

is perhaps because the entry into adult life, that is, into one or another of the social games that society asks us to invest in, does not always seem the most obvious thing to do. Frédéric, like all difficult adolescents, serves as a formidable analyst of our deepest relationships with society. To objectify romantic, fictional illusion, and above all, the relationship with the so-called real world on which it hinges, is to be reminded that the reality against which we measure all our imaginings is merely the recognized referent for an (almost) universally recognized illusion.

Flaubert says all this without saying it, and it is quite understandable that we understand without understanding. One is reminded of Proust's comment: 'A work that is stamped with theories is like an object that is still stamped with its price.' That is to say, there is something vulgar about bringing to the surface of a literary work its underlying theories. And yet, one should go all the way and try to make explicit the theory of the literary effect, of the novel's charm that is contained within the analysis of the effect that the sociological analysis exerts upon a literary text. The novelistic vision simulates and dissimulates reality; in the very act of giving it, it withdraws it. The form of the literary creation by which writers are able to say whatever the formal conventions of the day allow them to say is itself a mask; it brings unreality to what it presents as reality. Literary charm lies in this double game: 'Quae plus latent, plus placent,' said Saint Bernard. The more a work hides, the greater the pleasure. The more the writings are able to suggest, veiling what they are unveiling, the greater is the specifically literary effect that they produce and that the objectification tends to destroy.

Literary charm lies in a relationship of veiled revelation between an historical form and an historical content or context. The 'eternal charm' that Marx himself felt obliged to confer at least to Greek art may be understood in purely historical terms. It appears when what the veiled revelation reveals is an invariant historical structure, as, in the particular case of *Sentimental Education*, the structure of the field of power that every adolescent (at least every bourgeois adolescent) must confront, in 1848 as well as in 1968.

These are my initial reflections on *Sentimental Education*. Since the novel only reveals the structure of the society which it expresses in a disguised fashion, in the next lecture we shall have to come back to the direct, frankly sociological analysis of the structure of the field of power and of the literary field in which Flaubert himself took shape and which lies behind his representation of this structure.

## 5

## Field of Power, Literary Field and Habitus

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The reading of *Sentimental Education* has allowed the extraction of two bodies of information: first, Flaubert's representation of the structure of the field of power and the writer's position in that structure; and second, what I have termed Flaubert's formula, the generative scheme which, as the fundamental structure of Flaubert's habitus, is at the basis of the Flaubertian construction of the social world. In sum, on the one hand, Flaubert's sociology, meaning the sociology which he produces; on the other, the sociology of Flaubert, meaning the sociology of which he is the object. If it is true that the former furnishes us with elements for the latter, we must first of all submit it to the test. What is the structure of the social space in which the Flaubertian project was generated?

In my opinion, the approach the analyst should take in order to understand Flaubert's position, and thus uncover the principle of his work, is precisely the opposite of Sartre's approach in *The Family Idiot*. Generally speaking, Sartre seeks the genetic principle of Flaubert's work in the individual Gustave, in his infancy, in his first familial experiences. Using the method outlined in the chapter of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* entitled 'Questions of Method', Sartre hopes to discover a mediation between social structures and the work. He finds this mediation thanks to a method of analysis which integrates psychoanalysis and sociology in a social psychology of Flaubert, and which, as evidenced by the title, accords an enormous role to Flaubert's position in his family and to the experiences associated with the relationships between Flaubert, his father and his older brother.

One may credit Sartre with having reintroduced the social dimension into intra-familial relations: the relationship to the father or the older brother is one of the probable careers which are proposed to Flaubert and thus to the *space of social possibles* available to him. Nevertheless, we do not abandon the point of view of the individual; or indeed, when we do, it is to leap, in one motion, into the 'society' taken in its entirety (vol. 2 of *The Family Idiot*). Thus we have on the one hand a macro-sociology, and on the other a social micro-psychology, without a relation between the two ever being truly established.

We find here something that happens to all who attempt a sociological analysis of literary creation; it is as much the case with Lukács or Goldmann as with Adorno in relation to Heidegger, among so many others. This is also what makes one doubt the possibility of a true sociology of literary creation. Sartre's merit is that, with his characteristically mad energy, he pushed the paradigm to its limits, setting the considerable resources of his talent and culture to the task of attempting to account totally for a creative project as a function of social variables. And I believe he failed (even if he brings interesting ideas to the psycho-sociology of Flaubert's family experience).

Thus, we must completely reverse the procedure and ask, not how a writer comes to be what he is, in a sort of genetic psycho-sociology, but rather how the position or 'post' he occupies – that of a writer of a particular type – became constituted. It is only then that we can ask if the knowledge of particular social conditions of the production of what I have termed his habitus permits us to understand that he has succeeded in occupying this position, if only by transforming it. The genetic structuralism I propose is designed to understand both the genesis of social structures – the literary field – and the genesis of the dispositions of the habitus of the agents who are involved in these structures.

This is not self-evident. For example, historians of art and literature, victims of what I call the illusion of the constancy of the nominal, retrospectively transport, in their analyses of cultural productions prior to the second half of the nineteenth century, definitions of the writer and the artist which are entirely recent historical inventions and which, having become constitutive of our cultural universe, appear to us as a given. The invention of the writer and the artist, to which Flaubert himself greatly contributed, is the end result of a collective enterprise which is inseparable from (1) the constitution of an autonomous literary field, independent of or even opposite to the economic field (e.g. bohemian vs bourgeois), and (2) the constitution of a tactical position within the field (e.g. artist vs bohemian).

What do I mean by 'field'? As I use the term, a field is a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy. The existence of the writer, as fact and as

value, is inseparable from the existence of the literary field as an autonomous universe endowed with specific principles of evaluation of practices and works. To understand Flaubert or Baudelaire, or any writer, major or minor, is first of all to understand what the status of writer consists of at the moment considered; that is, more precisely, the social conditions of the possibility of this social function, of this social personage. In fact, the invention of the writer, in the modern sense of the term, is inseparable from the progressive invention of a particular social game, which I term the *literary field* and which is constituted as it establishes its autonomy, that is to say, its specific laws of functioning, within the field of power.

To provide a preliminary idea of what I mean by that I will make use of the old notion of the 'Republic of Letters', of which Bayle, in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, had announced the fundamental law: 'Liberty is what reigns in the Republic of Letters. This Republic is an extremely free state. In it, the only empire is that of truth and reason; and under their auspices, war is naïvely waged against just about anybody. Friends must protect themselves from their friends, fathers from children, fathers-in-law from sons-in-law: it is a century of iron. In it everyone is both ruler and subject of everyone else.' Several fundamental properties of the field are enunciated in this text, in a partly normative, partly positive mode: the war of everyone against everyone, that is, universal competition, the closing of the field upon itself, which causes it to be its own market and makes each of the producers seek his customers among his competitors; the ambiguity, therefore, of this world where one may see, according to the adopted perspective, the paradise of the ideal republic, where everyone is at once sovereign and subject, or the hell of the Hobbesian battle of everyone against everyone.

But it is necessary to make the definition somewhat more precise. The literary field (one may also speak of the artistic field, the philosophical field, etc.) is an independent social universe with its own laws of functioning, its specific relations of force, its dominants and its dominated, and so forth. Put another way, to speak of 'field' is to recall that literary works are produced in a particular social universe endowed with particular institutions and obeying specific laws. And yet this observation runs counter to both the tradition of internal reading, which considers works in themselves independently from the historical conditions in which they were produced, and the tradition of external explication, which one normally associates with sociology and which relates the works directly to the economic and social conditions of the moment.

This field is neither a vague social background nor even a *milieu artistique* like a universe of personal relations between artists and writers (perspectives adopted by those who study 'influences'). It is a

veritable social universe where, in accordance with its particular laws, there accumulates a particular form of capital and where relations of force of a particular type are exerted. This universe is the place of entirely specific struggles, notably concerning the question of knowing who is part of the universe, who is a real writer and who is not. The important fact, for the interpretation of works, is that this autonomous social universe functions somewhat like a prism which *refracts every external determination*: demographic, economic or political events are always retranslated according to the specific logic of the field, and it is by this intermediary that they act on the logic of the development of works.

To know Flaubert (or Baudelaire or Feydeau), to understand his work, is thus to understand, first of all, what this entirely special social universe is, with customs as organized and mysterious as those of a primitive tribe. It is to understand, in the first place, how it is defined in relation to the field of power and, in particular, in relation to the fundamental law of this universe, which is that of economy and power. Without going into detail at this point in the analysis, I will merely say that the literary field is the economic world reversed; that is, the fundamental law of this specific universe, that of disinterestedness, which establishes a negative correlation between temporal (notably financial) success and properly artistic value, is the inverse of the law of economic exchange. The artistic field is a *universe of belief*. Cultural production distinguishes itself from the production of the most common objects in that it must produce not only the object in its materiality, but also the value of this object, that is, the recognition of artistic legitimacy. This is inseparable from the production of the artist or the writer as artist or writer, in other words, as a creator of value. A reflection on the meaning of the artist's signature would thus be in order.

In the second place, this autonomous field, a kind of *coin de folie* or corner of madness within the field of power, occupies a dominated position in the field. Those who enter this completely particular social game participate in domination, but as *dominated* agents: they are neither dominant, plain and simple, nor are they dominated (as they want to believe at certain moments of their history). Rather, they occupy a dominated position in the dominant class, they are owners of a dominated form of power at the interior of the sphere of power. This structurally contradictory position is absolutely crucial for understanding the positions taken by writers and artists, notably in struggles in the social world.

Dominated among the dominant, writers and artists are placed in a precarious position which destines them to a kind of objective, therefore subjective, indeterminateness: the image which others, notably the domi-

nants within the field of power, send back to them is marked by the ambivalence which is generated in all societies by beings defying common classifications. The writer – or the intellectual – is enjoined to a double status, which is a bit suspect: as possessor of a dominated weak power, he is obliged to situate himself somewhere between the two roles represented, in medieval tradition, by the *orator*, symbolic counterweight of the *bellator*, charged with preaching and praying, with saying the true and the good, with consecrating or condemning by speech, and by the *fool*, a character freed from convention and conformities to whom is accorded transgression without consequences, inspired by the pure pleasure of breaking the rule or of shocking. Every ambiguity of the modern intellectual is inscribed in the character of the fool: he is the ugly buffoon, ridiculous, a bit vile, but he is also the alerter who warns or the adviser who brings forth the lesson; and, above all, he is the demolisher of social illusions.

Significantly, all statistical inquiries show that the social properties of agents, thus their dispositions, correspond to the social properties of the position they occupy. The literary and artistic fields attract a particularly strong proportion of individuals who possess all the properties of the dominant class *minus one*: money. They are, if I may say, *parents pauvres* or 'poor relatives' of the great bourgeois dynasties, aristocrats already ruined or in decline, members of stigmatized minorities like Jews or foreigners. One thus discovers, from the first moment, that is, at the level even of the social position of the literary and artistic field in the field of power, a property which Sartre discovered within the domestic unit and in the particular case of Flaubert: the writer is the 'poor relative', the *idiot of the bourgeois family*.

The structural ambiguity of their position in the field of power leads writers and painters, these 'penniless bourgeois' in Pissarro's words, to maintain an ambivalent relationship with the dominant class within the field of power, those whom they call 'bourgeois', as well as with the dominated, the 'people'. In a similar way, they form an ambiguous image of their own position in social space and of their social function: this explains the fact that they are subject to great fluctuation, notably in the area of politics (for example, when the centre of gravity of the field shifted towards the left in 1848, one notes a general swing towards 'social art': Baudelaire, for instance, speaks of the childish or 'puerile utopia of art for art's sake' and rises up in violent terms against pure art (see *De l'École païenne*, 1851).

The characteristics of the positions occupied by intellectuals and artists in the field of power can be specified as a function of the positions they occupy in the literary or artistic field. In other words, the position of the literary field within the field of power affects everything that

occurs within the latter. In order to understand what artists and writers can say or do, one must always take into account their membership of a dominated universe and the greater or lesser distance of this universe from that of the dominant class, an overall distance that varies with different periods and societies and also, at any given time, with various positions within the literary field. One of the great principles of differentiation within the literary field, in fact, lies in the relationship towards the structural position of the field, and thus of the writer, that different positions within the literary field favour; or, if one prefers, in the different ways of realizing this fundamental relationship, that is, in the different relationships with economic or political power, and with the dominant fraction, that are associated with these different positions.

Thus the three positions around which the literary field is organized between 1830 and 1850, namely, to use the indigenous labels, 'social art', 'art for art's sake' and 'bourgeois art', must be understood first as so many particular forms of the generic relationship which unites writers, dominated-dominant, to the dominant-dominant. The partisans of social art, republican and democratic like Pierre Leroux, Louis Blanc or Proudhon, or liberal Catholics like Lamennais and many others who are now completely unknown, condemn the 'egotistical' art of the partisans of art for art's sake and demand that literature fulfil a social or political function. Their lower position within the literary field, at the intersection of the literary field with the political field, doubtless maintains a circular causal relationship with respect to their solidarity with the dominated, a relationship that certainly is based in part on hostility towards the dominant within the intellectual field.

The partisans of 'bourgeois art', who write in the main for the theatre, are closely and directly tied to the dominant class by their lifestyle and their system of values, and they receive, in addition to significant material benefits (the theatre is the most economically profitable of literary activities) all the symbols of bourgeois honour – notably the Academy. In painting, with Horace Vernet or Paul Delaroche, in literature with Paul de Kock or Scribe, the bourgeois public is presented with an attenuated, softened, watered-down version of Romanticism. The restoration of 'healthy and honest' art is the responsibility of what has been called the 'school of good sense': those like Ponsard, Émile Augier, Jules Sandeau and, later, Octave Feuillet, Murger, Cherbuliez, Alexandre Dumas fils, Maxime Ducamp. Émile Augier and Octave Feuillet, whom Jules de Goncourt called the 'family Musset', and whom Flaubert detested even more than Ponsard, subject the most frenzied Romanticism to the tastes and norms of the bourgeoisie, celebrating marriage, good management of property, the honourable placement of children in life. Thus, Émile Augier, in *L'Aventurière*, combines the

sentimental reminiscences of Hugo and Musset with praise of morality and family life, a satire on courtesans and condemnation of love late in life.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the defenders of art for art's sake occupy a central but structurally ambiguous position in the field which destines them to feel with doubled intensity the contradictions that are inherent in the ambiguous position of the field of cultural production in the field of power. Their position in the field compels them to think of themselves, on the aesthetic as well as the political level, in opposition to the 'bourgeois artists', homologous to the 'bourgeois' in the logic of the field, and in opposition to the 'social artists' and to the 'socialist boors', in Flaubert's words, or to the 'bohemians', homologous to the 'people'. Such conflicts are felt successively or simultaneously, according to the political climate. As a result, the members of this group are led to form contradictory images of the groups they oppose as well as of themselves. Dividing up the social world according to criteria that are first of all aesthetic, a process that leads them to cast the 'bourgeois', who are closed to art, and the 'people', imprisoned by the material problems of everyday existence, into the same scorned class, they can simultaneously or successively identify with a glorified working class or with a new aristocracy of the spirit. A few examples: 'I include in the word *bourgeois*, the bourgeois in working smocks and the bourgeois in frock coats. We, and we alone, that is the cultured, are the people, or to put it better, the tradition of humanity' (letter to George Sand, May 1867). 'All must bow before the elite: the Academy of Sciences must replace the Pope.'

Brought back towards the 'bourgeois' when they feel threatened by the bohemians, they can be prompted by their disgust for the bourgeois or the bourgeois artist to proclaim their solidarity with all those whom the brutality of bourgeois interests and prejudices rejects or excludes: the bohemian, the young artist, the acrobat, the ruined noble, the 'good-hearted servant' and especially, perhaps, the prostitute, a figure who is symbolic of the artist's relationship to the market.

Their disgust for the bourgeois, a customer who is at the same time sought after and scorned, whom they reject as much as he rejects them, is fed, in the intellectual field, the first horizon of all aesthetic and political conflicts, by disgust for the bourgeois artist, that disloyal competitor who assures for himself immediate success and bourgeois honour by denying himself as a writer: 'There is something a thousand times more dangerous than the bourgeois,' says Baudelaire in his *Curiosités esthétiques*, 'and that is the bourgeois artist, who was created to come between the artist and genius, who hides each from the other.' (It is remarkable that all the partisans of art for art's sake, with the

exception of Bouilhet and Banville, suffered resounding defeat in the theatre, like Flaubert and the Goncourts, or that, like Gautier and Baudelaire, they kept librettos or scripts in their portfolios.) Similarly, the scorn shown at other times by the professionals of artistic endeavour, the partisans of art for art's sake, towards the literary proletariat who are jealous of their success, inspires the image that they have of the 'populace'. The Goncourts, in their *Journal*, denounce 'the tyranny of the brasseries and of bohemian life over all real workers' and oppose Flaubert to the 'great bohemians', like Murger, in order to justify their conviction that 'one must be an honest man and an honourable bourgeois in order to be a man of talent'. Placed at the field's centre of gravity, they lean towards one pole or the other according to the state of the forces outside the field and their indirect consequences within the field, shifting towards political commitment or revolutionary sympathies in 1848 and towards indifference or conservatism under the Second Empire.

This double rejection of the two opposing poles of social space and of the literary field, rejection of the 'bourgeois' and of the 'people', at the same time a rejection of 'bourgeois art' and 'social art', is continually manifested in the purely literary domain of style. The task of writing is experienced as a permanent struggle against two opposing dangers: 'I alternate between the most extravagant grandiloquence and the most academic platitudes. This smacks alternatively of Petrus Borel and Jacques Delille' (to Ernest Feydeau, late November/early December 1857); 'I am afraid of falling into a sort of Paul de Kock or of producing Chateaubriandized Balzac' (to Louise Colet, 20 September 1851); 'What I am currently writing runs the risk of sounding like Paul de Kock if I don't impose some profoundly literary form on it' (to Louise Colet, 13 September 1852). In his efforts to distance himself from the two poles of the literary field, and by extension of the social field, Flaubert comes to refuse any mark, any distinctive sign, that could mean support, or, worse, membership. Relentlessly hunting down *commonplaces*, that is, those places in discourse in which an entire group meets and recognizes itself, and *idées reçues*, generally accepted ideas that go without saying for all members of a group and that one cannot take up without affirming one's adhesion to the group, Flaubert seeks to produce a socially utopian discourse, stripped of all social markers.

The need to distance oneself from all social universes goes hand in hand with the will to refute every kind of reference to the audience's expectations. Thus Flaubert writes to Renan about the 'Prayer on the Acropolis': 'I don't know whether there is a more beautiful page of prose in French! It's splendid and I am sure that the bourgeois won't understand a bit of it! So much the better!' The more artists affirm their

autonomy and produce works which contain and impose their own norms of evaluation, the greater their chances of pushing the 'bourgeois' to the point where they are incapable of appropriating these works for themselves. As Ortega y Gasset observes: 'by its very existence new art compels the *bon bourgeois* to admit who he is: a *bon bourgeois*, a person unworthy of aesthetic feelings, deaf and blind to all pure beauty' (*The Dehumanization of Art*). The symbolic revolution through which artists free themselves from bourgeois demands and define themselves as the sole masters of their art while refusing to recognize any master other than their art – this is the very meaning of the expression 'art for art's sake' – has the effect of eliminating the market. The artist triumphs over the 'bourgeois' in the struggle to impose aesthetic criteria, but by the same token rejects him as a potential customer. As the autonomy of cultural production increases, so does the time-lag that is necessary for works to impose the norms of perceptions they bring along. This time-lag between supply and demand tends to become a structural characteristic of the restricted field of production, a very special economic world in which the producers' only customers tend to be their own competitors.

Thus the Christ-like mystique of the *artiste maudit*, sacrificed in this world and consecrated in the next, is nothing other than the retranslation of the logic of a new mode of production into ideal and ideology: in contrast to 'bourgeois artists', assured of immediate customers, the partisans of art for art's sake, compelled to produce their own market, are destined to deferred economic gratification. At the limit, pure art, like pure love, is not made to be consumed. Instant success is often seen, as with Leconte de Lisle, as 'the mark of intellectual inferiority'. We are indeed in the economic world reversed, a game in which the loser wins: the artist can triumph on the symbolic terrain only to the extent that he loses on the economic one, and vice versa. This fact can only reinforce the ambivalence of his relationship to the 'bourgeois', this unacceptable and unobtainable customer. To his friend Feydeau who is attending his dying wife, Flaubert writes: 'You have and will have some good paintings, and you will be able to do some good studies. You'll pay for them dearly. The bourgeois hardly realize that we are serving up our heart to them. The race of gladiators is not dead: every artist is one of them. He entertains the public with his death throes.' This is a case of not letting oneself become caught up in the mithridatizing effect created by our dependence on literary bombast. Gladiator or prostitute, the artist invents himself *in suffering*, in revolt, against the bourgeois, against money, by inventing a separate world where the laws of economic necessity are suspended, at least for a while, and where value is not measured by commercial success.

That being said, one cannot forget the economic conditions of that distancing of oneself from economic necessity that we call 'disinterestedness'. The 'heirs', as in *Sentimental Education*, hold a decisive advantage in a world which, as in the world of art and literature, does not provide immediate profits: the possibility that it offers for 'holding out' in the absence of a market and the freedom it assures in relation to urgent needs is one of the most important factors of the differential success of the avant-garde enterprise and of its unprofitable or, at least, very long-term investments. 'Flaubert', observed Théophile Gautier to Feydeau, 'was smarter than us. He had the wit to come into the world with money, something that is absolutely indispensable to anyone who wants to get anywhere in art.' In short, it is still (inherited) money that assures freedom from money. In painting as in literature, the most innovative enterprises are the privilege of those who have inherited both the boldness and the insurance that enable this freedom to grow . . .

Thus we come back to the individual agents and to the personal characteristics which predispose them to realize the potentialities inscribed in a certain position. I have attempted to show that the partisans of art for art's sake were predisposed by their position in the intellectual field to experience and to express in a particularly acute way the contradictions inherent in the position of writers and artists in the field of power. Similarly, I believe that Flaubert was predisposed through a whole set of properties to express in exemplary fashion the potentialities inscribed in the camp of art for art's sake. Some of these characteristics are shared by the whole group. For example, the social and educational background: Bouilhet, Flaubert and Fromentin are sons of famous provincial doctors; Théodore de Banville, Barbey d'Aurevilly and the Goncourts are from the provincial nobility. Almost every one of them studied law, and their biographers observe that, for several, the fathers 'wanted a high social position for them' (this opposes them to the partisans of 'social art' who, especially after 1850, come in large part from the middle class and even the working classes, while the 'bourgeois artists' are more often from the business bourgeoisie).

In the position within social space of what was at the time termed *les capacités* – that is, the 'liberal professions' – one can see the principle of particular affinities between writers issuing from that position and art for art's sake which occupies, as we have seen, a central position in the literary field: *les capacités* occupy an intermediary position between economic power and intellectual prestige; this position, whose occupants are relatively well endowed with both economic and cultural capital, constitutes a kind of intersection from which one can continue, with roughly equal probabilities, towards the pole of business or the pole of art. And it is truly remarkable to see how Achille-Cléophas,

Flaubert's father, invested simultaneously in the education of his children and in real estate.

The objective relation established between *les capacités* and the other fractions of the dominant class (not to mention the other classes) doubtless oriented the subconscious dispositions and the conscious representations of Flaubert's family and of Flaubert himself with respect to the various positions that could be explored. Therefore, in Flaubert's correspondence one can only be struck by the precocious appearance of the oratorical precautions, which are so characteristic of his relation to writing, and through which Flaubert, then ten years old, distances himself from commonplaces and pompous formulae: 'I shall answer your letter and, as some practical jokers say, I am setting pen to paper to write to you' (to Ernest Chevalier, 18 September 1831); 'I am setting pen to paper (as the shopkeeper says) in order to answer your letter punctually (as the shopkeeper again says)' (to Ernest Chevalier, 18 July 1835); 'As the true shopkeeper says, I am sitting down and I am setting pen to paper to write to you' (to Ernest Chevalier, 25 August 1838).

The reader of *The Family Idiot* discovers, not without surprise, the same stereotyped horror of the stereotype in a letter from Dr Achille-Cléophas to his son in which the ritualistic considerations – here not devoid of intellectual pretension – on the virtues of travel suddenly take on a typically Flaubertian tone, with vituperation against the shopkeeper: 'Take advantage of your travel and remember your friend Montaigne who reminds us that we travel mainly to bring back the mood of nations and their mores, and to "rub and sharpen our wits against other brains". See, observe, and take notes; do not travel as a shopkeeper or a salesman' (29 August 1840). This programme for a literary journey, so extensively practised by writers and, in particular, by the partisans of art for art's sake, and perhaps the form of the reference to Montaigne ('your friend'), which suggests that Gustave shared his literary tastes with his father, attests that if, as hinted by Sartre, Flaubert's literary 'vocation' may have had its origin in the 'paternal curse' and in the relationship with his elder brother – that is, in a certain division of the work of reproduction – it met very early on with the understanding and the support of Dr Flaubert who, if one can believe this letter and, among other indications, the frequency of his references to poets in his thesis, must have been not insensitive to the prestige of the literary enterprise.

But this is not all. At the risk of seeming to push the search for an explanation a bit far, it is possible, starting from Sartre's analysis, to point out the homology between the objective relationship that tied the artist as 'poor relation' to the 'bourgeois' or 'bourgeois artist' and the relationship that tied Flaubert, as the 'family idiot', to his elder brother,

and through him – the clear objectification of the most probable career for their category – to his class of origin and to the objective future implied by that class. We would therefore have an extraordinary superimposition of redundant determinations. When Sartre evokes the relationship that Flaubert maintains with his family milieu, the child's and the misunderstood student's resentment, he seems to describe the relationship that the segment of artists and writers maintains with the dominant fractions: 'He is outside and inside. He never ceases to demand that this bourgeoisie, in so far as it manifests itself to him as his family milieu, recognize and integrate him.'<sup>2</sup> 'Excluded and compromised, victim and accomplice, he suffers from both his exclusion and his complicity.'<sup>3</sup> To evoke the relationship that Gustave maintained with his brother Achille, an objective realization of the objective probability of a career attached to his 'category', is to evoke the relationship of the partisans of art for art's sake with the 'bourgeois artists', 'of whom they sometimes envied the success, the resounding fame, and also the profits':<sup>4</sup> 'It's the older brother Achille, covered with honours, it's the stupid young heir who is satisfied with an inheritance that he does not deserve, it's the solemn physician reasoning at the bedside of a dying patient whose life he cannot save, it's the ambitious person who wants power but will be satisfied with the *Légion d'honneur* . . . This is what Henry will become at the end of the first *Education*: "the future belongs to him, and those are the people who become powerful and influential".'<sup>5</sup>

One could ask what has been gained by proceeding as I have, from the opposite side of the most common approach: instead of starting from Flaubert and his particular oeuvre, I went directly to the space in which he was inserted, I tried to open the biggest box, the field of power, in order to discover what the writer was about, what Flaubert was as a writer defined by a predetermined position in this space. Then, in opening the second box, I tried to reconstitute this dominated-dominant in the literary field, where I found a structure homologous to that of the field of power: on one side the 'bourgeois artists', dominated-dominants with the emphasis on the dominant, and on the other side 'social art', dominated-dominants with emphasis on the dominated; between the two, art for art's sake and Flaubert, dominated-dominants with no emphasis on either side, in a state of equilibrium, unstable between the two poles. Finally, I examined the initial position of Gustave in social space and discovered, I believe, the immobile trajectory which, starting from the position of equilibrium between the two poles of the field of power that is represented by the position of the physician, directed him to occupy this position of equilibrium in the literary field. This long aside was not superfluous, I believe, since it permitted the observation

that many properties which one could be tempted to attribute to the particular characteristics of Flaubert's history, as was done by Sartre, are inscribed in the position of 'pure' writer.

What we have learned through this analysis also accounts for Flaubert's quasi-miraculous lucidity. If Flaubert was able to produce a quasi-objective representation of social space of which he was himself the product, it is because the position he never ceased to occupy in this space from the very outset, and the tension, even the suffering associated with the *indetermination* which defines it, promotes a *painful lucidity*, since it is rooted in powerlessness, converted into a refusal to belong to one or the other group situated at one or the other of the poles of this space. The objectifying distance, close to Frédéric's contemplative indifference, which enables Flaubert to produce a global vision of the space in which he is situated, is inseparable from the obsession of powerlessness which is associated with the occupation of neutral positions where the forces of the field are neutralized.

Flaubert's trajectory is, one might say, an *Aufhebung* of what is involved in Frédéric's position: Flaubert has passed from an indeterminate state, close to Frédéric's, in the field of power, to a homologous position in the literary field. And if Flaubert was able to project on to Frédéric his own experience of the adolescent's indetermination situated at the neutral point of the field of power, it is because he was able to situate himself, through art for art's sake, in a homologous position within the literary field, but from which he could realize the objectivization of his past position. It is indeed easy to find in young Flaubert's *Correspondence*, or even in his first works, all the traits of Frédéric's indetermination: 'I am left with all the major roads, the well-trodden paths, the clothes to sell, the employment possibilities, a thousand holes that get plugged up with imbeciles. I shall therefore be a "plug" [*bouche-trou*] in society. I'll do my duty, I'll be an honest man, and everything else, if you want, I'll be like somebody else, respectable, *just like everybody else*, a lawyer, a doctor, a sub-prefect, a notary public, an attorney, a judge, as stupid as anyone else, a man of the world or a government official, which is even more stupid. Because one has to be something, and there is no middle of the road solution. Well, I have chosen, I have made up my mind, I'll study law, which far from opening up all opportunities, directs you to *nothing*' (to Ernest Chevalier, 23 July 1839).

This description of the space of the positions objectively offered to the bourgeois adolescent of the 1840s owes its objectivistic rigour to an indifference, a lack of satisfaction and, as Claudel used to say, an 'impatience with limits', which are hardly compatible with the magical experience of the 'vocation': 'I will pass my bar examination, but I

scarcely think I shall ever plead in court about a party-wall or on behalf of some poor paterfamilias cheated by a rich upstart. When people speak to me about the bar, saying "This young fellow will make a fine trial lawyer", because I'm broad in the shoulders and have a booming voice, I confess it turns my stomach. I don't feel myself made for such a completely materialistic, trivial life' (to Gourgaud-Dugazon, 22 January 1842).

So, the status of the writer devoted to pure art, situated at equal distance from the two polar positions, also appears as a means of holding on to the refusal to belong, to hold and to be held, which characterized the young Gustave. Pure art transforms Frédéric's 'inactive passion' into a wilful position, a system: 'I no longer want to be associated with a review, or to be a member of a society, a club, or an academy, no more than to be a city counsellor or an officer in the national guard' (to Louise Colet, 31 March 1853); 'No, *sacré nom de Dieu!* no!, I shall not attempt to publish in any review. It seems to me that, under present conditions, to be a member of anything, to join any official organization, any association or small club [*boutique*], or even to take a title no matter what it might be, is to lose one's honour, to debase oneself, since everything is so low' (to Louise Colet, 3-4 May 1853).

Again at the risk of seeming to push the analysis too far, I should like to describe finally what appears to be the true principle of the relationship between Flaubert and Frédéric, and the true function of the work of writing through which Flaubert projected himself, and projected a self through and beyond Frédéric's character. What is at stake in this relationship is the inescapable social genesis of a sovereign position which proclaims itself free of any determination. And what if social determinations which encourage distance *vis-à-vis* all determinations did exist? What if the power that the writer appropriates for himself through writing were only the imaginary inversion of powerlessness? What if intellectual ambition were only the imaginary inversion of the failure of temporal ambitions? It is evident that Flaubert never ceased to ask himself whether the writer's scorn for the 'bourgeois' and the worldly possessions of which they are the prisoners does not owe something to the resentment of the failed 'bourgeois' who transforms his failure into elective renunciation; unless it is the 'bourgeois' who, by keeping him at a distance, enable the writer to distance himself from them.

Flaubert knew all too well that flights into the imaginary, just like revolutionary declarations, are also ways to seek refuge from powerlessness. One can return now to Frédéric who, at the apex of his trajectory, in the Dambreuses' salon, reveals, through his disdain for his failed revolutionary friends, his conviction that the artistic or revolutionary

vocations are nothing but refuges from failure – the same Frédéric who never feels more intellectual than when his life goes wrong. It is when he is faced with Monsieur Dambreuse's reproach for his actions or by Madame Dambreuse's allusions to Rosanette's coach that, surrounded by bankers, he defends the positions of the intellectual in order to conclude: 'I don't give a damn about business!'

It would appear that Flaubert was not able to forget the negative determinations of his writer's 'vocation', free of all determination. The enchantment of writing enables him to abolish all determinations which are the constituent parts of social existence: 'This is why I love Art. It's because at least there, in the world of fictions, everything can happen; one is at the same time one's king and one's people, active and passive, victim and priest. No limits; humanity is a jokester with little bells that one jingles at the end of one's sentence, like a street performer at the end of his foot' (to Louise Colet, 15-16 May 1852); 'The only way to live in peace is to leap in one motion above humanity and to have nothing in common with it, except to gaze upon it.' Eternity and ubiquity are the divine attributes the pure observer appropriates for himself. 'I could see other people live, but a life different from mine: some believed, some denied, others doubted, and others finally were not at all concerned by these matters and went about their business, that is, selling in their shops, writing their books, or declaiming from their podiums.'<sup>6</sup>

But *Sentimental Education* is there to prove that Flaubert never forgot that the idealist representation of the 'creator' as a 'pure' subject who is inscribed in the social definition of the writer's *métier* is rooted in the sterile dilettantism of the bourgeois adolescent, temporarily freed from social determinations, and is magically realized in the ambition, that Flaubert himself professed, to 'live like a bourgeois and think like a demigod'.