only as it was present within the creative space of his writing. Indeed, the presence of models, in the form of other texts, eventually leads to their disposal. The books that are referenced, both by the author and the protagonists, offer very few “answers”. What they do provide, however, is a means of cultivating the imagination. It is the force of their imaginative faculty, not the accumulation of their science, which distinguishes both characters from their society.

Bouvard and Pécuchet’s relationship to science is not unlike that of Salammbô, who sees science as a way of arriving at a truth. In the beginning of the novel, it appears that science is a driving and motivating force for the two: “Ce fut l’objet d’une discussion médicale. Ensuite, ils glorifièrent les avantages des sciences: que de choses à connaître, que de recherches... si on avait le temps!” (5) It would be wrong to assume that science here refers only to scientific discovery. Indeed, for the two copyists, science is more akin to the view of progress discussed above. Science is only positive when it allows for potential; when scientific knowledge becomes

restrictive it is incomprehensible to them. One such example occurs when Bouvard and Pécuchet aspire to learn chemistry:

La notation leur parut baroque. Les proportions multiples troublèrent Pécuchet. Puisqu'une molécule A, je suppose, se combine avec plusieurs parties de B, il me semble que cette molécule doit se diviser en autant de parties ; mais si elle se divise, elle cesse d'être l'unité, la molécule primordiale. Enfin, je ne comprends pas. Moi non plus ! disait Bouvard. Et ils recoururent à un ouvrage moins difficile, celui de Girardin, où ils acquirent la certitude que dix litres d'air pèsent cent grammes, qu'il n'y entre pas de plomb dans les crayons, que le diamant n'est que du carbone. (72)

This inability to comprehend the more advanced details of science has sometimes been used as evidence of their simplemindedness. Barbey d'Aurevilly refers to the men as, “Deux idiots qui se sont rencontrés un jour sur un banc de promenade et se sont raccrochés par vide de tête, badauderie, flânerie, bavardage et nostalgie d'imbécillité et dont les deux niaiseries, en se fondant voluptueusement l'une dans l'autre, sont devenues la plus incroyable et la plus infatigable des curiosités” (133). Their mediocrity, however, is the driving force of their creativity. Indeed, Bouvard and Pécuchet purposefully accept their averageness, their failures, their regression as evidence of their individual progress.

Mary Orr touches upon this when she writes: “The question in *BP* centres less on political than on epistemological equalities—Bouvard and Pécuchet's average mediocrity...Hence the repetitive, iterative, digressive, enumerative episodes...take up in peculiar harmony the aimlessness of Frédéric's and Deslaurier's return to adolescent memory...the new twist is...Bouvard and Pécuchet's epistemological 'progress' as regress” (170-1). The supposed “regression” of human intellect is, however, turned around to instead reflect individual and imaginative progress. Bouvard and Pécuchet's scientific experiments are much more representative of the gender experimentation going on within their characters' minds

than of any valid scientific discovery. The so-called scientific failures, then, are nonetheless proof of internal progress.

As Thierry Poyet notes, Flaubert's final novel is "un roman qui aide à grandir et à vivre. Vivre avec soi" (14). Deemed by the writer himself to be his *testament*, the triptych portrayed by *Bouvard et Pécuchet* posits Flaubert's existential, philosophical, and literary projects through the apparent *bêtise* of the titular protagonists. To say that this novel helps one to grow and live with one's (literary) self, as Poyet does, makes several implications that I explore further throughout the rest of this chapter. For one, with the emphasis placed on the literary self, there is a consequential break from the masses, whether figuratively or, as is the case with the novel's protagonists, literal seclusion. I read the literal seclusion of Bouvard and Pécuchet as a metaphor for the artistic process and the cerebral dissociation from the public that such creation requires.⁷⁷ Further, because I see gender development as a similar process, examples of how the separation of private and public spheres is illustrated in the novel elaborate ways in which an individual's gender identity must be formed in part detached from socially imposed definitions of masculinity and femininity.

Another implication made by Poyet's claim is that there is a link between maturing, or "growing", and introverted life. In the previous chapter, I discussed how *L'Éducation sentimentale* portrays an anti-*Bildungsroman* in that the protagonists do not succeed in their attempts to "come of age" in regard to their gender identity. I conclude, however, that gender development is distinct from sexual development and that a mature, or activated, gender identity requires its own cultivation. If we are to see a link between growing and living with oneself, it

⁷⁷As recounted by Poyet: "On sait depuis l'étude de sa correspondance combien Flaubert aura regretté l'expérience de *Madame Bovary*—inspirée pour partie du fait divers des Delamare—et l'on sait aussi combien de fois il aura répété ne rien accepter de devoir au public et refuser coûte que coûte d'entendre ce qu'il réclame" (21).

seems appropriate to examine this development as more thought-based in nature. The lack of social criticism implied by physical seclusion is also depicted by the two men who, when disgusted by their public, resort to social hibernation. Indeed, it is during these moments, when the narrative concentrates only on Bouvard and Pécuchet and even emphasizes their abandonment of the other villagers, where the most experimentation occurs. Although here represented in the physical sense, I read these moments of exclusion as indicative of “self-work” that occurs within their combined creative space. In fact, while both characters demonstrate a unique imaginative force, it is their union that reinforces the multiplicity of creations. Both Bouvard and Pécuchet are products of the Flaubertian imaginary, and as such reflect two potentialities, two “texts” from one “writing”. Similarly, the two protagonists together represent one creative space, and each of their experiments reflect potential creations from the “experimenting” that occurs within that space. I return to this duality later when it is reproduced in the education of Victor and Victorine. Before this, however, it is important to elaborate on the link between physical seclusion and mental stimulation.

In *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, the urge to escape is strongly linked to conceptual freedom and even to the imagination⁷⁸. It is not only that the two want to leave the capital; it is a dream— (“Barberou les [Bouvard et Pécuchet] sauva. Il connaissait leur rêve, et un beau jour vint leur dire qu’on lui avait parlé d’un domaine, à Chavignolles, entre Caen et Falaise” 19)—and a vision they project:

Déjà ils se voyaient en manches de chemise, au bord d’une plate-bande, émondant des rosiers, et bêchant, binant, maniant de la terre, dépotant des tulipes. Ils se réveilleraient au

⁷⁸The link between seclusion and mental fortitude is present in Flaubert’s correspondence as well: “Je suis, pour mon compte, effrayé par la Bêtise universelle! Cela me fait l’effet du déluge, et j’éprouve la terreur que devaient subir les contemporains de Noé, quand ils voyaient l’inondation envahir successivement tous les sommets. Les gens d’esprit devraient construire quelque chose d’analogue à l’Arche, s’y enfermer et vivre ensemble” (156).

chant de l'alouette pour suivre les charrues, iraient avec un panier cueillir des pommes, regarderaient faire le beurre, battre le grain, tondre les moutons, soigner les ruches, et se délecteraient au mugissement des vaches et à la senteur des foins coupés. (17)

In preparation for their eventual move, the two purchase various tools for their intended experiments, “si la fantaisie leur en prenait” (18), and even when Bouvard and Pécuchet arrive at their new home, they repeat to each other, “— Nous y voilà donc ! quel bonheur ! il me semble que c'est un rêve!” (24). Indeed, the representation of a physical retreat from Parisian life reflects a mental retreat from social restriction. Orr also discusses how this reclusion represents freedom: “The voluntary withdrawal from the world of work, key site of male evaluation and designation of one's place in society and its pecking-order, takes the notion of autonomy and free will into a completely secular province, figuratively and literally” (174-175). Bouvard and Pécuchet's physical journey from the city to Chavignolles is symbolic of the psychic journey they are to begin.

Far from being “petits bourgeois comme les autres”, as the reader may initially view them, Bouvard and Pécuchet establish themselves as much more complex characters. Although they may be intellectually lacking, they evidence a strong imaginative capacity. According to Roger Kempf:

À vouloir les prendre toujours en défaut, l'on néglige leur immense savoir—et qui ne prête pas forcément à rire—, leurs enquêtes, leurs fatigues, leur studiosité. Ainsi ne disent-ils pas simplement Buffon, mais *leur* Buffon, n'en ayant pas sauté une ligne. On les voit repérant dans l'instant un passage du *Contrat social*. Exigeants vis-à-vis d'eux-mêmes, ils tiennent à se procurer les livres dont ils ne connaissent que les résumés. Une brochure de Raspail les laisse sur leur faim: il leur faut “le grand ouvrage” pour être parfaitement informés. Quand Petit, l'instituteur, leur préconise, sur le spiritualisme, des écrits “défectueux sans doute, mais qui étaient le signe d'une aurore”, ils les commandent sur-le-champ. Ce ne sont pas des paresseux. Pour Lamarck seul, ils se contentent d'extraits. (38)

Because of their inability to comprehend the finer points of scientific knowledge, their determination and ability to imagine a better outcome become even more significant. For

Bouvard and Pécuchet, scientific fields of chemistry and archeology (often viewed as “hard sciences”) are placed on the same level as gardening and literature (which can be seen as more practical or social science). The two protagonists demonstrate that the force of the imagination and the potential for creativity equalize these different types of knowledge.

The power of the imagination is further highlighted in Bouvard and Pécuchet’s discussion of literature. After their failed attempt at historiography, “ils conclurent que les faits extérieurs ne sont pas tout. Il faut les compléter par la psychologie. Sans l’imagination, l’histoire est défectueuse” (163). This conclusion references, again, the critical step from existing models to new, creative identities. “Reality” must be filtered through the imagination in order to be fully formed by the individual mind. When Bouvard and Pécuchet discover Walter Scott, “Ce fut comme la surprise d’un monde nouveau...”; the images they process create a new, envisioned reality:

Les hommes du passé, qui n’étaient pour eux que des fantômes ou des noms, devinrent des êtres vivants, rois, princes, sorciers, valets, garde-chasses, moines, bohémiens, marchands et soldats, qui délibèrent, combattent, voyagent, trafiquent, mangent et boivent, chantent et prient, dans la salle d’armes des châteaux, sur le banc noir des auberges, par les rues tortueuses des villes, sous l’auvent des échoppes, dans le cloître des monastères. Des paysages artistement composés entourent les scènes comme un décor de théâtre. On suit des yeux un cavalier qui galope le long des grèves. On aspire au milieu des genêts la fraîcheur du vent, la lune éclaire des lacs où glisse un bateau, le soleil fait reluire les cuirasses, la pluie tombe sur les huttes de feuillage. Sans connaître les modèles, ils trouvaient ces peintures ressemblantes, et l’illusion était complète. (164)

This new world, provoked by literature, recalls the imaginative power present in Flaubert’s other novels. We can see a part of Emma Bovary, whose romantic expectations were filtered through the romance novels she read as a child, and even Frédéric, whose first view of Mme Arnoux “fut comme une apparition”, instantly engendering his imagined love affair. Moreover, the dramatization of history recalls *Salammbô*, and even more importantly, the composition of the novel.

Despite the great amount of research that Flaubert completed in preparation to write *Salammbô*, the resulting text creates a world far removed from “History”. Bouvard and Pécuchet’s reading practice resonates with Flaubert’s writing style, further highlighting the interaction between creation and creator as inhabitants of the same creative space. The difference in this novel versus the others is that Bouvard and Pécuchet are fully aware of the literary illusion. This consciousness does not devalue its power, however. Instead, poetics become a lens through which the two practice life. Orr has noted how the subjects taken on by Bouvard and Pécuchet show regression of both civilization and scientific integrity, moving from chemistry and medicine to magic and religion:

Bouvard and Pécuchet ‘recreate’ a world by stripping away recent layers of post-revolutionary civilization, first science as medicine and archaeological understanding (chapters III and IV); then uncovering the Renaissance *scientia* of literature, arts, and history in chapters V and VI; before returning ultimately to the medieval world of superstition, magic, spiritism, and religion in chapters VIII and IX. Bouvard and Pécuchet have the unsuccess of their experiments in these respective areas judged by the representative expert in provincial remodeling, who speaks on behalf of these quantum leaps in civilization. Thus Vaucorbeil the doctor is later replaced by l’abbé Jeufroy as touchstone of value-judgment. *BP*’s progression therefore details knowledge as regression. (178)

While the subjects studied tend to move further and further from “official” science, Bouvard and Pécuchet continually recognize the growing power of the imagination. What can be seen as luck in their early agriculture success is later explained through their creative potential. The regression of civilization noted by Orr in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is as arbitrary as the deterioration of the civilized Carthaginians in *Salammbô*. Indeed, eventually Bouvard and Pécuchet begin to understand the imaginative faculty, but in doing so also develop another faculty: “Alors une faculté pitoyable se développa dans leur esprit, celle de voir la bêtise et de ne plus la tolérer” (292). If *Bouvard et Pécuchet* details a quest for knowledge, the knowledge they seek lies in the individual power of the imagination. To reconnect with what precedes, it is imaginative fortitude

that combats human *bêtise*. Even if Bouvard and Pécuchet are unable to fully comprehend certain scientific theories, they demonstrate superiority through their creative potential.

It is the imagination, then, and not knowledge that distinguishes Bouvard and Pécuchet from their peers. Within the narrative, the faculty of the imagination is distinguished from the other “facultés de l’âme”: “L’imagination est plutôt une faculté particulière *sui generis*” (277). The uniqueness of the imagination is a driving force throughout the novel, from when the two men decide to leave Paris to when they begin preparing to speak about their discoveries. If this narrative teaches how to live with oneself, as Poyet suggests, the self represents a field of study that extends throughout the entirety of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. As much as Bouvard and Pécuchet study various subjects, each iteration of their research falls back to a reflection of themselves. What they truly learn, that is, the power of the imagination, is both the driving force of their self-discovery, and their unfulfilled desire to share this discovery with the world. Consequently, near the end of the novel, Bouvard and Pécuchet’s mission turns towards combatting stupidity in others, and they anticipate achieving this goal through the education of two adopted children: Victor and Victorine.

5. THE EDUCATION OF VICTOR AND VICTORINE

In their last experiment, Bouvard and Pécuchet adopt a brother and sister pair. In attempting to provide the two children with an education, they also attempt to teach them gender. It is at this point in the novel where Bouvard and Pécuchet, satisfied with the auto-erudition they have completed, now wish to impart this knowledge to others. The formation of the two young children becomes the matter for the debate between nature and nurture, with Bouvard and

Pécuchet partisans of the latter. When Victor and Victorine are being sent away to a juvenile institution and convent, respectively, they think:

Était-ce leur faute, s'ils étaient nés d'un père forçat ? Au contraire, ils semblaient très doux, ne s'inquiétaient même pas de l'endroit où on les menait. Bouvard et Pécuchet les regardaient marcher devant eux. Victorine chantonnait des paroles indistinctes, son foulard au bras, comme une modiste qui porte un carton. Elle se retournait quelquefois, et Pécuchet, devant ses frisettes blondes et sa gentille tournure, regrettait de n'avoir pas une enfant pareille. Élevée en d'autres conditions, elle serait charmante plus tard... (344)

Clearly, the two copyists are of the opinion that how a child is raised is more important than any innate proclivity. Indeed, the children's potential is not related to their biology, but instead to their mental capacity. Bouvard and Pécuchet resort to phrenology in order to determine Victor and Victorine's talents: "Mais avant d'instruire un enfant, il faudrait connaître ses aptitudes. On les devine par la phrénologie" (350). The use of phrenology marks not only a shift from the 'hard' sciences of chemistry and medicine to a favoring of more 'pseudo-sciences', it also highlights the significance of potential. Although phrenology can predict a penchant for future crime, Bouvard and Pécuchet insist that fatalism is untenable. They argue: "Bouvard objecta que l'organe prédispose à l'action sans pourtant y contraindre. De ce qu'un homme a le germe d'un vice, rien ne prouve qu'il sera vicieux" (352).

The experimental education of Victor and Victorine offers yet another case of Flaubert's characters enacting gender identities through parental roles. What makes the scene in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* so elaborate, however, is the completeness of the portrait. Within this text, the reader is exposed both to manifestations of mothering and fathering in Bouvard and Pécuchet and to how gender identities are born within Victor and Victorine, in part resulting from the education they receive from our two protagonists. Flaubert plays liberally with the gendered expectations of his readers. Pécuchet, although normally seen as the more feminine of the two, takes charge of the young Victor, and believes in a strong, paternal parenting style: "Bien qu'ils eussent un

tempérament solide, Pécuchet voulait comme un Spartiate les endurcir encore, les accoutumer à la faim, à la soif, aux intempéries, et même qu'ils portassent des chaussures trouées afin de prévenir les rhumes" (347). Pécuchet's parenting style echoes that of Charles's father in *Madame Bovary*. Just as Charles's father often sent his son to bed without eating, or left him without heat in an attempt to harden his young son, Pécuchet takes a similar approach in raising Victor. Bouvard, for his part, takes a more maternal approach: "L'homme étant corrompu naturellement, on doit le châtier pour l'améliorer. Bouvard protesta. La douceur valait mieux" (337). His philosophy is later put into practice. Indeed, when Pécuchet argues that the children needed a mother, Bouvard insists that he had been one: "Peut-être ont-ils manqué d'une famille, des soins d'une mère. J'en étais une! objecta Bouvard" (389). Although gender through maternal/paternal roles has been a constant throughout this dissertation, *Bouvard et Pécuchet* offers us the first example of gender-conscious parenting. If we consider again the tripartite process of documentation, experimentation, and evaluation, the education of Victor and Victorine, although an experiment, is also an evaluation of the gender process Bouvard and Pécuchet have been practicing throughout the work. Consequently, the education of Victor and Victorine reflects the conclusions made by Bouvard and Pécuchet regarding gender; that is, physical manifestations of sexuality should be avoided and, instead, formation should focus on the mind.

Throughout the gender education the two children receive, it becomes clear that both men see physical manifestations of sexuality as detrimental to the learning process. A decisive moment of this revelation is when the two men discuss whether or not they should teach the children about childbirth: "Fallait-il leur apprendre le mystère de la génération? Je n'y verrais pas de mal, dit Bouvard. Le philosophe Basedow l'exposait à ses élèves, ne détaillant toutefois

que la grossesse et la naissance” (376). A polemic debate during the 19th-century,⁷⁹ Pécuchet’s worry regarding teaching the children about childbirth demonstrates his fear that the two are capable of being physically corrupted. As much as Bouvard finds it harmless to instruct the children about pregnancy, he also appears ignorant of Victor and Victorine’s suspect past. When told a story suggesting Victorine’s sexual tendencies, Bouvard wholly rejects the possibility: “Victorine effectivement s’était prise de tendresse pour Arnold, tant elle le trouvait joli avec son col brodé, sa veste de velours, ses cheveux sentant bon, et elle lui apportait des bouquets jusqu’au moment où elle fut dénoncée par Zéphyrin. Quelle niaiserie que cette aventure, les deux enfants étaient d’une innocence parfaite!” (376). Innocence is linked to childhood, and thus immaturity, for Bouvard.

Although it is Bouvard who insists on the children’s innocence, he is also the proponent of sexual education, which complicates the idea of sexuality as a degrading, superficial aspect of humanity. It is through the education of Victor and Victorine that a nuanced vision of sexuality arises in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. As a counterpoint to the seventh chapter on love, the education of Victor and Victorine elaborates the protagonists’ interpretation of sexuality as a necessary, if inferior, part of gender development. Although paradoxical, the importance of sexuality in the gender education of Victor and Victorine recalls a similar process we repeatedly see in Flaubert’s writing: the consultation (and ultimate rejection) of textual sources. Earlier, I discussed how Pécuchet feels the “need” to experience heteronormative/physical love. In the aftermath, he comes out⁸⁰ with a stronger sense of self and a renewed desire to cultivate the mind. In forcing Victor and Victorine to recognize the expectations of their sex and gender, then, I believe that

⁷⁹See Stewart, Mary Lynn. “‘Science Is Always Chaste’: Sex Education and Sexual Initiation in France, 1880s-1930s” (*Journal of Contemporary History* 32.3 (1997): 381–94).

⁸⁰Perhaps in more ways than one...

Bouvard and Pécuchet hope to eventually overcome them. Indeed, these paradoxes are illustrated by the parental qualities of the two men. Upon further examination, however, we can explain these supposed irregularities as the presentation of a model that is to be soon rejected.

The character of Bouvard is exposed as paradoxical through his maternal attributes. While many critics find him to be the more masculine of the pair, he himself is insistent on taking on the role of the mother for Victor and Victorine. Further, given his own sexual experience, it is curious that he would be the one defending the children's innocence. These inconsistencies soon become intelligible, however, when Pécuchet confesses his concern over Victor's developing "bad habits":

Pécuchet pensa différemment. Victor commençait à l'inquiéter. Il le soupçonnait d'avoir une mauvaise habitude. Pourquoi pas? des hommes graves la conservent toute leur vie, et on prétend que le duc d'Angoulême s'y livrait. Il interrogea son disciple d'une telle façon qu'il lui ouvrit les idées, et peu de temps après n'eut aucun doute. Alors, il l'appela criminel et voulait, comme traitement, lui faire lire Tissot⁸¹. Ce chef-d'œuvre, selon Bouvard, était plus pernicieux qu'utile. Mieux vaudrait lui inspirer un sentiment poétique ; Aimé Martin rapporte qu'une mère, en pareil cas, prêta *La Nouvelle Héloïse* à son fils, et, pour se rendre digne de l'amour, le jeune homme se précipita dans le chemin de la vertu. Mais Victor n'était pas capable de rêver une Sophie. Si plutôt nous le menions chez les dames? Pécuchet exprima son horreur des filles publiques. Bouvard la jugeait idiote et même parla de faire exprès un voyage au Havre. (376-77)

The two men have opposing reactions to the children's budding sexuality that could be explained by their own sexual experiences.

We may recall that Pécuchet, unlike Bouvard, was never married and quite naïve in regards to his own sexuality. His reference to Tissot, whose popular work on the detrimental effects of masturbation provoked a century-long battle against onanism, suggests that he is concerned with the physical health of the child. Having contracted a disease from his recent affair, his suspicion of sexuality is not unusual. Bouvard, on the other hand, proposes two very

⁸¹Most likely, *L'Onanisme*

different solutions to Victor's "problem". His first recommendation is to appeal to his poetic sentiment, which is ineffective because Victor is incapable of imagining a "real" Sophie, the wife of Émile in Rousseau's *Émile, ou de l'éducation*. Consequently, Bouvard proposes bringing Victor to a brothel. The recourse to the physical manifestation of sexuality, I argue, underscores the failure of the emotional, cerebral solution initially proposed. It would seem that Victor's inability to imagine marks, at least for Bouvard, a level of immaturity that must be overcome. This parallels both Bouvard and Pécuchet's sexual encounters, after which both men swear off women in favor of their own intellectually driven companionship. Their attempt to expose Victor to a prostitute, however, is unsuccessful. The two men decide to simply tire the boy from other physical activities, but he constantly evades them: "Le gamin leur échappait, bien qu'ils se relayassent : ils n'en pouvaient plus, et, le soir, n'avaient pas la force de tenir le journal" (377). There is an interesting parallel to be drawn between Bouvard and Pécuchet abandoning the trip to the brothel and Frédéric and Deslauriers running away from a similar establishment as children in *L'Éducation sentimentale*. Just as Frédéric is content to remain immature, it would seem Victor is destined to a comparable fate. Victorine, also, suffers from an inability to cultivate the mind.

The education of Victorine, although originally the occupation of Bouvard, is soon critiqued by Pécuchet. For Pécuchet, it is important to teach the young Victorine many things, because "il est cruel, objecta Pécuchet, d'élever les filles en vue exclusivement du mari qu'elles auront. Toutes ne sont pas destinées à l'hymen, et si on veut que plus tard elles se passent des hommes, il faut leur apprendre bien des choses" (361). Again, there is a discrepancy between the education of practical subjects, such as sewing and arithmetic, and the more privileged education of more intellectually stimulating topics that would allow her to surpass the socially restricted

status of woman. The domestication of women is also linked to their submission to men sexually. Later, when Victorine suddenly changes into a devout young girl, it is exposed that this transformation is a ploy to please father Romiche: “Quand elle repassait le linge, elle poussait son fer sur la planche en chantonnant d’une voix douce, s’intéressait au ménage, fit une calotte pour Bouvard, et ses points de piqué lui valurent les compliments de Romiche... Derrière les débris du bahut, sur une paillasse, Romiche et Victorine dormaient ensemble” (387). This scene recalls the encounter between Pécuchet and Mélie, the latter who feigns sexual inexperience in an effort to win the approval of the protagonist. Despite their best efforts, Victorine falls victim to the corruption of sexuality, failing, like her brother, to attain a more conceptually founded gender identity. Indeed, when Bouvard laments the loss of Victorine’s innocence—“Il imaginait une fille de quinze ans à peu près, l’âme délicate, l’humeur enjouée, ornant la maison des élégances de sa jeunesse; et comme s’il eût été son père et qu’elle vînt de mourir, le bonhomme en pleura” (371)—his image of the young girl evokes an idealistic social convention. The loss of this innocent girl is not, however, the result of her mental maturity. She has instead been “infected” by her sexuality, effectively killing, rather than overcoming, her immature feminine identity.

Although their attempt to educate Victor and Victorine in the process of gender development fails, there is evidence that proves a distinction between physical and mental immaturity: “D’ailleurs que prouve un insuccès? Ce qui avait échoué sur des enfants pouvait être moins difficile avec des hommes. Et ils imaginèrent d’établir un cours d’adultes” (390). As I suggested earlier, sexuality, although inferior to gender, is a necessary part of maturation. If Bouvard and Pécuchet look at their own gender education as a model, it would make sense to evaluate their findings on other mature individuals. To do so, however, Bouvard and Pécuchet

determine that a lecture is necessary: “Il aurait fallu une conférence pour exposer leurs idées. La grande salle de l’auberge conviendrait à cela, parfaitement” (390). Such a public display of their ideas seems again to suggest a lack of progress throughout the novel, recalling Bouvard and Pécuchet’s first “experiment” and their desire to expose the result to their neighbors. As I will show in the next section, the unveiling of their garden is such a disaster that the two men decide to no longer interact with their community. However, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, Bouvard and Pécuchet are not the same men that we meet in the beginning of the novel.

6. THE CULTIVATION OF GENDER

The experimentation that the two men practice echoes gender identity development in significant ways. For each body of knowledge that they attempt to cultivate, there is first a period of introspection in which the external world is literally pushed out, “Les batteurs en grange fourraient du blé dans leur cruche à boire. Pécuchet en surprit un...en le poussant dehors par les épaules” (37). During this phase, Bouvard and Pécuchet pass their time reflecting on the options available to them, that is to say, existent models. One example of this is when the two decide to create a garden. The metaphorical significance of gardening is hard to ignore, especially after discussing their attempt at cultivating the minds of the young Victor and Victorine. In this part of my analysis, I show how the cultivation of Bouvard and Pécuchet’s garden depicts the tripartite process of documentation/experimentation/evaluation. Although the novel, as a whole, portrays this process on a larger scale, their gardening demonstrates how the pair is inspired by, but not dependent on, extant models of identity. The decomposition of these paradigms, as illustrated by the creation of fertilizer, resonates with the gendering process. Imaginative genders can only be created after social models of masculinity and femininity are acknowledged and deconstructed.

It is important to note that, like many of their future experiments, gardening was not their initial objective. In fact, what leads the two men to gardening (and, consequently, a succession of other subjects) is spontaneous success. Despite a lack of knowledge, poor weather, and little fertilizer, “Ils virent enfin lever les petits pois. Les asperges donnèrent beaucoup. La vigne promettait” (30). Armed with this success, the two decide to delve further into agriculture: “Puisqu’ils s’entendaient au jardinage, ils devaient réussir dans l’agriculture ; et l’ambition les prit de cultiver leur ferme. Avec du bon sens et de l’étude ils s’en tireraient, sans aucun doute” (30). It is at this point that the two turn to manuals, in an attempt to learn as much as possible about the subject matter. Although they follow these models to the letter, what follows is a series of natural disasters that put a precocious end to their farming practice. Reflecting on this unsuccessful endeavor, the two question the cause of their misfortune: “Quand ils purent recouvrer la parole, ils se demandèrent quelle était la cause de tant d’infortunes, de la dernière surtout? et ils n’y comprenaient rien, sinon qu’ils avaient manqué périr” (71). This moment of contemplation exposes the reflective activity characteristic of gender creation. There is a divergence between the haphazardness of their initial success and the meticulousness of their failure that would suggest complete abandonment of any models. Such a conclusion is untenable, however, considering the pervasive presence of mimetic prototypes (the two men are copyists, after all). What inference, then, can be made from the protagonists’ first foray into the world of experimenting? The answer, from my reading of the novel, lies in how Bouvard and Pécuchet aesthetically react to disaster.

Sometime between their initial successful harvest and the utter failure of their farm at the end of the first chapter, Bouvard and Pécuchet turn to gardening in its more aesthetic form. After their fruitless attempt at arboriculture, the two men stumble upon a book about gardens:

“Heureusement qu’ils trouvèrent dans leur bibliothèque l’ouvrage de Boitard, intitulé

l’Architecte des Jardins” (54). The manual details at length various types of gardens and décors:

L’auteur les divise en une infinité de genres. Il y a, d’abord, le genre mélancolique et romantique, qui se signale par des immortelles, des ruines, des tombeaux, et un « ex-voto à la vierge, indiquant la place où un seigneur est tombé sous le fer d’un assassin ». On compose le genre terrible avec des rocs suspendus, des arbres fracassés, des cabanes incendiées ; le genre exotique, en plantant des cierges du Pérou « pour faire naître des souvenirs à un colon ou à un voyageur ». Le genre grave doit offrir, comme Ermenonville, un temple à la philosophie. Les obélisques et les arcs de triomphe caractérisent le genre majestueux ; de la mousse et des grottes, le genre mystérieux ; un lac, le genre rêveur. Il y a même le genre fantastique, dont le plus beau spécimen se voyait naguère dans un jardin wurtembergeois — car on y rencontrait successivement un sanglier, un ermite, plusieurs sépulcres, et une barque se détachant d’elle-même du rivage, pour vous conduire dans un boudoir où des jets d’eau vous inondaient quand on se posait sur le sofa. (54-55)

I quote this passage at length not only to show the extent to which Flaubert inserted extant documentation into his own literary creation, but also to highlight the detail provided for the exact construction of these various types of gardens. The gardens that are described in this book include much more than floral species: there are rock formations, statues, even animals. Given the variety of templates present in *l’Architecte*, constructing one’s own garden becomes an almost overwhelming task. Indeed, Bouvard and Pécuchet, “Devant cet horizon de merveilles...eurent comme un éblouissement” (55). Whether the amount of choices make a decision difficult, or none of the gardens match what they envision, the types of gardens outlined in *l’Architecte* only accentuate Bouvard and Pécuchet’s desire to escape from models.

The restrictive nature of the model is further accentuated during the actual composition of their garden. Amidst the tilling of the land that is to become their garden, Bouvard notices that one of the trees is preventing a view of the garden: “Quelque chose manquait au-delà pour compléter l’harmonie. Ils abattirent le plus gros tilleul de la charmille...La besogne finie, Bouvard, qui était sur le perron, cria de loin: Ici! on voit mieux! Voit mieux, fut répété dans l’air.

Pécuchet répondit: J’y vais! Y vais! Tiens, un écho! Écho! Le tilleul, jusqu’alors, l’avait empêché de se produire...” (56). The tree, which had prevented both the sight and voice of Bouvard and Pécuchet symbolizes the blinding effect of *l’Architecte*. Although it seems that models exist only to stifle individuality, the inspiration of *l’Architecte* is still significant. While Bouvard and Pécuchet abandon the archetypes offered by the manual, they do maintain some elements of the gardens described: “Mais les rocs étaient possibles, comme les arbres fracassés, les immortelles et la mousse...” (55). Even their own personal touches are meant to simulate natural occurrences: “[ils] le couchèrent dans toute la longueur du jardin, de telle sorte qu’on pouvait le croire apporté par un torrent ou renversé par la foudre” (55). Clearly, Bouvard and Pécuchet’s garden both resists and incorporates existing elements of garden “genres”. The garden, then, becomes a sort of intertext in and of itself, drawing from models both inside *l’Architecte* and examples seen in nature. As the pair’s first creative experiment, I argue that the garden becomes the quintessential representation of gender creation, which eventually leads to their evaluation of the process through the education of their adoptive children.

Bouvard and Pécuchet follow the triple method of documentation/experimentation/evaluation in the creation of their garden. Using *l’Architecte* as their documentation, the two quickly abandon the models outlined and, “dans un enthousiasme progressif, après beaucoup de tâtonnements, avec l’aide d’un seul valet et pour une somme minime, ils se fabriquèrent une résidence qui n’avait pas d’analogie dans tout le département” (55). Experimentation necessitates creativity, but it also implies a rejection of the initial documented models. In order to fabricate their unique landscape, the two must first decompose the remnants of these rejected models:

Excité par Pécuchet, il eut le délire de l’engrais. Dans la fosse aux composts furent entassés des branchages, du sang, des boyaux, des plumes, tout ce qu’il pouvait

découvrir. Il employa la liqueur belge, le lizier suisse, la lessive, des harengs saurs, du varech, des chiffons, fit venir du guano, tâcha d'en fabriquer, et, poussant jusqu'au bout ses principes, ne tolérait pas qu'on perdît l'urine; il supprima les lieux d'aisances. On apportait dans sa cour des cadavres d'animaux, dont il fumait ses terres. Leurs charognes dépecées parsemaient la campagne. Bouvard souriait au milieu de cette infection. Une pompe installée dans un tombereau crachait du purin sur les récoltes. À ceux qui avaient l'air dégoûté, il disait: Mais c'est de l'or! c'est de l'or! (42)

The making of fertilizer is marked predominantly by the addition of human and animal waste.

Cadavers, urine, and fecal matter are added to the mix that is to become the source of their new garden. Like the various documents that are woven into Flaubert's narrative, these raw materials provide the constituents that the protagonists use to fabricate their own creation. The proverbial phrase "one man's trash is another man's treasure" takes on new meaning in this context, the scraps of social gender models deteriorating into the building blocks of novel gender identities.

Within this potent blend of ingredients, we can also see remnants of Salammbô and Mathô, characters who were figuratively and physically, respectively, stripped down to their very primordial essence. Yet even this mixture is incomplete. Jules Godefroi writes of Bouvard and Pécuchet's fertilizer: "Mais... la théorie des engrais complets était parfaitement ignorée de 1830 à 1840... Ces engrais, succédanés du fumier, excellents en eux-mêmes, ne renferment pas tous les éléments nécessaires à la vie des plantes... Comme ces principes sont enlevés avec la récolte et qu'on ne les reconstitue pas, la terre s'épuise rapidement et la végétation devient précaire" (Neefs, "Lire" 57-58). Indeed, despite their best efforts, the finished garden does not procure the result they anticipate.

The third part of the tripartite method is that of evaluation, and Bouvard and Pécuchet later in the chapter invite the people of Chavignolles to evaluate their garden. The garden in many ways becomes indissoluble from its creators. In the eyes of the public, the invitation to see their garden is equivalent to an invitation to meet Bouvard and Pécuchet themselves: "Depuis

qu'ils habitaient le pays, ils se tenaient à l'écart. Tout le monde, par désir de les connaître, accepta leur invitation" (58). Consequently, both Bouvard and Pécuchet portray an anxiety that suggests that their guests' opinion of their garden is as much an opinion of their character. When the creation is finally revealed, the two are hopeful when faced with the initial surprise of their invitees: "Pécuchet fit un signe, les rideaux s'ouvrirent et le jardin apparut. C'était, dans le crépuscule, quelque chose d'effrayant... Devant l'étonnement de leurs convives, Bouvard et Pécuchet ressentirent une véritable jouissance" (61). Kempf has commented on Bouvard and Pécuchet's desire to be accepted, calling it their Achilles' heel: "Bouvard et Pécuchet ont leur talon d'Achille: l'appétit de considération. À cet égard, quel chagrin que la grandiose réception des notables" (40). Indeed, Bouvard and Pécuchet are somewhat paradoxical in their initial seclusion from the city and their current need for public consumption of their garden.

In contrast to their attempt at farming, gardening is regarded more as an art form than a scientific endeavor. Bouvard and Pécuchet throw their dinner party as a means of unveiling their piece of art: "Comme tous les artistes, ils eurent le besoin d'être applaudis, et Bouvard songea à offrir un grand dîner" (57). Their garden is a work of art, because it reflects the capabilities of their imagination. Although a model was consulted, it was eventually discarded and decomposed, allowing the creation of their unique garden. The parallel to gender identity, given my previous analysis, becomes even clearer: the cultivation of their garden represents the period of introspection that the Flaubertian character must experience before developing their gender. Although the work/experimentation is done primarily in solitude (with the help of only a single valet), it is situated between two social procedures: a recognition of extant models and the public evaluation of their gender/garden. The criticism they receive from their guests, however, does not live up to the optimism they portray earlier.

At the end of their tour of the garden, Bouvard and Pécuchet are met with laughter rather than applause: “Bouvard observait le visage de ses hôtes, et impatient de connaître leur opinion: Qu’en dites-vous? M^{me} Bordin éclata de rire. Tous firent comme elle, M. le curé poussait une sorte de gloussement, Hurel toussait, le docteur en pleurait, sa femme fut prise d’un spasme nerveux, et Foureau, homme sans gêne, cassa un Abd-el-Kader qu’il mit dans sa poche, comme souvenir” (62). The public’s disapproval marks the failure of the garden. Unlike their other experiments, where natural disasters or incomprehensible results lead to the abandonment of the experimentation, for the garden the only judgment comes from the people of Chavignolles. Further, the voice of the people symbolically stifles, once again, the creativity of Bouvard and Pécuchet. When the two men wish to demonstrate the echo effect of their garden, it fails: “Quand on fut sorti de la charmille, Bouvard, pour étonner son monde avec l’écho, cria de toutes ses forces: Serviteur! Mesdames! Rien! pas d’écho. Cela tenait à des réparations faites à la grange, le pignon et la toiture étant démolis” (62-3).

The garden’s failure marks a turning point for Bouvard and Pécuchet. If, as Orr suggests, “The maladjustment of their lives only begins to show when the two Parisians try to apply in the private, provincial setting, methods learned in their urban world of copying. The problem is not so much their use or abuse of method, but rather their failure to see that definitions, labels, figures, and diagrams as universals do not match individual signifiers or signifieds in the way that, comically, they themselves did in the city” (176), then the mocking they receive in response to their garden signals a change in the minds of our protagonists. Although the two clearly sought the opinion of their fellow Chavignollais, they are quick to discount their authority: “Mais pour le jardin, tant de dénigrement provenait de la plus noire jalousie; et s’échauffant tous les deux: Ah! l’eau manque dans le bassin! Patience, on y verra jusqu’à un cygne et des poissons! À

peine s'ils ont remarqué la pagode! Prétendre que les ruines ne sont pas propres est une opinion d'imbécile!" (65). After hearing the criticism of their guests, they reject it, noting what the guests did *not* notice, as well as snubbing them as imbeciles. As a result of the incident, they decide to further seclude themselves from the public: "Dégoûtés du monde, ils résolurent de ne plus voir personne, de vivre exclusivement chez eux, pour eux seuls" (66). Contrary to the resoluteness of this statement, Bouvard and Pécuchet continually seek approval from their society, even if they never have another dinner party.

Is this, truly, their Achilles' heel? Is their constant desire to publically unveil their experimental genders what keeps them from truly succeeding in their various trials? With an unfinished end, it would be impossible to say. There is no doubt, however, that the garden scene marks a significant point in Bouvard and Pécuchet's character development, and the way in which I read it akin to gender development. According to Roger Kempf:

Quant au fabuleux jardin sur lequel, au dessert, se lève le Rideau, pour un dénouement inoubliable, il suscite étonnement, puis stupeur. Ainsi, de bout en bout, jusqu'au champagne, Bouvard et Pécuchet auront eu leur calvaire: les sourires perfides de Hurel, les commentaires imbéciles, l'air narquois du docteur, le mutisme de Mme Vaucorbeil, les réactions, condescendantes, de Mme Bordin, les fous rires concertants devant la porte aux quatre cents pipes, la muflerie de Foureau en cassant une et l'empochant. Patience, se disaient-ils, atteints au tréfonds, le dégoût et le ressentiment l'emportant aussitôt sur les satisfactions, obscurément pressenties, de l'orgueil. Pour la première fois cependant, confrontés dans leurs murs aux principaux de Chavignolles, ils mesurent à l'incompréhension générale leur singularité et leur isolement. Un mot les eût rassérénés, le seul à pouvoir consoler des affligés de leur espèce: artiste. (40-41)

For it is in this moment, faced with the devastating disaster that was their first dinner party, the unveiling of their garden, and their first creative experiment, that Bouvard and Pécuchet begin to understand the force of the imagination. Poyet claims that this novel is meant to help one "vivre avec soi-même", and after the garden incident Bouvard and Pécuchet resolve to "vivre pour eux seuls". The rest of the narrative, then, the succession of supposed failures experienced by the two

copyists, is instead a progression towards this goal. The decisive elaboration of gender, as created within the Flaubertian imaginary, is living completely with oneself, for oneself, and within one's own imagined identity.

CONCLUSION

In this final chapter of my dissertation, I have demonstrated that, in Flaubert's unfinished *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, the notion of creative gender takes on its most elaborate form. Although many critics comment on the fact that this novel lacks progression, the succession of failed experiments, I argue, only serve to emphasize the significance of process over product. The trend throughout Flaubert's corpus, and consequently in my own dissertation, has been toward protagonists with less resolute gender identities. Even though literary critics comment on fluctuations between masculine and feminine genders, there is a requirement, in many cases, to come to a kind of gendered conclusion. Is this character *ultimately* masculine or feminine? I have shown how this is not the case in Flaubert's *Éducatons sentimentale*. It is perhaps even more transparent in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, since the text itself remains inconclusive.

The absence of overt gender commentary in the narrative is also a significant part of my analysis. The process of gender creation that I have detailed throughout my analysis of the Flaubertian corpus is offered as a tool of literary study that can offer new readings of texts. Gender theorists have already confirmed that gender is ubiquitous.⁸² Although it is codified by the masculine/feminine binary, how gender identity is interpreted leads to a variety of iterations that could never be fully treated by two contrasting genders. Indeed, as this chapter has shown,

⁸²“There is nothing in social life that is not to be understood through gender constructs and sexual relations. Society is not constructed independently of gender and cannot in this sense be an explanatory context for it” (Strathern, Marilyn. *The Gender of the Gift. Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988, 32).

gender identity is best described as a thought-based and imaginative process that requires both creativity and consciousness to be fully realized. Bouvard and Pécuchet, although simpleminded in terms of intellect, demonstrate the force of the imaginative faculty and offer literary critics a new way of using gender as a lens to study character development.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study was to demonstrate how literary characters within the Flaubertian imaginary use gender to reflect a creative, developmental, self-identifying process. To do so, I examined specific novels written by Gustave Flaubert that I deemed representative of pivotal moments during his literary career. Each chapter of this dissertation treated a novel as a distinctive textual space. Gender identity is thus expressed as unique to the characters that inhabit this particular space. Further, each chapter has offered threads that connect these specific works to the Flaubertian imaginary at large. In this way, the novels I examine became both a representation of how one “textual society” interacts with gender identity as well as a window into how gender develops throughout Flaubert’s writing. Through my readings I was able to answer the question central to my dissertation’s *raison d’être*: How do Flaubert’s literary characters, as creations of his imaginary, elaborate gender as a creative, developmental process? Not only did my study expose ways in which characters develop gender in specific novels by Flaubert, it has also shown a creative synergy between poetics and gender in the Flaubertian corpus as a whole. It is this dual perspective that makes my conclusions more fruitful for future research in both literary and gender studies.

1. Chapter conclusions

Within each novel I showed how gender is used in a different way while offering insight into how gender functions in the Flaubertian imaginary as a whole. My first chapter detailed how gender identity in *Madame Bovary* is created through parental behaviors. The levels of

attachment and/or detachment between parent and child proved to be a strong indicator of gender identity in this work. This relationship also called into question the level of attachment between creator and creation, which I discuss through the Flaubertian practice of impersonal narration. As the first novel where Flaubert perfects his unique, detached writing style, this poetic practice is highlighted by how characters in *Madame Bovary* interact with the expectations of their gendered roles. While some characters (M. and Mme Bovary, M. Rouault) maintain a conventional gender identity, others (Charles) seem less concerned with conformity. However, it is the struggle between the individual and society, as depicted through the character of Emma, which hints at a larger discussion of artistic creation. The source of Emma's frustration echoes that of the artist who must mediate his art through the public sphere. Within the novel, Emma must reconcile her gender identity with her textual society's requirements for her as wife and mother. Her suicide results from her inability to realize her own gender fully, to creatively mediate her masculine propensities with her compulsive desire to conform. This chapter offers gender as a means of exploring Emma's textual conflict as well as of explaining her dynamic character development that sees her fluctuating between a detached paternal figure and an idealized mother and wife. On a larger scale, the death of Emma reflects an imaginative faculty not yet able to realize a fully capable protagonist. Emma's creative restrictions underscore a novelist placed under scrutiny.

In my second chapter, I showed a correlation between Flaubert's desire to escape his contemporary society and the "foreignness" of his writing in *Salammbô*. It is also in this chapter that I first spoke of Flaubert's "trap", which tricks his readers into searching for a kernel of truth that does not exist. This fictitious truth, I argue, is equatable to the supposed origins of gender identity. Masculinity and femininity in their idealized forms are nonexistent. Nonetheless, these

are the norms to which literary characters are constantly compared. Flaubert's *Salammbô* presents two characters who, not unlike the author, wish to escape their fate. Both Salammbô and Mâtho exist, at the beginning of the novel, as incarnations of idealized femininity and masculinity. At their core, however, I show that there is nothing. Rather than the conventional reading that would look at their development from beginning to end, I read the novel in the reverse order. In doing so, I revealed how both Salammbô and Mâtho are layered with superficial representations of their gender: Salammbô through her lavish but restricting ornamentation and Mâtho through the fortification of his flesh and sex. The "deterioration" that occurs as the novel progresses reflects a stripping away of these gendered layers, in an effort to understand their original state. What is exposed, however, is the lacunae of these primitive truths; that, rather than discovering a precise point of departure, the narrative begins and ends with the patriarchal construct of gender. This cycle is further underscored by the presence of the zaïmph, which incarnates the many paradoxes of gender identity. Although it is told that the truth lies within the veil, what is unveiled is, in reality, nothing. As a counterpoint to the first chapter, the textual weavings presented in my reading of *Salammbô* reflect a much larger discourse on gender origins in the Flaubertian imaginary. Understanding this history, although it may be but fiction, is an important step in the continuing development of creative gender identity.

My third chapter used Flaubert's two *Éductions sentimentales* to elaborate further the connections between the writing and gender creation processes. I asserted that the textual characters from these two works must be considered both individually and as products from the same imaginary. Indeed, the complex position of the two *Éductions sentimentales* in Flaubert's corpus highlights the status of his creations as both uniquely inventive and yet part of something larger. Literary gender should be examined in a similar manner. My conclusions demonstrate

that gender offers more enriching insight into character development when viewed as a continual, non-linear process and not simply as a product. The poetic limitations presented in Flaubert's 1845 *Éducation* echo the limitations of its protagonists to realize successfully a mature gender identity. Their gender is left incomplete by the end of the novel, marking a certain failure in the characters' imaginative capacity that is further underscored by Flaubert's ultimate rejection of the novel. In the 1869 *Éducation*, however, I explored Frédéric's successful attempt to resist gender maturation. This chapter brought attention to a larger question of success. If critics are able to distinguish a mature Flaubert from an immature Flaubert, I have shown that this same distinction is visible in the imaginative capacity of his characters. What the immature Flaubert, Jules, and Henry are unable to achieve in the 1845 *Éducation*, the mature Flaubert and Frédéric accomplish with the 1869 novel.

The final chapter treats the experimental nature of gender in Flaubert's final and unfinished novel, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. I detailed first how this text reflects the height of Flaubert's poetic maturation, as well as the amalgamation of many themes that can be traced through his corpus. The question of progress is treated at length, stemming from conclusions made in the previous two chapters. The creative process, I show, is rarely linear. It often experiences fluctuations and setbacks, a process that is textually rendered by the action of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Further, rather than success, it is actually failure that stimulates the two men who seek to comprehend the reason behind their errors. I explored this accumulation of knowledge in tandem with gender development. This reading revealed the various setbacks gender identities may also experience. I further detailed how the novel's anticipated ending is cause for reflection. While many critics have argued that, by deciding to return to Paris as copyists, Bouvard and Pécuchet represent a critique of human futility, I demonstrated instead

that the ending of the novel underscores the importance of the process. Creative products, such as gender and literature, are windows through which we can gaze upon the infinite potential of the imaginary.

2. Research impact

As mentioned at the onset and throughout this dissertation, my own study lies at the crux of literary and gender studies. However, I draw from other fields of research that I also believe could benefit from my reading of Flaubert's work. More specifically, I see my dissertation as having potential impact on sex, sexuality, and gender studies, Flaubert studies, genetic criticism and literary criticism at large.

A) Literary criticism

In regard to literary criticism, I find that my dissertation has complicated the notion of gender as restrictive. Although Christine Planté, among other literary critics, has helped to dismantle constraints associated with gender as a category of literary analysis, my reading of Flaubert's novels further highlights the plurality of gender. By focusing primarily on the creative element of gender development, gender becomes a much clearer component of textual production. While I do not replace masculinity and femininity as important notions of gender, I complicate the need to assign literary characters one or the other "in the end". Gender becomes a more complex component of textual identity that requires critical attention as a creative, conceptual element. Characters too often assigned a gender identity based on the overall presence of masculine or feminine traits could be reconsidered. Critics can ask: "how" a character mediates his/her own conceived gender and the gender attributes expected of him/her,

or “why” a character adopts a certain gender identity and to what extent s/he is shown to be conscious of his/her gender.

The synergistic relationship I expose between creative writing and gender identity also opens new avenues into the authorial imaginative space. My own study treated only one example of authorial creative space, that of Gustave Flaubert, (or, perhaps, even more specifically, of the “mature” Flaubert). Although I have explored throughout this thesis how Flaubert’s poetics lend themselves to a study of creative gender, critical readings of other “imaginaries” could provide uniquely rich foundations for analyses of creative gender formation. Gender, and how it is exhibited by literary characters, could offer a useful thread with which to connect products from the same imaginary, giving a new criterion for delineating a corpus of study. Rather than a restriction, I have established gender as a category full of creative potential.

B) Genetic criticism

Although I was largely unaware of genetic criticism when I began this dissertation and could only address it in a cursory and symbolic fashion, it has proven to be a critical and enriching element of my readings. I see my study as contributing to genetic criticism in that it privileges the writing process over the production or publication process. Further, my use of gender as a lens into the creative process offers a new, fruitful way of tracing the genesis of a work. Where correspondence and authorial notes may lack, gender representations can substitute as an indication of creative maturity. If literary characters demonstrate a lack of imaginative capacity through their gender identities, we can perhaps read this lack as a constraint within, or pointed to by, the author’s creative space. While gender may not provide a definitive account of all authorial imaginaries, it does afford an additional means of observing the genesis of a narrative.

In addition to providing a lens into the imaginaries of multiple authors, this perspective of gender could also serve to distinguish multiple imaginaries attributed to the same author. Critics have already recognized a difference between Flaubert's juvenilia (pre-*Madame Bovary*) and his more mature (and celebrated) works. In addition to the stylistic, narrative, and thematic differences that separate these two Flauberts, gender is also an indication of this transition. My explanation of this, through Flaubert's two *Éductions*, supplies a model that could be explored with other authors.

C) Flaubert studies

Flaubert studies is already a rich field of literary criticism. In choosing to study the novels of Gustave Flaubert, I immediately placed myself in dialogue with many critics who have explored the Flaubertian *œuvre* in relation to myriad critical fields (including, but not limited to, agriculture, medical science, religious studies, art history, etc.). I see the present study as continuing in this tradition. In addition to the benefits to literary criticism and genetic criticism within the Flaubertiste sphere, this dissertation also elaborates a new way of reading Flaubert as author. Gustave Flaubert's meticulous writing style lies at the crux of critical studies of his work. This writing style was a process, one that the author himself documents both through his correspondence⁸³ and through his writing. The incompleteness of this process, however, is reflected by the unfinished *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

Gender not only offers another way of tracing this creative process; it also details a way of critically reading other unfinished "creations" from the Flaubertian imaginary. Although primarily recognized as a novelist, Flaubert has also dabbled in theater. An unfulfilled attempt, his dramatic ambitions constitute another part of Flaubert's creative space where gender can

⁸³And perhaps a reading of his epistolary works could further expand and/or ground gender consideration.

serve as a link for this shift in genres. It is through their gendered costumes, I argued in my second chapter, that Mâtho and Salammbô become textual representations of gender ideals. This theatrical element of *Salammbô* coupled with the performative aspect of Butlerian gender furnishes a possibly fecund avenue for further exploration of gender in Flaubert's texts. Additionally, how gender was to be performed on the stage could offer further insight into how gender was "showable" within the Flaubertian imaginary.

D) Gender studies

While my experience with gender studies helped greatly in inspiring this dissertation, one of my goals was to (re)assert the status of literature as a fruitful source for gender scholars. One aspect of contemporary conceptions of gender that served as a starting point to my discussion was a lack of space for individual agency. My reading of gender as a creative process offers a textual example of how literary characters can interact with representations of masculinity and femininity in new and imaginative ways. With the present study I have opened gender as a category of study to allow for more artistic and innovative ways of expressing preconceived notions of masculinity and femininity. Gender is no longer accepted in a finite way but instead appreciated for its fluidity. Determining if a character is masculine or feminine is no longer the objective of reading through a gendered lens; we can now ask more meaningful questions such as how that character conceives of gender, how s/he resists social categorization, how reaching a level of gender maturity is a choice and not a necessity.

Further, my research (re)validates literature as a crucial source of inspiration when looking at new and creative ways to consider gender. Although this dissertation focuses on purely textual representations of gender, it also demonstrates the capacity of the imagination to create. The conceptualization of gender, which becomes more apparent through the maturation of

the authorial creative space, provides a context for thinking about gender on a more reflective level. Rather than focusing on and categorizing physical manifestations of gender, we can complicate these notions by determining how gender is perceived internally as well. Connections and/or disconnections between internalized and externalized notions of masculinity and femininity can then help explain the individual's creative and active role in the formation of one's own gender identity.

3. Limitations

The limitations of this study reflect both a personal choice and a logistical necessity. The constraints of the dissertation genre required me to make a choice in what works I would treat. With more time, a consideration of all of Flaubert's texts would have produced a more complete treatment of gender within the Flaubertian imaginary. That being said, the novels I have chosen go a long way in exposing the relevance of gender identity in Flaubert's creative process.

The inclusion of Flaubert's own words was also limited. This, however, was my own choice, since I wished to make the distinction between Flaubert (the person) and Flaubert (the author) as clear as possible. The uniqueness of Flaubert's writing style is due in part to his detachment from the work, even as its creator. Nonetheless, when considering the creative space as a whole, it is important to note fluctuations in the writing process as they impact fluctuations in the writing itself. In a future study, or had the present study been framed differently, more material from Flaubert's correspondence would be used to accentuate further the relationship between how gender and his stylistics are developed.

4. Future research

In many ways, the limitations I mentioned above provide valuable *pistes* for future research. One such avenue would be to read other works by Flaubert, such as *Trois contes* or *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, to see how characters in those works conceive gender. These readings could confirm findings I have already made, or perhaps provide nuanced reflections of gender identity and richer conclusions. In a similar vein, another project would be to look at two distinct Flaubertian imaginaries. Using the 1845 *Éducation* as a starting point, I could examine how gender identity is created by characters in Flaubert's juvenile writings (*Novembre*, *Mémoires d'un fou*, even earlier versions of *La Tentation*). These readings could justify a distinction on the creative/conceptual plane in addition to the one critics have already made based on form.

Another avenue for future research would involve a paper I gave recently at a conference on adaptations. Focusing on the character of Emma Bovary, I argue that viewers familiar with Flaubert's "Emma" are often dissatisfied with visual representations of Emma because Emma Bovary can only exist within the imagination. I saw this presentation as an opportunity to draft an article (which I submitted this past fall) where I looked at how "realist" Flaubert's fiction can really be if his characters exist primarily, if not exclusively, in imaginative, "non-real", and non-mimetic space. Researching this topic further would work in tandem with my dissertation and could also help me elaborate a more detailed distinction between the "real" and the (Flaubertian) "imaginary".

Ultimately, I anticipate that my future research lies in the synergy between creative writing and (creative) gender development. By incorporating manuscript details, authorial notes, and more personal correspondence, I believe that I can reveal the Flaubertian imaginary to be a

rich source for analyzing how gender and poetics function symbiotically within the creative mind.

I see this dissertation as a point of departure and not a point of finality. Just as my readings confirm that the literary critic must focus on the process much more than the product, it is my conviction that literary analyses are never complete. My thesis follows in the tradition of innumerable critics who have produced fascinating and innovative criticisms based on readings of the same novels. My research, then, like the Flaubertian imaginary, offers nearly limitless potential, and I aim for it to foster many insightful “creations” as it continues to develop.

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PRESENTATIONS

International conferences

- 2015 "The Pen is Mightier than the Sword? : Parody and Strengthening the Literary Canon."
 Romance Studies Symposium, Swansea, Wales

National conferences

- 2013 "What every young Frenchman ought to know?: Regulating Sex Education in late
 19th century France." Nineteenth-Century French Studies Colloquium, Richmond, VA
- 2010 "Les Caprices de Marianne, a story of mimetic desire." Romance Studies Colloquium,
 Jersey City, NJ

Local presentations/talks

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