

THE RULES
OF ART

*Genesis and Structure
of the Literary Field*

Translated by
Susan Emanuel

Pierre Bourdieu

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I

The Conquest of Autonomy

The Critical Phase in the Emergence of the Field



It is painful to note that we find similar errors in two opposed schools: the bourgeois school and the socialist school. 'Moralize! Moralize!' cry both with missionary fervour.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Leave everything.
Leave Dada.
Leave your wife, and your mistress.
Leave your hopes and your fears.
Sow your children in the corner of a wood.
Leave the prey for the shadow.
Leave if need be an easy life, what you are
offered for a future situation.
Hit the road.

ANDRÉ BRETON

The reading of *Sentimental Education* is more than a simple preamble aiming to prepare the reader to enter into a sociological analysis of the social world in which it was produced and which it brings to light. It requires the interrogation of the particular social conditions which are at the origin of Flaubert's special lucidity, and also the limits of that lucidity. Only an analysis of the genesis of the literary field in which the Flaubertian project was constituted can lead to a real understanding of both the generative formula at the core of the book and Flaubert's craftsmanship in *putting it to work* [*la mettre en*

oeuvre], objectifying in one fell swoop this generative structure and the social structure of which it is the product.

We know how much Flaubert contributed, along with others, notably Baudelaire, to the constitution of the literary field as a world apart, subject to its own laws. To reconstruct Flaubert's point of view, that is, the point in the social space from which his vision of the world was formulated, and that social space itself, is to have a real chance of placing ourselves at the origins of a world whose functioning has become so familiar to us that the regularities and the rules it obeys escape our grasp. And returning to the 'heroic times' of the struggle for independence, when the virtues of revolt and resistance had to assert themselves clearly in the face of a repression exercised in all its brutality (especially during the trials), also means rediscovering the forgotten – or repudiated – principles of intellectual freedom.

A structural subordination

To understand the experience that writers and artists may have had of the new forms of domination they found themselves subjected to in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the horror the figure of the 'bourgeois' sometimes inspired in them, we need to have some idea of the impact of the emergence of industrialists and businessmen of colossal fortunes (like the Talabots, the de Wendels, or the Schneiders). Fostered by the Second Empire's industrial expansion, they were self-made men, uncultured *parvenus* ready to make both the power of money and a vision of the world profoundly hostile to intellectual things triumph within the whole society.¹

One can cite the testimony of André Siegfried speaking of his own father, an entrepreneur in textiles: 'In his education, culture counted for nothing. To tell the truth, he never had intellectual culture and didn't worry about having any. He was educated, remarkably informed, knew everything he needed for acting on the spot, but the disinterested taste for things of the mind remained foreign to him.'² In the same way, André Motte, one of the great patrons of the North, writes: 'I repeat each day to my children that the title of *bachelier* [high school graduate] will never put a piece of bread into their mouths; that I sent them to school to allow them to taste the pleasures of intelligence, and to put them on their guard against all false doctrines, whether in literature, philosophy or history. But I add that it would be very dangerous for them to give themselves over to the pleasures of the mind.'³

The reign of money is asserted everywhere, and the fortunes of the newly dominant class, either industrialists making unprecedented

profits from technical transformations and state subsidies, or occasionally small speculators, are flaunted in the luxurious mansions of Haussmann's Paris and in the splendour of carriages and dress. The practice of having an official candidate in elections allows new men to be given political legitimacy along with membership in the legislative body, and a large proportion of these are businessmen; it forges tight links between the political world and the economic world, extending progressively to a press becoming increasingly read and increasingly profitable.

The exaltation of money and profit serves the strategies of Napoleon III: in order to secure the loyalty of a bureaucracy not yet fully converted to the 'impostor', he rewards his supporters with sumptuous emoluments and lavish gifts; he increases the number of celebrations in Paris, and in Compiègne, where he invites (in addition to editors and the patrons of the press) those society writers and painters who are the most compliant and conformist, such as Octave Feuillet, Jules Sandeau, Ponsard, Paul Féval, and Meissonier, Cabanel, Gérôme, and those most disposed to behave like courtesans, as when Octave Feuillet and Viollet-le-Duc stage, with the help of Gérôme or Cabanel, 'tableaux vivants' on subjects borrowed from history and mythology.

We are far from the learned societies and the clubs of aristocratic society of the eighteenth century, or even of the Restoration. The relationship between cultural producers and the dominant class no longer retains what might have characterized it in previous centuries, whether that means direct dependence on a financial backer (more common among painters, but also occurring in the case of writers), or even allegiance to a patron or an official protector of the arts. Henceforward it will be a matter of a veritable *structural subordination* which acts very unequally on different authors according to their position in the field. It is instituted through two principal mediations: on the one hand, the market, whose sanctions and constraints are exercised on literary enterprises either directly, by means of sales figures, numbers of tickets sold and so forth, or indirectly, through new positions offered in journalism, publishing, illustration and all forms of industrialized literature; and on the other hand, durable links, based on affinities of lifestyle and value systems, and operating especially through the intermediary of the salons, which unite at least a portion of the writers to certain sections of high society, and help to determine the direction of the generousities of state patronage.

In the absence of true specific apparatuses of consecration (the universities, for example, with the exception of the Collège de France, have no influence in this field), political authorities and members of

the imperial family exercise a direct hold on the literary and artistic field, not only by the sanctions which hit newspapers and other publications (lawsuits, censorship, etc.), but also through the material and symbolic profits they are in a position to distribute: pensions (like the one Leconte de Lisle secretly received from the imperial regime), access to the opportunity to be performed in the theatres and concert halls or to exhibit in the Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture (whose control Napoleon III tried to wrest away from the Académie Française), not to mention salaried posts or commissioned offices (like the post of senator granted to Sainte-Beuve), and honorific distinctions, such as appointment to the academies and institutes.

The tastes of the self-made men installed in power lean in the direction of the novel, in its most facile forms – like the serialized novels [*feuilletons*], which are argued over at court and in ministries, and which give rise to lucrative publishing houses. In contrast, poetry, still associated with major romantic battles, with bohemia and with partisanship on behalf of the disfavoured, becomes the object of a deliberately hostile policy, notably on the part of the Minister of State – as evidenced for example by the lawsuit aimed at poets, or by the persecutions of editors such as Poulet-Malassis, who had published a whole poetic avant-garde, notably Baudelaire, Banville, Gautier, Leconte de Lisle, and who was driven to bankruptcy and debtors' prison.

The constraints inherent in belonging to the field of power also apply to the literary field owing to exchanges that are established between the powerful – for the most part upstarts in search of legitimacy – and the most conformist or the most consecrated of writers, notably through the subtly hierarchized universe of the salons.

The Empress surrounds herself, at the Tuileries, with society writers, critics and journalists, all of them as notoriously conformist as Octave Feuillet, who was made responsible for organizing spectacles at Compiègne. Prince Jérôme vaunts his liberalism (for example, he gives a banquet in honour of Delacroix – which does not stop him from receiving Augier) by keeping at his side, at the Palais-Royal, a Renan, a Taine or a Sainte-Beuve. Princess Mathilde, finally, affirms her originality in relation to the imperial court by receiving, in a very selective manner, writers such as Gautier, Sainte-Beuve, Flaubert, the Goncourt brothers, Taine and Renan. Then, further from the court, one finds salons like that of the Duc de Morny, protector of writers and artists; that of Mme de Solms, who, in bringing together personalities as heterogeneous as Champfleury, Ponsard, Auguste Vacquerie and Banville, attracts that prestige attached to a place of opposition; that of Mme d'Agoult, where the liberal press gathers; that of Mme Sabatier, where the friendship between Flaubert and Baudelaire is forged; those of Nina de Callias and Jeanne de Tourbey, both rather hetero-

geneous assemblages of writers, critics and artists; and finally, that of Louise Colet, frequented by the followers of Victor Hugo and the survivors of Romanticism, but also by Flaubert and his friends.

These salons are not only places where writers and artists can gather together as kindred spirits and meet the powerful – thereby making real, through direct interactions, the continuity from one end of the field of power to the other. They are not merely élitist refuges where those who feel threatened by the eruption of industrialized literature and journalist-writers can give themselves the illusion of reliving (without really believing in it) the aristocratic life of the eighteenth century, a life which is often evoked nostalgically by the Goncourts: 'This bear-cage of nineteenth-century men of letters is curious when you compare it to the society life of *littérateurs* of the eighteenth century, from Diderot to Marmontel; today's bourgeoisie scarcely seeks out a man of letters except when he is inclined to play the role of mysterious creature, buffoon or guide to the outside world.'⁴

The salons are also, through the exchanges that take place there, genuine articulations between the fields: those who hold political power aim to impose their vision on artists and to appropriate for themselves the power of consecration and of legitimation which they hold, notably by means of what Sainte-Beuve calls the 'literary press';⁵ for their part, the writers and artists, acting as solicitors and intercessors, or even sometimes as true pressure groups, endeavour to assure for themselves a mediating control of the different material or symbolic rewards distributed by the state.

The salon of the Princess Mathilde is the paradigm of these *bastard institutions*, whose equivalents can be found in the most tyrannical regimes (fascist or Stalinist, for example) and where exchanges are instituted which it would be false to describe in terms of 'rallying' (or, as one would say after 1968, of 'recuperation') and in which the two camps find some definite advantages. It is often among these personages caught in a double bind – powerful enough to be taken seriously by writers and artists, without being sufficiently so to be taken seriously by the powerful – that arise gentle forms of ascendancy that prevent or discourage the complete *secession* of the holders of cultural power and that bog them down into these confused relations, founded on gratitude as well as guilt over compromises and shady deals, with a power of intercession perceived as a last recourse, or at the very least an exceptional measure, suitable to justify concessions of bad faith and to provide an excuse for heroic ruptures.

Mlle de Morny

This profound imbrication of the literary field and the political field is revealed at the time of Flaubert's trial, an occasion for the mobilization of a powerful network of relations uniting writers, journalists, senior civil servants, major bourgeois who support the Empire (his brother Achille especially) and members of the court – and happening in spite of all differences in taste and lifestyle. That said, in this great chain there are straightforward exclusions. In the first rank is Baudelaire, proscribed from the court and the salons of the members of the imperial family; unlike Flaubert, he loses his trial, because he does not want to fall back on the influence of a family of the haute bourgeoisie, and he smacks of heresy because he mixed with bohemia. However, the ranks also include realists like Duranty, and later Zola and his group (although many of the old guard of the 'second bohemia' like Arsène Houssaye, have entered the ranks of the powerful *littérateurs*). There are also some who are simply left out, like the Parnassians,⁶ often, it is true, of petit-bourgeois origins and bereft of social capital.

Like the routes of domination, the routes of autonomy are complex, if not impenetrable. And the struggles at the heart of the political field – like the one which pits the Empress Eugénie, a foreigner, upstart and bigot, against Princess Mathilde, formerly received by the Faubourg Saint-Germain and long since well acquainted with the Parisian salons, protectress of the arts, liberal guardian of French values – may indirectly serve the interests of the writers most concerned about their literary independence: under the protection of the powerful, the latter can obtain the material or institutional resources that they cannot expect from either the market, that is, the newspaper publishers, or, as they quickly understood after 1848, from the commissions monopolized by their most destitute competitors from bohemia.

Although she is no doubt not so far removed in her real tastes (for the serial novel, the melodrama, Alexander Dumas, Augier, Ponsard and Feydeau) from the Empress whom she impugned as frivolous, the Princess Mathilde wants to give her salon a very high literary profile. Advised in the choice of her guests by Théophile Gautier, who had come to her in 1861 to seek her assistance in finding an employment capable of freeing him from journalism, and by Sainte-Beuve, who was a very famous man in the 1860s, reigning over the *Constitutionnel* and the *Moniteur*, she means to act as a patroness and protectress of the arts. She constantly intervenes to secure favours or protection for her friends: obtaining a seat in the Senate for Sainte-Beuve, the prize of the Académie Française for George Sand, the Légion d'Honneur for Flaubert and Taine, fighting to secure for Gautier first a post, then the Académie, interceding for *Henriette Maréchal* to be performed at the Comédie-Française, and protecting, through the intermediary of her lover Neiuwerkerke, whose taste she followed in painting, official painters like Baudry, Boulanger, Bonnat or Jalabert.⁷

Thus it is that the salons, which distinguish themselves more by whom they exclude than by whom they include, help to structure the

literary field (as journals and publishers will do in other states of the field) around great fundamental oppositions: on the one hand the eclectic and fashionable hacks assembled in the court's salons, and on the other the great élitist writers, grouped around Princess Mathilde and at the Magny dinner table (headed by Gavarni, the great friend of the Goncourts, Sainte-Beuve and Chennevières, and including Flaubert, Paul Saint-Victor, Taine, Théophile Gautier, Auguste Neffetzer, editor-in-chief of *Le Temps*, Renan, Berthelot, Charles Edmond, editor of *La Presse*), and finally the bohemian set.

The effects of structural domination are also exercised through the press: in contrast to that of the July Monarchy, which was very diversified and highly politicized, the press of the Second Empire, under the permanent threat of censorship, and quite often under the direct control of bankers, is obliged to offer accounts of official events in a weighty and pompous style; it has to sacrifice itself to vast and inconsequential literary and philosophical theories, and to a pompousness worthy of Bouvard and Pécuchet. The 'serious' journals themselves give space to the serials, light boulevard chronicles and jottings which dominate the two most celebrated creations of the period, *Le Figaro* – whose founder, Henri de Villemessant, spreads the tidbits he manages to collect in the salons, cafés and behind the scenes in the theatres, dividing them between the rubrics of 'échos', 'chronicles', 'letters' – and *Le Petit Journal*, a deliberately apolitical penny paper, which gives pride of place to more or less fictionalized stories of a sensational nature.

The directors of the papers, habitual guests of all the salons and intimates of the political ruling class, are flattered personalities, whom no one dares defy, especially the writers and artists who know that an article in *La Presse* or *Le Figaro* creates a reputation and opens a future. It is through these papers, and the serials of which they have an endless supply and which are read by everybody, from the common people to the bourgeoisie, from ministerial offices to the court, that, as Cassagne puts it, 'industrialism has penetrated literature itself after having transformed the press'.⁸ The industrialists of writing follow public taste and manufacture written works in a cursive style, of popular appearance, but not excluding either the 'literary' cliché or the search for stylistic effect, 'whose value is routinely measured by the amount these works have earned'.⁹ As an example, every day Ponson du Terrail managed to write a different page each for *Le Petit Journal*, *La Petite Presse*, a literary daily, *L'Opinion Nationale*, a political daily which was pro-imperial, *Le Moniteur*, the Empire's official journal, and *La Patrie*, a very serious political daily. Through their roles as critics, the writer-journalists set

themselves up, in all innocence, as the measure of everything in art and literature, thereby authorizing themselves to disparage everything that surpasses them and to condemn all initiatives which might question the ethical dispositions influencing their judgements and which above all express the limits and even the intellectual mutilations inscribed in their trajectory and their position.

Bohemia and the invention of an art of living

The development of the press is one index among others of an unprecedented expansion of the market for cultural goods, linked by a relationship of circular causality to the inflow of a substantial population of young people without fortunes, issuing from the middle or popular classes of the capital and especially the provinces, who come to Paris trying for careers as writers and artists – careers which until then had been more strictly reserved for the nobility or the Parisian bourgeoisie. Despite the multiplication of positions offered by the development of trade, in fact business and the civil service (especially the education system) cannot absorb all those with diplomas from secondary schools, whose numbers are increasing rapidly throughout Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century, and will see a new rise in France under the Second Empire.¹⁰

The gap between the supply of dominant positions and the demand for them is particularly marked in France because of the effect of three specific factors: first, the relative youth of the administrative personnel coming out of the Revolution, the Empire and the Restoration, which for a long time blocks access to those careers open to the children of the small and middle bourgeoisie – in the army, medicine, the administration – to which should be added the competition from aristocrats who are regaining administrative positions and barring the route to professionals [*capacités*] coming from the bourgeoisie; secondly, a centralization that concentrates those with diplomas in Paris; and finally, the exclusivity of the grande bourgeoisie. The latter, made especially sensitive by revolutionary experiences, perceives any form of upward mobility as a threat to the social order (as evidenced by Guizot's speech before the Chamber of Deputies on 1 February 1836 on the unsuitable character of humanities teaching) and tries to reserve eminent positions, especially in the upper echelon of the administration, to its own children – among other things, by trying to conserve the monopoly of access to classical secondary education. In fact, under the Second Empire, in keeping with economic growth, the personnel in secondary education continues to grow (going from 90,000 in 1850 to 150,000 in 1875), as do those in higher education, especially in the literary and scientific fields.¹¹

These newcomers, nourished in the humanities and in rhetoric but deprived of the financial means and the social protection indispens-

able for taking advantage of their degrees, find themselves pushed towards literary professions, which are surrounded with every prestige of romantic triumph and which, in contrast to the more bureaucratized professions, do not require any qualification guaranteed by scholarship, or else pushed towards the artistic professions exalted by the success of the Salon. It is clear in fact that, as always, supposedly morphological factors (and in particular those relating to the sizes of the populations concerned) are themselves subordinate to social conditions such as, in this particular case, the prodigious prestige of the career of painter or writer: 'Even those among us who were not of that craft', writes Jules Buisson, 'only thought about things in order to write about them.'¹²

These morphological changes are no doubt one of the major determinants (or at least a precondition) of the process of autonomization of the literary and artistic fields and the correlative transformation of the relation between the world of art and literature and the political world. To understand this transformation, one might think of it by analogy with the oft-analysed shift from the servant, attached by personal ties to a family, to the free worker (of which Weber's agricultural labourer is a particular case) who, freed from the ties of dependence which limited or prevented the free sale of his labour, is available to put himself on the market and to undergo its anonymous constraints and sanctions, often more pitiless than the gentle violence of paternalism.¹³ The major virtue of this comparison is to put us on guard against the widespread inclination to reduce this fundamentally ambiguous process solely to its alienating effects (in the tradition of the British Romantics analysed by Raymond Williams): we forget that it exercised liberating effects, too, for example by offering the new 'proletaroid intelligentsia' the possibility of earning a living (no doubt a rather miserable one) from all the small jobs linked to industrial literature and journalism, although the new possibilities thereby acquired could also be the basis of new forms of dependence.¹⁴

With the assemblage of a very numerous population of young people aspiring to live by art, and separated from all other social categories by the art of living they are in the course of inventing, a genuine society within society makes its appearance. Even if, as Robert Darnton has shown, it was taking shape, on a much smaller scale, as early as the end of the eighteenth century, a society of writers and artists in which scribblers and daubers predominate, at least numerically, has something extraordinary about it, something without precedent, and it gives rise to much investigation, first of all among its own members. The bohemian lifestyle, which has no doubt

made an important contribution (with fantasy, puns, jokes, songs, drink and love in all forms) to the invention of the artistic lifestyle, was elaborated as much against the dutiful existence of official painters and sculptors as against the routines of bourgeois life. Making the art of living one of the fine arts means predisposing it to enter into literature; but the invention of the literary personage of bohemia is not simply a fact of literature: from Murger and Champfleury to Balzac and to the Flaubert of the *Sentimental Education*, novelists contribute greatly to the public recognition of this new social entity – especially by inventing and spreading the very notion of bohemia – and to the construction of its identity, values, norms and myths.

The assurance of being collectively keepers of excellence with respect to lifestyle is expressed everywhere, from Murger's *Scenes of Bohemian Life* to Balzac's *Treatise of the Fashionable Life*. Thus, according to Balzac, in a universe divided into 'three classes of being' – 'the man who works' (which throws in together the labourer, mason, soldier, small retailer, office clerk and even the doctor, lawyer, large merchant, country squire and bureaucrat), 'the man who thinks', and 'the man who does nothing' and devotes himself to the 'elegant life' – 'the artist is the exception: his idleness is a form of work, and his work a rest; he is elegant and casual in turn; he puts on, according to whim, the labourer's smock, or decides on the tail coat worn by the man of fashion. He does not follow the rules. He imposes them. Whether occupied in doing nothing or meditating a masterpiece without appearing to be occupied; whether he drives a horse with a wooden bit or holds the reins of an elegantly equipped britschka, whether he doesn't have twenty centimes on him or throws away handfuls of gold, he is always the expression of a great thought and he dominates society.'¹⁵ Force of habit and complicity prevent us from seeing everything that is at stake in a text like this, that is, the work of constructing a social reality in which we participate more or less as intellectuals by affiliation or by aspiration, and which is nothing other than the social identity of the intellectual producer. The reality designated by words in ordinary usage – writer, artist, intellectual – has been made by cultural producers (Balzac's text is only one among thousands), by normative statements, or better yet, by performative ones like this one. Under the guise of saying what is, these descriptions aim to make us see and make us believe, to make the social world be seen in conformity with the beliefs of a social group that has the singularity of having a quasi-monopoly on the production of discourse about the social world.

An ambiguous reality, bohemia inspires ambivalent feelings, even among its most passionate defenders. In the first place this is because it defies classification: near to the 'people', with whom it often shares misery, it is separated from them by the art of living that defines it socially and which, even if ostentatiously opposed to the conventions and proprieties of the bourgeoisie, is situated nearer to the aristocracy or the grande bourgeoisie than to the orderly petite-bourgeoisie, notably in the matter of relations between the sexes, where it

experiments on a large scale with all the forms of transgression (free love, venal love, pure love, eroticism) which it institutes as models in its writings. All this is no less true of its most destitute members who, strong in their cultural capital and the authority born of being *taste-makers*, succeed in providing themselves at the least cost with audacities of dress, culinary fantasies, mercenary loves and refined leisure, for all of which the 'bourgeois' pay dearly.

But adding to its ambiguity, bohemia does not stop changing in the course of time, as it grows numerically and as its prestige (or mirages) attracts destitute young people, often of provincial and working-class origin, who around 1848 dominate the 'second bohemia'. In contrast to the romantic dandy of the 'golden bohemia' of the rue de Doyenné, the bohemia of Murger, Champfleury or Duranty constitutes a veritable intellectual reserve army, directly subject to the laws of the market and often obliged to live off a second skill (sometimes with no direct relation to literature) in order to live an art that cannot make a living.

In fact, the two bohemias coexist in practice, but with different social weights at different times: the 'proletaroid intellectuals', who are often so miserable that, in taking themselves for object, according to the tradition of romantic memoirs like Musset's, they invent what will be called 'realism', live alongside, and may also clash with, delinquent or downgraded bourgeois possessing all the properties of the dominants save one: poor relations of the great bourgeois dynasties, aristocrats ruined or in decline, foreigners and members of stigmatized minorities such as the Jews. These 'penniless bourgeois', as Pissarro put it, or those whose income serves only to finance a lost cause, seem to be adjusted in advance, in their double or divided habitus, to the position of a double bind, that of being the dominated among the dominants, which destines them to a sort of objective indetermination, hence a subjective one, never as visible as in the simultaneous or successive fluctuations of their relationship with the powerful.

The rupture with the 'bourgeois'

The relations the writers and artists maintain with the market, whose anonymous sanction may create unprecedented disparities among them, certainly helps to shape the ambivalent picture they have of the 'public' at large, both fascinating and despised. They confuse the 'bourgeois', who are enslaved by the vulgar concerns of commerce, with the 'people', who are given over to the stupefying effect of

productive activities. This double ambivalence inclines writers and artists to form an ambiguous image of their own position in the social space and of their social function: this explains why they are given to wide oscillations when it comes to politics, and why – as the numerous changes of regime intervening between the 1830s and 1880s can attest – they tend to slide, like iron filings, towards the pole of the field that is momentarily strong. Thus, when in the last years of the July Monarchy the centre of the field's gravity is displaced to the left, we observe a general slide towards 'social art' and socialist ideas (Baudelaire himself speaks of the 'puerile Utopia of the school of *art for art's sake*'¹⁶ and takes a violent stand against pure art). Tipping the other way, under the Second Empire, without rallying openly behind it, and sometimes proclaiming, as with Flaubert, the greatest contempt for 'Badinguet', a number of defenders of pure art assiduously frequent one or another of the salons run by great personages of the imperial court.

But the society of artists is not merely a laboratory where this singular art of living that is the style of an artist's life is being invented as a fundamental dimension of the enterprise of artistic creation. One of its major functions, and yet one always overlooked, is to be its own market. This society offers the most favourable and comprehensive welcome to the audacities and transgressions that writers and artists introduce, not only into their works but also into their existence (itself conceived as a work of art); the rewards of this privileged market, if they do not manifest themselves in cold cash, have at least the virtue of assuring a form of social recognition for those who otherwise appear (that is, to other groups) as a challenge to common sense. The cultural revolution which gave rise to this inverse world (the literary and artistic field) could only succeed because the great heresiarchs, in their will to subvert all the principles of vision and division, could count if not on the support, at least on the *attention* of all those who, in entering into the universe of art in the process of formation, had tacitly accepted the possibility that everything there was possible.

Thus it is clear that the literary and artistic field is constituted as such in and by opposition to a 'bourgeois' world which had never before asserted so bluntly its values and its pretension to control the instruments of legitimation, both in the domain of art and in the domain of literature, and which, through the press and its hacks, now aims to impose a degraded and degrading definition of cultural production. The distaste mixed with contempt inspired in writers (Flaubert and Baudelaire notably) by this regime of upstarts with no culture, entirely governed by the false and the dubious, and the credit

granted by the court to the most common literary works, the very ones the press serve as a vehicle for and celebrate, combined with the vulgar materialism of the new masters of the economy and the sycophantic servility of quite a number of writers and artists, have in no small way contributed to favouring a break with the ordinary world that is inseparable from the constitution of the world of art as a world apart, an empire within an empire.

'Everything was false,' says Flaubert in a letter to Maxime Du Camp dated 28 September 1871:¹⁷ 'a false army, false politics, false literature, false credit, and even false courtesans.' And he develops the theme in a letter to George Sand:¹⁸ 'All was false! False realism, false army, false credit, and even false harlots [...]. And this falseness [...] was applied especially in the manner of judging. They extolled an actress not as an actress, but as a good mother of a family. They asked art to be moral, philosophy to be clear, vice to be decent, and science to be within the range of the people.' And says Baudelaire: 'The 2 December has physically apoliticized me. There are no more great ideas.' One could also cite, although it comes much later, a text by Bazire on the subject of Manet's *Jesus Mocked by the Soldiers*, which well expresses the particular horror aroused by the cultural atmosphere of the Second Empire: 'This Jesus, who truly suffers at the hands of the brutal soldiers, is a man instead of a god but was accepted as neither ... People were fanatical about prettiness, and would have liked to see appealing faces on all the figures, victim and executioners alike. There is and always will be a group of people who need to have nature embellished and who will have nothing to do with art unless it is a lie. Such a point of view flourished at that time: the Empire had idealized tastes and hated to see things as they are.'¹⁹

How could we suppose that the political experience of this generation, with the failure of the revolution of 1848 and the coup d'état of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, and then the long period of desolation that was the Second Empire, did not play a role in the elaboration of the disenchanted vision of the political and social world which went hand in hand with the cult of art for art's sake? This exclusive religion is the last recourse of those who reject submission and resignation: 'The moment was disastrous for verse,' as Flaubert wrote in a preface to the 'last songs' of his friend Louis Bouilhet. 'Imagination, like courage, was singularly flattened, and the public was not disposed, any more than the powers that be, to permit independence of mind.'²⁰ When the people had manifested a political immaturity only equalled by the cynical cowardice of the bourgeoisie, and humanist dreams and humanitarian causes had been held up to ridicule or dishonoured by those very people who were supposed to be defending them – journalists selling themselves to the highest bidder, former 'martyrs of art' turned guardians of artistic orthodoxy, *littérateurs* pandering to a false idealism of escapism in

their 'respectable' plays and novels – then one may say, with Flaubert, that 'nothing is left' and 'for us the only way is to shut ourselves up and keep our noses to our work, like moles.'²¹

And in fact, as Albert Cassagne observes, 'they will devote themselves to independent art, to pure art, and since art has to have a subject, they will either find this subject in the past, or else they will take it from the present, but making of it simple objective representations which are thoroughly disinterested'.²² 'Renan's thoughts sketch out the evolution that will lead to dilettantism ("Since 1852, I have become all curiosity"); Leconte de Lisle buries his humanitarian dreams under Parnassian marble; the Goncourts repeat that "the artist, the man of letters and the scholar should never get mixed up in politics: it is a storm they should let pass over them."²³

While accepting these descriptions, we must challenge the idea that they tend to imply, of a direct determination by economic and political conditions: it is from the very particular position that they occupy in the literary microcosm that writers such as Flaubert, Baudelaire, Renan, Leconte de Lisle or Goncourt become aware of a political conjuncture which, grasped through the categories of perception inherent in their dispositions, allows and encourages their inclination to independence (whereas other historical conditions might have repressed or neutralized that inclination – for example by reinforcing the dominated positions in the literary field and in the social field, as on the eve of 1848, or in the days after it).

Baudelaire the founder

This analysis of the relations between the literary field and the field of power, which puts the stress on the forms (patent or latent) and on the effects (direct or inverted) of dependence, should not make us forget one of the major effects of the functioning of the literary world as a field. There is no doubt whatsoever that *moral indignation* against all forms of submission to the forces of power or to the market – whether it is a matter of careerist assiduity which makes certain *littérateurs* (one thinks of a Maxime du Camp) pursue privileges and honours, or the subservience to the demands of the press and of journalism which pushes writers of serialized fiction and vaudeville into an undemanding literature devoid of style – has played a determining role with writers such as Baudelaire or Flaubert in the daily resistance which led to a progressive affirmation of the autonomy of writers; and it is certain that, in the heroic phase of the conquest of autonomy, the ethical rupture is always, as one sees

clearly with Baudelaire, a fundamental dimension of all aesthetic ruptures.

But it is no less certain that indignation, revolt and contempt remain negative principles, contingent and conjunctural, too directly dependent on the particular dispositions and virtues of individuals and no doubt too easily reversed or overturned, and that the reactional independence which they arouse remains too vulnerable to enterprises of seduction or annexation by the powerful. Practices which are regularly and durably emancipated from constraints and from direct or indirect pressures from temporal powers are not possible unless they can find their principle not in the fluctuating inclinations of moods or the voluntarist revolutions of morality, but in the very necessity of a social universe which has as a fundamental law, as a *nomos*, independence with respect to economic and political power; unless, to put it another way, the specific *nomos* which constitutes the literary or artistic order as such finds itself instituted both in the objective structures of a socially governed universe and in the mental structures of those who inhabit it and who tend by this fact to accept as evident the injunctions inscribed in the immanent logic of its functioning.

It is only in a literary and artistic field which has achieved a high degree of autonomy, as will be the case in France in the second half of the nineteenth century (especially after Zola and the Dreyfus Affair), that all those who mean to assert themselves as fully fledged members of the world of art, and above all those who claim to occupy the dominant positions in it, will feel the need to manifest their independence with respect to external powers, political or economic. Then, and only then, will indifference with respect to power and honours – even the most apparently specific, such as the Académie, or even the Nobel Prize – and distance with respect to the powerful and their values be immediately understood, and even respected, and therefore rewarded, and consequently those qualities will tend to impose themselves more and more forcefully as the practical maxims of legitimate conduct.

In the critical phase of the constitution of an autonomous field claiming the right to define for itself the principles of its legitimacy, those who contribute to the questioning of literary and artistic institutions (in which the overthrow of the Académie de Peinture and the Salon mark the high point) and to the invention and imposition of a new *nomos* have come from the most diverse positions: in the first place, from among the over-abundant youth of the Latin Quarter who denounce and sanction, notably in the theatre, compromises with power; from the realist circle of Champfleury and Duranty, who

pit their politico-literary theories against the conformist 'idealism' of bourgeois art; finally and especially, from the upholders of art for art's sake. In fact, what Baudelaire, Flaubert, Banville, Huysmans, Villiers, Barbey and Leconte de Lisle have in common, over and above their differences, is being engaged in a labour that is located at the antipodes of a production subservient to the powerful or to the market; and despite their discreet concessions to the seductions of the salons (or even, as with Théophile Gautier, of the Académie), they are the first to formulate clearly the canons of the new legitimacy. It is they who, making a break with the dominants over the principle of the existence of the artist as artist, institute it as a rule of operation of the field in the process of formation. Thus Renan can prophesy: 'If the revolution is led in an absolutist and Jesuitical direction, we will react with intelligence and liberalism. If it is made for the benefit of socialism, we will react in the direction of the civilization and intellectual culture which will be bound to suffer at first from this excess . . .'

If, in this collective enterprise with no explicitly planned scheme or expressly designated leader, one had to choose a sort of founding hero, a *nomothète*, and an initial founding act, one could think only of Baudelaire and, among other creative transgressions, of his candidacy to the Académie Française, both perfectly serious and parodic at the same time. By a decision reached after mature deliberation, even in its intention to outrage (it is Lacordaire's seat that he chooses to bid for), and fated to appear just as bizarre, if not scandalous, to his friends in the subversive camp as to his enemies in the conservative camp who are loyal to the Académie and before whom he chooses to present himself (he will visit them one by one), Baudelaire defies the whole established literary order. His candidacy is a veritable symbolic attack, and is much more explosive than all the transgressions with no social consequences that, nearly a century later, will be called 'actions' in painting circles: he calls into question and puts to the challenge the mental structures, the categories of perception and of appreciation, which, being adjusted to social structures by a congruence so profound that they escape the scrutiny of the most apparently radical critique, are the basis of an unconscious and immediate submission to the cultural order – a visceral adherence which is betrayed for example in the 'astonishment' of a Flaubert, who was nevertheless eminently capable of comprehending the Baudelairean provocation.

Flaubert writes to Baudelaire, who had asked him to recommend his candidature to Jules Sandeau: 'I have so many questions to ask you and my astonishment

has been so profound that a whole volume would not suffice!²⁴ And to Jules Sandeau, with a very Baudelairean irony: 'The candidate asks me to tell you "what I think of him". You must know his work. As for me, certainly, if I were a member of the honourable assembly, I would like to see him seated between Villemain and Nisard! What a scene!²⁵

In presenting his candidature to an institution of consecration still widely recognized as such, Baudelaire, who was more aware than anyone of what sort of welcome would be offered him, affirms the right to consecration conferred on him by the recognition he enjoys in the narrow circle of the avant-garde; in forcing this body, discredited in his own eyes, to show in the plain light of day its incapacity to recognize him, he also affirms the right, and even the duty, incumbent on the bearer of the new legitimacy to overturn the scale of values, obliging even those who do recognize him, and whom his act disconcerts, to admit that they still recognize that old order more than they thought. By an act contrary to good sense, senseless, he undertakes to institute the anomie that, paradoxically, is the *nomos* of this paradoxical universe that will come to be the literary field when it achieves full autonomy, to wit, the free competition among creator-prophets freely asserting the extraordinary and singular *nomos*, without precedent or equivalent, which properly defines them. This is what he said to Flaubert in his letter of 31 January 1862: 'How could you have failed to guess that [the name] Baudelaire meant: Auguste Barbier, Théophile Gautier, Banville, Flaubert, Leconte de Lisle, in short, *pure literature*?²⁶

Moreover, the ambivalence of Baudelaire himself – while affirming to the end the same obstinate rejection of the 'bourgeois' life, he remains despite everything concerned about social recognition (did he not dream once of the Légion d'Honneur, or, as he writes to his mother, of directing a theatre?) – shows clearly how very difficult it was for the founding revolutionaries (the same swings can be observed in Manet) to make the breaks needed to install a new order. In the same way as the elective transgression of an innovator (one thinks of Manet's *Dead Bullfighter*) may appear as the awkwardness of incompetence, so the deliberate failure of a provocation remains simply a failure, at least in the eyes of the Villemains or even the Sainte-Beuves. The latter concludes his article in the *Constitutionnel* about the Académie elections with these remarks full of perfidious condescension: 'What is certain is that M. Baudelaire gains from being seen; whereas one was expecting to see a strange and eccentric man, one finds oneself in the presence of a polite, respectful, exemplary candidate, a gentle boy, of refined language and completely classical in formal appearance.'²⁷

It is probably not easy, even for the creator himself in the intimacy of his experience, to discern what it is that separates the failed artist, a bohemian who prolongs adolescent revolt beyond a socially assigned limit, from the 'accursed artist', provisional victim of the reaction aroused by the symbolic revolution that he effects. As long as everyone does not recognize that new principle of legitimacy which permits a sign of future election to be perceived in present malediction, and as long as a new aesthetic regime is not yet installed in the field – and beyond it, in the field of power itself (the problem will pose itself in the same terms to Manet and to those refused by the Salon) – then the artist-heretic is doomed to an extraordinary incertitude, the principle of a terrible *tension*.

Baudelaire, no doubt because he lived, with the lucidity of beginnings, all the contradictions – experienced as so many *double binds* – inherent in a literary field in the process of formation, saw better than anyone the link between transformations of the economy and society and the transformations of the artistic and literary life which confront the pretenders to the status of writers or artists with two alternatives: either degradation, the famous 'bohemian life', made up of material and moral misery, sterility and resentment; or a submission to the tastes of the dominants, just as degrading, through journalism, the serial or the boulevard theatre. A ferocious critic of bourgeois taste, Baudelaire is equally vigorous in his opposition to the 'bourgeois school' of the 'knights of good sense', led by Émile Augier, and the 'socialist school', both of them accepting the same (moral) password: 'Moralize! Moralize!'

In his article on *Madame Bovary* in *L'Artiste*, he writes: 'For several years, the share of interest the public accords spiritual things has significantly diminished; its budget of enthusiasm is still shrinking. The last years of Louis-Philippe had witnessed the final explosions of a spirit that could still be stimulated by the play of the imagination; but the new novelist found himself confronting a society that was completely jaded – worse than jaded – degraded and greedy, abhorring only the imaginary and caring only for material possessions.'²⁸ Similarly, once again allying himself with Flaubert, who in letter after letter (to Louise Colet especially) rails against the 'pretty' and the 'sentimental', Baudelaire – in a draft of a response to an article by Jules Janin on Heine – denounces the taste for the pretty, the gay, the charming, which leads to preferring the joy of French poets over the melancholy of foreign poets (he is thinking of those who, like Béranger, can exalt the 'charming intoxication of twenty years of age').²⁹ And he exhibits fury worthy of Flaubert towards those who accept servicing bourgeois taste, in the theatre especially: 'For some time, a great craze for respectability has dominated the theatre as well as the novel [...] One of the proudest supporters of bourgeois respectability, one of the champions of *good sense*, M. Émile Augier, has written a play, *La Ciguë*, in which a young man, rowdy, drunken, and dissolute [...] finally takes a fancy to the pure eyes of a young girl. Great

profligates have been known to seek painful, unknown pleasures in asceticism [...]. That would be beautiful, although rather commonplace. But that would be too much for M. Augier's virtuous public. I believe he wanted to prove that in the long run we always have to *settle down*...' ³⁰

He lives and describes with stunning lucidity the contradiction he had discovered in his painful and rebellious apprenticeship to the literary life at the heart of bohemia in the 1840s: the tragic humiliation of the poet and the exclusion and malediction he suffers are imposed by exterior necessity at the same time as they present themselves to him, by an interior self-necessity, as the condition of accomplishing his work. The experience and the awareness of this contradiction mean that, unlike Flaubert, Baudelaire places his whole existence and his entire work under the banner of defiance and rupture, and also that he knows that there is no other way for him and does not want to be recuperated.

While Baudelaire's position in the field is comparable to that of Flaubert, he brings to it a heroic dimension, founded no doubt on his relationship with his family, and at the time of his trial this will lead him to take a very different attitude from that of Flaubert, who was ready to play on the bourgeois worthiness of his lineage, and it is also responsible for Baudelaire's long descent into the misery of bohemian life. We must cite the letter he writes to his mother when he was 'worn out with weariness, worry and hunger': 'Send me [...] enough to let me survive for three weeks [...] I believe so firmly in my timetable and in the strength of my willpower that I know for a fact that if I could succeed in leading a regular life, for two or three weeks, *my intelligence would be saved*.'³¹ While Flaubert comes out of the *Madame Bovary* trial enhanced by the scandal, lifted to the ranks of the greatest writers of the age, Baudelaire experiences, after the trial of *Les Fleurs du mal*, the fate of a 'public' man but a stigmatized one, excluded from good society and the salons frequented by Flaubert, and banned from the literary universe by the mainstream press and magazines. In 1861 the second edition of *Les Fleurs du mal* is ignored by the press, hence by the public, but establishes its author in literary circles, where he still has numerous enemies. As a result of the continuous challenge he throws down to the 'right-thinking' in his life as much as in his work, Baudelaire incarnates the most extreme position of the avant-garde, that of revolt against all authorities and all institutions, beginning with literary institutions.

He is certainly led to put a gradual distance between himself and the realist or humanitarian complacencies of bohemia, a flabby and uncultivated world, whose insults confuse the great romantic creators with the ever-so-honest plagiarists of embourgeoisied literature, and he opposes to it the work which must be done in suffering and despair, as with Flaubert at Croisset.

In the 1840s, Baudelaire marks his distance with respect to the realist bohemia by the symbolic impact of his external appearance, opposing to the slovenliness

of his companions the elegance of the dandy, the visible expression of the tension which never ceases to haunt him. He belabours the realist ambitions of Champfleury who, 'since he minutely studies it [...] believes he has grasped an external reality'; he rails against realism, 'a repulsive insult [...] which for the ordinary man signifies not a new means of creation, but a minute description of trivial details.'³² In his description of 'realist youths, giving themselves over, on leaving infancy, to realist art (new things require new words)', he cannot find words harsh enough, despite the friendship for Champfleury that he will never relinquish: 'What distinctly characterises them is a decided, inborn hatred of museums and libraries. Yet they have their classics, Henri Murger and Alfred de Musset in particular [...] From [Murger's] complete confidence in genius and inspiration, they derive the right not to submit to any mental gymnastics [...]. They are bad mannered, have stupid love affairs, are as conceited as they are lazy.'³³

But he never renounces what he has acquired by his passage through the most disinherited regions of the literary world, which are thus the regions most favourable to a critical and global perception – disenchanted and complex, criss-crossed by contradictions and paradoxes – of this world itself and the whole social order. Moral deprivation and misery, even while they constantly threaten his mental integrity, appear to him as the only possible site for freedom and the only legitimate principle of an inspiration inseparable from an insurrection.

Unlike Flaubert, who follows an aristocratic tradition, it is not in the salons or in correspondence that he wages his fight, but in the heart of that world of 'déclassés', in the words of Hippolyte Babou, who form a heterogeneous army of the cultural revolution. Through him, it is the whole of bohemia – despised and stigmatized (even down to the tradition of authoritarian socialism, prompt to recognize there the interloper of the *Lumpenproletariat*) – and the 'accursed artist' who find themselves rehabilitated. (We see this in a letter to his mother of 20 December 1855 where he contrasts 'the admirable poetic faculty, the neatness of ideas and the power of hope that constitute [his] capital', that is to say, the specific capital guaranteed by an autonomous literary field, with the 'ephemeral capital that he lacks to keep himself, so as to work in peace far from the damned carrion of the proprietor'.)³⁴ Breaking with the naive nostalgia of a return to aristocratic patronage in the manner of the eighteenth century (often evoked by writers nevertheless near to him in the field, such as the Goncourts or Flaubert), he formulates an extremely realistic and farsighted definition of what the literary field will become. Thus, in mocking the decree of 12 October 1851, designed to encourage 'authors of plays with a moral and educational purpose', he writes: 'There is something in an official prize which offends

man and humanity, and obscures the modesty of virtue [...]. As for writers, their prize is in the esteem of their peers and in the cash registers of booksellers.'³⁵

In trying to gather together and to understand the different actions taken by Baudelaire, in his life as in his work, to affirm the independence of the artist, and in not selecting just those rejections which, after him, became integral to the writer's existence – rejection of family (birth or membership), rejection of career, rejection of society and so on – there is a risk of seeming to return to the hagiographic tradition which takes as its principle the illusion of seeing in the objectively congruent outcomes of a habitus the willed coherence of a project. How could we not perceive, however, something like a policy of independence in the acts that Baudelaire undertook regarding publishing and criticism? We know that at a time when the growth of 'commercial' literature is making fortunes for a few large publishing houses – Hachette, Lévy and Larousse – Baudelaire chooses to associate, for *Les Fleurs du mal*, with a small publisher, Poulet-Malassis, who frequents the cafés of the avant-garde. Refusing the more favourable financial conditions and the incomparably wider distribution offered him by Michel Lévy, precisely because he is afraid of a mass exposure of his book, he takes up with a smaller publisher, but one who is himself engaged in the struggle on behalf of young poetry (he will publish notably Asselineau, Astruc, Banville, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Champfleury, Duranty, Gautier, Leconte de Lisle) and fully identified with the interests of his authors (this way of demonstrating his option of rupture contrasts with Flaubert's strategy of publishing with Lévy and in *La Revue de Paris*, even though he despises the editorial board, composed as it is of *arrivistes* like Maxime Du Camp, and partisans of 'useful' art).³⁶ Obeying one of those emotional attachments both profoundly willed and uncontrollable, reasonable without being thought out, which are the 'choices' of the habitus ('with you, I will be honestly and elegantly produced'), Baudelaire effects for the first time the break between commercial and avant-garde publishing, thereby contributing to the upsurge of a field of publishers homologous with that of writers; at a stroke, he achieves a structural liaison between the publisher and the writer at the front line [*de combat*] (an expression which is not excessive if one remembers that Poulet-Malassis was roundly condemned for the publication of *Les Fleurs du mal* and obliged to go into exile).

The unitary course of radicalism is expressed in the conception of criticism that Baudelaire elaborated. It seems as if he was renewing the tradition which at the time of Romanticism associated artists and writers in an ideal community, grouped in the same circles or around

a magazine like *L'Artiste*, and which incited many writers to take up art criticism – going too far, in a sense, since a number of them forgot everything about the old ideal. However, substituting the theory of ‘correspondances’ for the vague notion of a common ideal, Baudelaire denounces the incompetence and especially the lack of understanding of critics who try to measure individual works against formal and universal rules. He dispossesses the art critic of the role of judge conferred by, among other things, the academic distinction between the phase of the work’s conception, superior in dignity, and the subordinate phase of its execution, the place of technique and know-how, and instead asks that the critic submit in some way to the work, but with a wholly new intention of creative readiness, striving to bring to light the deepest intentions of the painter. This radically new definition of the role of the critic (until then largely confined to paraphrasing the informational content, especially historical, of the painting) is logically inscribed in the process of the institutionalization of the anomie that is the correlative of the formation of a field in which each creator is authorized to establish his own *nomos* in a work, bringing along with it the principle (without antecedent) of his own perception.

The first calls to order

Paradoxically, the out-of-the-ordinary acts of prophetic rupture that the founding heroes must carry out in fact work to create the conditions necessary for making the heroes and heroism of these beginnings redundant: in a field reaching a high degree of autonomy and self-awareness, it is the mechanisms of competition themselves which authorize and favour the ordinary production of out-of-the-ordinary acts, founded on the rejection of temporal satisfactions, worldly gratifications and the goals of ordinary action. The calls to order and the sanctions (the most terrible of which is discredit, the exact equivalent of an excommunication or a bankruptcy) are the automatic product of the competition that particularly pits the consecrated authors, those most exposed to the seduction of worldly compromises and temporal honours which are always suspected of being compensations for renunciations or repudiations, against the newly arrived, who by their position are less subject to solicitations of the outside world, and who tend to contest established authorities in the name of values (disinterestedness, purity, etc.) which the latter proclaim, or are called on to impose.

Symbolic repression is exercised with special rigour on those who

endeavour to arm themselves with external (hence ‘tyrannical’, in Pascal’s sense) authorities or powers in order to triumph in the field.

This is the case with all the intermediary personages situated between the artistic field and the economic field – the publishers, gallery owners or theatre directors, not to mention the civil servants in charge of administering state patronage – with whom the writers and artists often maintain (there are exceptions such as the publisher Charpentier) relations of either latent or occasionally open violence. As witness, Flaubert, who himself had many quarrels with his publisher, Lévy, writes like this to Ernest Feydeau, who is preparing a biography of Théophile Gautier: ‘You should convey that he was exploited and tyrannized by all the newspapers for which he wrote; Girardin, Turgan and Dalloz were torturers to our poor old man, which we bemoan [. . .]. A man of genius, a poet with no income and who is of no given political party, he was forced to write for the papers in order to live; so, this is what befell him. In my opinion, this is the *spirit* in which you should do your study.’³⁷

To take just one example, borrowed from Flaubert’s age, one may here evoke the person of Edmond About, a liberal writer for the *Opinion Nationale*, who was a veritable *bête noire* for the whole literary avant-garde, for a Baudelaire, a Villiers or a Banville – they said of him that he ‘was naturally made for borrowing received opinions’; despite the ‘spiritual impertinences’ of his articles for the *Figaro*, he was reproached for having sold his pen to the *Constitutionnel*, whose subservience to the powerful was well known, and especially for incarnating the treachery of opportunism and servility, or simply of frivolity, which disfigures all values, and above all those it vaunts. When in 1862 he puts on *Gaëtana*, all the youth of the Left Bank mobilize to heckle it, and after four turbulent evenings the play is withdrawn.³⁸ There were countless plays (for example *La Contagion* by Émile Augier) which were booed and scuttled by mercenary cabals or claques of rowdy art students.

But there is no better proof of the effectiveness of the calls to order inscribed in the very logic of the field as it moves towards autonomy than the recognition that the authors who appear to be the most directly subordinate to external demands or exigencies, not only in their social behaviour but in their work itself, are more and more often forced to grant to the specific norms of the field; as if, in order to honour their status as writers, they must manifest a certain distance from the dominant values. Thus, if one only knows them through the sarcasms of Baudelaire or Flaubert, it comes as something of a surprise when one discovers that the most typical representatives of the bourgeois theatre offer, far from unequivocal praise of bourgeois life and values, a violent satire on the very foundations of that

existence and of the 'lowering of manners' imputed to certain personages of the court and the imperial bourgeoisie.

Thus the same Ponsard who, with his *Lucrèce*, presented at the Théâtre-Français in 1843 (the year *Les Burgraves* failed), had appeared as the herald of the neoclassical reaction against Romanticism, and who had been accordingly named as head of the 'School of good sense', under the Second Empire attacks the ravages of money: in *L'Honneur et l'Argent* he becomes indignant against people who prefer dignities and riches dishonestly acquired to an honourable poverty; in *La Bourse* he castigates cynical speculators, and in his last play, a drama entitled *Galilée* performed in 1867, the year of his death, he makes a plea for the freedom of science.

In the same way, Émile Augier, who has a Parisian grand bourgeois background (born in Valence, he had been raised in Paris), who came into the repertory of the Comédie-Française in 1845 with *Un Homme de bien* and *La Ciguë* and who had written *Gabrielle*, a work performed in 1849 as the paradigm of the anti-romantic bourgeois comedy, turns into a painter of the evils caused by money. In *La Ceinture dorée* and *Maître Guérin* he dramatizes grand bourgeois gentlemen of dishonestly acquired fortunes who suffer at the hands of their children of overly delicate virtue. In *Les Effrontés*, *Le Fils de Giboyer* and *Lions et Renards*, plays created in 1861, 1862 and 1869, he attacks shady businessmen who exploit journalism, illegal deals, and illicit trading, and he deplores the success of unscrupulous rogues.³⁹

Even though also intended as warnings to the bourgeoisie, these concessions that the authors most typical of bourgeois theatre feel bound to make to anti-bourgeois values attest to the fact that no one can any longer completely ignore the fundamental law of the field; the writers furthest in appearance from the values of pure art in fact recognize this – even if only in their manner, always a little shameful, of transgressing it.

We note in passing something that is not acknowledged by the argument that the sociology (or social history) of literature, often identified with a certain kind of literary statistics, would somehow have the effect of 'levelling' artistic values by 'rehabilitating' second-rate authors. Everything inclines us to think that, on the contrary, one loses the essence of what makes for the individuality and even the greatness of the survivors when one ignores the universe of contemporaries with whom and against whom they construct themselves. Besides the fact that they are marked by their membership in a literary field and thus enable us to grasp its impact and, at the same time, its limits, such authors, condemned by their failures or successes of doubtful merit, and simply and purely fated to be erased from the history of literature, also affect the functioning of the field by their very existence and by the reactions they arouse. The analyst who only knows about those authors from the past who have been

recognized by literary history as worthy of being conserved is embracing an intrinsically vicious form of understanding and explanation. Such an analyst can only register, unwittingly, the way the ignored authors have affected, by the logic of action and reaction, the authors to be interpreted – the ones who, by their active rejection, have contributed to the others' disappearance from history. This is to preclude a true understanding of everything in the work of the survivors themselves that is, like their rejections, the indirect product of the existence and action of the vanished authors. This is never more clearly seen than in the case of a writer such as Flaubert, who defines and constructs himself in and through the whole series of double negations with which he counters contrasting pairs of styles or authors – like Romanticism and realism, Lamartine and Champfleury, and so forth.

A position to be made

From the 1840s onwards, and especially after the coup d'état, the influence of money, exercised notably through dependence on it of the press, itself subject to the state and the market, and the fascination, encouraged by the splendour of the imperial regime, with pleasures and banal entertainments, in the theatre especially, favoured the expansion of a commercial art which was directly subject to audience expectations. Faced with this 'bourgeois art', a 'realist' current perpetuates itself with difficulty as a current which prolongs and transforms the tradition of 'social art' – to use the labels of the day. Against one and the other was defined, in a double refusal, a third position, that of 'art for art's sake'.

This prevalent taxonomy, born of the struggle over classification occurring in the literary field, has the virtue of reminding us that, in a field still being constituted, the internal positions must first of all be understood as so many specifications of the generic position of writers (or the literary field) in the field of power, or, if you like, as so many particular forms of the relationship objectively established between writers as a whole and temporal power.

The representatives of 'bourgeois art', who are for the most part writers for the theatre, are tightly and directly linked to the dominant class, as much by their origins as by their lifestyle and value system. This affinity, which is the very basis of their success in a genre that supposes direct communication, and therefore ethical and political complicity, between author and audience, assures them not only of great material profits – the theatre is by far the most profitable of

literary activities – but also of all sorts of symbolic profits, beginning with the emblems of bourgeois consecration, particularly membership in the Académie. Like those in painting such as Horace Vernet and Paul Delaroche, then Cabanel, Bouguereau, Baudry and Bonnat, and those in the novel such as Paul de Kock, Jules Sandeau, Louis Desnoyers and so on, it is authors such as Émile Augier or Octave Feuillet who offer to bourgeois audiences plays perceived as ‘idealist’ (by contrast with the current called ‘realist’, but just as ‘moral’ and moralizing, which will be represented in the theatre by Dumas fils and his *La Dame aux camélias* and also, but in another mode, by *Henriette Maréchal* by the Goncourt brothers): this watered-down Romanticism, whose generative formula is well described by Jules de Goncourt when he calls Octave Feuillet ‘a Musset for all the family’, subordinates the most frenzied novelistic style to bourgeois tastes and norms, celebrating marriage, good management of patrimony and honourable settlements on children.

Thus, in *L'Aventurière*, Émile Augier combines the sentimental reminiscences of Hugo and Musset with praise for high morals and family life, and with a satire on courtesans and a condemnation of love late in life.⁴⁰ But it is with *Gabrielle* that the restoration of ‘healthy and respectable’ art attains the summit of bourgeois anti-Romanticism: this verse play, performed in 1849, concerns a bourgeois wife, married to a notary who is too prosaic for her taste, who, on the point of yielding to a poet, a friend of ‘fields prostrating themselves to the sun’, suddenly discovers that true poetry lies in hearth and home; falling into the arms of her husband, she cries:

Oh, father of the family, oh poet, I love you.

This line seems written to enter into the parodies of the ‘Garçon’; Baudelaire, in an article in *La Semaine Théâtrale* of 27 November 1851 entitled ‘The respectable drama and novel’, commented on it as follows: ‘A notary! Can you see that respectable housewife cooing amorously on her husband’s shoulder and looking languishingly at him as in the novels she has read! Can you see all the notaries in the theater applauding the author who treats them as his equals by avenging them on all those indigent rascals who believe that a poet’s craft consists in expressing the lyric emotions of the heart in a rhythm determined by tradition!’⁴¹ The same moralizing intention is affirmed by Dumas fils who pretends to aid in transforming the world by a realist picture of the problems of the bourgeoisie (money, marriage, prostitution and so on) and who, opposing Baudelaire and the separation of art and morality he proclaims, will state in the preface to his 1858 play *Le Fils naturel*: ‘All literature which does not aim at perfectibility, the raising of moral standards, the ideal – and in a word, the useful – is a scrawny, unhealthy, stillborn literature.’

At the opposite pole of the field, there are the supporters of social art, who had their hour on the eve of and just after the February

Days of 1848: republicans, democrats and socialists such as Louis Blanc and Proudhon, and also Pierre Leroux and George Sand who, notably in their *Revue Indépendante*, flattered Michelet and Quinet, Lamennais and Lamartine and, to a lesser degree, the too tepid Hugo. They condemn the ‘egotistical’ art of the supporters of ‘art for art’s sake’ and demand that literature fulfil a social or political function.

In the social effervescence of the 1840s, also marked by manifestos in favour of social art emanating from the Fourierists and Saint-Simonians, there appeared ‘popular’ poets such as Pierre Dupont, Gustave Mathieu⁴² or Max Büchon, translator of Hebel, and the ‘worker-poets’ patronized by George Sand and Louise Colet.⁴³ In the small circles of bohemia, in cafés like the Voltaire and the Momus, or at the editorial offices of small literary journals like the *Corsaire-Satan*, gather writers as different as A. Gautier, Arsène Houssaye, Nerval, all survivors of the first bohemia, and also Champfleury, Murger, Pierre Dupont, Baudelaire and Banville and dozens of others who have fallen into obscurity (like Monselet or Asselineau). These authors temporarily brought together are destined for divergent fates, like Pierre Dupont and Banville, the plebeian producer of cheap couplets and the republican aristocrat enamoured of classical form, or like Baudelaire and Champfleury, whose very close friendship, forged around Courbet (they will meet again over the magazine *L'Atelier*) and the mystical exchanges of their ‘Wednesdays’, will survive the disagreement over ‘realism’.

In the 1850s the position is occupied by the second bohemia, or at least by a ‘realist’ tendency which is forming there and whose theoretician is Champfleury. This ‘singing and wineladen’ bohemia⁴⁴ extends the circle of the *Corsaire-Satan*. It holds its meetings on the Left Bank, at the Andler brasserie (and a few years later at the Brasserie des Martyrs), grouping together around Courbet and Champfleury popular poets, painters such as Bonvin and A. Gautier, the critic Castagnary, the fantastical poet Fernand Desnoyers, the novelist Hippolyte Babou, the publisher Poulet-Malassis and sometimes, despite his theoretical disagreements, Baudelaire. With its easy-going lifestyle and spirit of camaraderie, with the enthusiasm and passion of theoretical discussions on politics, art and literature, this open assembly of young people, writers, journalists, painters and students, founded on daily reunions in a café, favoured an ambience of intellectual exaltation contrasting in every way with the reserved and exclusive atmosphere of the salons.

No doubt the solidarity that these ‘proletaroid intellectuals’ manifest with respect to the dominated owes something to their provincial

and working-class ties and attachments: Murger was the son of a concierge, Champfleury's father was secretary in the mayor's office in Laon, Barbara's a small merchant of musical instruments in Orléans, that of Bonvin a gamekeeper, that of Delvau a tanner in the faubourg Saint-Marcel, and so forth. But, contrary to what they wanted (and led others) to believe, this solidarity is not just the direct effect of loyalty, of inherited dispositions: it is also rooted in the experiences associated with the fact of occupying, at the heart of the literary field, a dominated position which is clearly not unconnected with their position in terms of origin, and, more precisely, to the dispositions and the economic and cultural capital they have inherited from it.

We may borrow from Pierre Martino this evocation of Murger's social properties as an exemplary representative of the category: 'He was the son of a concierge and certainly destined for an entirely different career than that of editor of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*; it is his mother's ambition that helped him make, after many miseries, this sudden break; he was sent to college; he sometimes recalled this maternal decision without enthusiasm and implored humble parents to allow their children to remain the same. His studies were irregular and incomplete; the child scarcely profited from them; he read the poets for the most part, and began to write verses. He never thought of making up this lost education; his ignorance was remarkable: he admired with respect and ingenuousness one of his friends who had read Diderot, but he didn't wish to imitate him. His judgement, even in his maturity, lacked vigour: when he touched on social, political, religious and even literary questions, his thoughts were singularly impoverished. How would he find the time and the means to give his mind serious nourishment? After a break with his father, he took refuge with one of the 'water drinkers', and he was in the grip of true misery, which took away his health, sent him several times into hospital, and led him to die at the age of forty, worn out by privation. The success of his books, after ten very hard years, brought him only small ease, and the wherewithal to live alone in the country. His experience of the world was as incomplete as his education; the only reality he knew was his own bohemian life, and what he could see of peasant ways in the neighbourhood of his house at Marlotte, and so he often repeated himself.'⁴⁵

Champfleury, a close friend of Murger, presents very similar characteristics: his father is secretary at the mayor's office in Laon, and his mother has a small store. His studies are cursory, then he leaves for Paris where he obtains a small job as a delivery boy for booksellers. He and some friends from a restaurant compose the circle called the 'water drinkers'. He writes art criticism for *L'Artiste* and *Le Corsaire*. In 1846 he enters the Society of Men of Letters. He writes serials for serious magazines. In 1848, he takes refuge in Laon, but receives two hundred francs from the provisional government. Back in Paris, in the 1850s, he sees a lot of his old friends Baudelaire and Bonvin, as well as Courbet. He writes much in order to live (novels, reviews, scholarly essays). He becomes known as the 'chief of the Realists', which causes him trouble with the censors. Thanks to Sainte-Beuve, in 1863 he obtains the licence of the Funambules Theatre, but only for a short time. In 1872, he becomes curator at the Sèvres museum.⁴⁶

Even though they define themselves by their refusal of the two polar positions, those who are going gradually to invent what will be called 'art for art's sake' (and at the same time, the norms of the literary field) have in common with social art and with realism the fact that they, too, are violently opposed to the bourgeoisie and bourgeois art: their cult of form and impersonal neutrality makes them appear as the defenders of an 'immoral' definition of art, especially when those such as Flaubert seem to place their formal research in the service of a debasing of the bourgeois world. The word 'realism', no doubt more or less as vaguely characterized in the taxonomies of the time as any of its equivalents today (like 'gauchiste' or radical), allowed it to encompass in the same condemnation not only Courbet, the initial target, and his defenders, with Champfleury at their head, but also Baudelaire and Flaubert – in short, all those who, in form or substance, seemed to threaten the moral order and thereby the very foundations of the established order.

At Flaubert's trial, the closing speech of the assistant public prosecutor Pinard denounces 'realist painting' and invokes the morality that 'stigmatizes realist literature'; Flaubert's lawyer is obliged to recognize in his defence that his client belongs to the 'realist school'. The reasons adduced for the judgment twice take up the terms of the accusation, and insist on 'the vulgar and often shocking realism of the character portrayals'.⁴⁷ In the same fashion, in the judgment condemning *Les Fleurs du mal*, we read that Baudelaire is guilty of a 'crude realism which offends modesty' and leads to 'the arousal of the senses'.⁴⁸ In general, a number of historical debates, about art especially, but also other matters, would find themselves clarified, or more simply annulled, if one could bring to light, in each case, the complete world of distinct and often contrasting significations which all the relevant concepts – 'realism', 'social art', 'idealism', 'art for art's sake' – are given in social struggles within the entire field (where they often function, originally, as terms of denunciation or insults, as here with the notion of realism) or within the subfield of those who claim them as emblems (such as the different defenders of 'realism' in literature, painting, theatre, etc.). Nor should we forget that the meanings of these words, eternalized in theoretical discussion by dehistoricizing them (this dehistoricization, often the simple effect of ignorance, being one of the important conditions of a debate called 'theoretical'), constantly change in the course of time, as do the fields of corresponding struggles and the relations of force between users of considered concepts, who never overlook so completely the previous history of the taxonomies they are using as when they construct genealogies, more political than scientific, with the purpose of giving symbolic force to their present usages.

But in a way, as witnessed by the trials mounted against them, whose serious side should not be underestimated, the proponents of 'pure art' go much further than their apparently more radical fellow-travellers: aesthetic detachment – constituting, as we shall see, the veritable principle of the symbolic revolution they are carrying out –

leads them to break with the moral conformism of bourgeois art without falling into that other form of ethical complacency illustrated by the proponents of 'social art' and the 'realists' themselves when, for example, they exalt the 'superior virtue of the oppressed', as does Champfleury, according the people 'a sentiment for great things that makes them superior to the best judges.'⁴⁹

That said, the frontier between the spirit of ironic provocation and rebellious transgression is blurred, corresponding to less difference between a moderate openness to the literary avant-garde characterizing the former, and the spirit of contestation, more political than aesthetically radical, asserted by the latter. Without doubt, after the coup d'état the differences of lifestyle associated with social origins relayed by position in the field favoured the constitution of distinct groups. On the one side, writers who are already more or less consecrated and dedicated to art for art's sake gather at the two brasseries Divan Le Peletier and the Paris and at *La Revue de Paris* – writers such as Banville, now adopted by the major reviews, Baudelaire, Asselineau, Nerval, Gautier, Planche, the de la Madelène brothers, Murger (once he is famous), Karr, de Beauvoir, Gavarni, the Goncourts and so forth. On the other side, at the Andler and Martyrs brasseries the 'realists' meet: Courbet, Champfleury, Chenavard, Bonvin, Barbara, Desnoyers, P. Dupont, G. Mathieu, Duranty, Pelloquet, Vallès, Montégut, Poulet-Malassis and so on. All the same, the two groups are not rigorously separated and there are frequent movements from one to another: Baudelaire, Poulet-Malassis, Ponslet, who are the most to the left politically, make frequent incursions into the Andler brasserie, as do Chenavard, Courbet and Vallès to the Divan Le Peletier.

Rather than a ready-made position which only has to be taken up, like those founded in the very logic of social functioning, through the social functions they fulfil or lay claim to, 'art for art's sake' is a *position to be made*, devoid of any equivalent in the field of power and which might not or wasn't necessarily supposed to exist. Even though it is inscribed in a potential state in the very space of positions already in existence, and even though certain of the romantic poets had already foreshadowed the need for it, those who would take up that position cannot make it exist except by making the field in which a place could be found for it, that is, by revolutionizing an art world that excludes it, in fact and in law. They must therefore invent, against established positions and their occupants, everything necessary to define it, starting with that unprecedented social personage who is the modern writer or artist, a full-time professional, dedicated to one's work in a total and exclusive manner, indifferent to the

exigencies of politics and to the injunctions of morality, and not recognizing any jurisdiction other than the norms specific to one's art.

The double rupture

The occupants of this contradictory position are destined to oppose, according to two different relationships, different established positions and hence to try to reconcile the irreconcilable, that is, the two opposed principles governing their double rejection. In opposition to 'useful art', the official and conservative variant of 'social art', of which Maxime Du Camp, a close friend of Flaubert's, was one of the most notorious defenders, and in opposition to bourgeois art, the consenting or unconscious vehicle of an ethical and political *doxa*, they call for ethical freedom, even prophetic provocation; they want above all to assert a distance from all institutions – the state, the Académie, journalism – but without recognizing themselves for all that in the spontaneous carelessness of the bohemians, who also claim the values of independence but in order to legitimate either transgressions without properly aesthetic consequences or pure and simple regressions to the facile and the 'vulgar'.

If they reject the bourgeois life to which they were destined, meaning both career and family, it is not to trade one slavery for another by accepting, in the manner of Gautier and so many others, the servitudes of the literary industry and journalism, nor to place themselves in the service of a cause, no matter how noble or generous. In this sense, the political attitude of Baudelaire, especially in 1848, is exemplary: he does not fight for the republic, but for the revolution, one he loves as a sort of art for the sake of revolt and transgression. In their concern to situate themselves on a plane above ordinary alternatives, to surmount them by flying over them, they impose an extraordinary discipline on themselves, one which is deliberately assumed against the facile options that their adversaries on all sides permit themselves. Their autonomy consists in an obedience freely chosen, but unconditional, to the new laws they invent and that they wish to make triumph in the Republic of Letters.

It follows that they are fated to feel with renewed intensity the contradictions inherent in the status of 'poor relations' of the bourgeois family which is inscribed in the dominated position that the field of cultural production occupies in the midst of the field of power. (This means that one may impute to this position the essence of what Sartre, in the case of Flaubert, attributes to the relationship

to the family and class of origin.) And perhaps it is not excessive to see in the poem significantly titled 'Héautontimoroumenos' ('he who punishes himself') a symbolic expression of the extraordinary tension resulting from the contradictory relationship of participation-exclusion that links Baudelaire both to the dominants and the dominated:

I am the wound, and yet the knife!
The smack and yet the cheek that takes it!
The limb, and yet the wheel that breaks it,
The torturer and he who is flayed!⁵⁰

For those who suspect me of reading something into the text (a fault customarily levelled at inspired interpreters), I shall cite the following statement which one would be wrong to see as a simple provocation by aesthetic cynicism (which it is as well), and in which Baudelaire, after the revolution of 1848, identifies himself with the two camps: 'I would have wanted to be in turn torturer and victim, to know the sensations that one has in both cases.'

Baudelaire's very aesthetic undoubtedly finds its basis in the double rupture that he achieves and that is especially manifest in a sort of permanent exhibition of paradoxical singularity: dandyism is not only the will to stand out and to astonish, an ostentation of difference or even the pleasure of displeasing, the concerted intention to disconcert, to scandalize, by voice, gesture, sarcastic pleasantry; it is also and above all a whole ethical and aesthetic posture extended to a culture (and not a cult) of the self, that is to say, to the exaltation and the concentration of emotional and intellectual capacities. A hatred of flabby forms of Romanticism, which holds sway within the school of good sense – when for example an Émile Augier becomes the defender of a poesy dedicated to 'true feelings', that is, to healthy passions of love for family and society – greatly influences his condemnation of improvisation and lyricism to the benefit of work and research; but at the same time, a rejection of facile transgressions, usually confined to the ethical plane, is the basis of the will to inject contention and method into even this controlled form of freedom which is the 'cult of the manifold sensation'.

It is in this geometric space between contraries, that has nothing of the 'juste milieu' of Victor Cousin, that Flaubert too is situated, along with others such as Gautier, Leconte de Lisle, Banville, Barbey d'Aurevilly and so on, very different one from another and never constituting a real group.⁵¹ And I will cite only one particularly exemplary formulation of these double rejections that are found in

all domains of existence, from politics all the way to aesthetics proper, and whose formula could be put like this: I detest X (a writer, manner, movement, theory, etc.; here, realism, Champfleury), but I detest just as much the opposite of X (here, the false idealism of an Augier or a Ponsard who, like me, is opposed to X, that is, to realism and to Champfleury; but also, in addition, to Romanticism, like Champfleury): 'Everyone thinks I am in love with reality, whereas actually I detest it. It was in hatred of realism that I undertook this book. But I equally despise the false brand of idealism which is such a hollow mockery in the present age.'⁵²

This generative formula, which is the transformed form of the contradictory properties of the position, allows us to reach a truly genetic understanding of a number of the particularities inherent in the position-takings of the occupants of this position, a re-creative understanding which is quite different from some kind of projective empathy. I am thinking, for example, of their political neutrality, which shows itself in the complete eclecticism of their relationships and friendships and which is associated with the refusal of any engagement in action ('Foolishness', in Flaubert's celebrated phrase, 'consists in wanting to draw conclusions'), of any official consecration ('Honours dishonour,' he also said), and above all of any kind of ethical or political preaching, whether glorifying bourgeois values or instructing the masses in republican or socialist principles.

The concern to keep one's distance from all social roles (and the gathering places where the people occupying them commune) requires a refusal to bow to the expectations of the public, to follow them or to lead them, in the way the authors of successful plays or serials do. Flaubert, who undoubtedly goes further than anyone else with this bias in favour of indifference, reproaches Edmond de Goncourt for addressing the public in the preface to the *Frères Zemganno* to explain to them the aesthetic intentions of the play: 'Why do you need to speak to the public? It is not worthy of our confidences.'⁵³ And he writes to Renan, on the subject of the *Prière sur l'Acropole*: 'I do not know if there exists in French a more beautiful page of prose! [...] It is splendid and I am sure that the bourgeois don't understand a word of it. So much the better!'⁵⁴ The more the artist affirms himself as such by affirming his autonomy, the more he constitutes the 'bourgeois' (which term encompasses, as it does for Flaubert, 'the bourgeois in overalls and the bourgeois in frock coat') as the 'Boeotian' or 'Philistine', inapt at loving the work of art, at appropriating it in a real way, that is, symbolically.

'I include in the word "bourgeois" the bourgeois in overalls as well as the bourgeois in frock coat. It's we, we alone – that is, the educated – who are the People, or, to put it better, the tradition of Humanity.'⁵⁵ Or again: 'Yes, they will give me hell – count on them. *Salammbô* will annoy the bourgeois, that means the whole world . . .'⁵⁶ 'The bourgeois, which means practically the whole world: bankers, exchange agents, notaries, dealers, shopkeepers and the others, whoever was not part of the mysterious circle and earned his living prosaically.'⁵⁷ If pure artists are carried along by their hatred of the 'bourgeois' to proclaim their solidarity with those proscribed by the brutality of interests and prejudices – the bohemian, the acrobat, the ruined noble, the big-hearted servant girl and the prostitute, a kind of figure symbolic of the relation of the artist to the market – they can also be brought to approach the 'bourgeois' when they feel threatened by bohemia.⁵⁸

The horror of the *bourgeois* is nourished in the very heart of the artistic microcosm – chief horizon of aesthetic and political conflicts – by the execration of the 'bourgeois artist'; by his success and notoriety, almost always paid for by his servility to the public or the powers that be, he is a reminder of the possibility always open to the artist of turning art into commerce or of making himself the organizer of the pleasures of the powerful, in the fashion of Octave Feuillet and his friends. 'There is something a thousand times more dangerous than the bourgeois,' says Baudelaire in *Les Curiosités esthétiques*, 'and that is the bourgeois artist, who was created to interpose himself between the artist and genius, hiding one from the other.' But the 'pure' writers are also led by their very demanding conception of artistic work to hold the literary proletariat in a professional's contempt, which undoubtedly underlies the picture they form of the 'populace'. The Goncourts denounce in their *Journal* 'the tyranny of the brasseries and bohemia over all real workers', and they contrast Flaubert with the 'great men of bohemia', like Murger, to justify their conviction that 'you have to be an honest man and an honourable bourgeois to be a man of talent.' As for Baudelaire and Flaubert, who, in spite of themselves, are placed by the dominant perspective, within and outside the field, among the 'realists' – these two are opposed to the vague humanism of the proponents of social art and the Proudhonian realists by the rigour of their professional ethic, leading them to refuse to identify freedom with carelessness, and by the aristocratism of their personal ethic, inspiring in them the same horror of all forms of 'Pharisaism', whether conservative or progressive. Thus, for example, when Hugo writes to him that he 'never said Art for Art's sake', but 'Art for Progress's sake', Baudelaire (who in a letter to his mother speaks of *Les Misérables* as a 'squalid and inept book') redoubles his contempt for the political priesthood of the romantic magus. After the militant period of 1848, he joins Flaubert

in a disenchantment leading to a rejection of any connection with the social world and to an undifferentiated condemnation of all those who sacrifice to the cult of good causes, like George Sand, his *bête noire*. He agrees with Flaubert to hold in contempt the proponents of 'social Catholicism', that monstrous coupling (to cite freely a letter from Flaubert to George Sand) of the 'Immaculate Conception and lunch boxes for workingmen.'⁵⁹

'I have just swallowed Lamennais, Saint-Simon, and Fourier, and am now going over all of Proudhon. [. . .] One salient feature is common to them all: hatred of liberty, hatred of the French Revolution and of philosophy. All those people belong to the Middle Ages; their minds are buried in the past. And what schoolmasters! What pedants! Seminarists on a spree, bookkeepers in delirium! The reason for their failure in '48 was that they stood outside the mainstream of tradition. Socialism is one face of the past, just as Jesuitism is another. Saint-Simon's great teacher was M. de Maistre, and how much Proudhon and Louis Blanc owe to Lamennais has never been sufficiently told.'⁶⁰ We remember that in *Sentimental Education* Flaubert encompasses in the same disdain conservatives attached to the bourgeois order and reformers infatuated with chimeras. Baudelaire, here again, proves himself much more radical than Flaubert, notably regarding George Sand: silly, ponderous, gossipy, 'she displays when discussing morality the same depth [. . .] as concierges' daughters and harlots'; a 'theologian of judgement', she 'suppresses hell by friendship for humankind'. He habitually denounces the 'heresy of teaching a lesson', the view that the aim of poetry is 'a lesson of some sort'. He also takes just as violently against Veuillot who had attacked art for art's sake and of whom he says that he is 'utilitarian like a democrat'.⁶¹

An economic world turned upside down

The symbolic revolution through which artists free themselves from bourgeois demand by refusing to recognize any master except their art produces the effect of making the market disappear. In fact they could not triumph over the 'bourgeois' in the struggle for control of the meaning and function of artistic activity without at the same time eliminating the bourgeois as a potential customer. At the moment when they argue, with Flaubert, that 'a work of art [. . .] is beyond appraisal, has no commercial value, cannot be paid for,' that it is *without price*, that is to say, foreign to the ordinary logic of the ordinary economy, they discover that it is effectively *without commercial value*, that it has no market. The ambiguity of Flaubert's phrase, saying two things at once, leads to the uncovering of a sort of infernal mechanism, which is set up by artists and in which they find themselves caught: making a necessity of their virtue, they can always be suspected of making a virtue of necessity.

Flaubert felt this principle of the new economy very keenly: 'If one does not address the crowd, it is right that the crowd should not pay one. It is political economy. But, I maintain that a work of art (worthy of that name and conscientiously done) is beyond appraisal, has no commercial value, cannot be paid for. Conclusion: if the artist has no income, he must starve! They think that the writer, because he no longer receives a pension from the great, is very much freer, and nobler. All his social nobility now consists in being the equal of a grocer. What progress!'⁶² 'The more one puts conscience into one's work, the less use it is. I would maintain this axiom with my neck under the guillotine. We are workers of luxury; thus nobody is rich enough to pay us. When you want to earn money with your pen, you have to do journalism, serials, or the theatre.'⁶³

This antinomy of modern art as pure art is displayed in the fact that, as the autonomy of cultural production grows, the interval of time necessary for works to impress on the public (most of the time against the critics) the concomitant norms of their perceptions is seen to grow likewise. This temporal gap between supply and demand tends to become a structural characteristic of the field of limited production: in this economic universe (actually anti-economic) which is established at the economically dominated but symbolically dominant pole of the literary field – in poetry with Baudelaire and the Parnassians, and in the novel with Flaubert (despite the *succès de scandale*, and based on a misunderstanding, of *Madame Bovary*) – producers may have only their competitors as clients, at least in the short run. Thus, when under the Second Empire, with the establishment of censorship, the major journals were closed to young writers, we witness a proliferation of small reviews, for the most part doomed to an ephemeral existence, whose readers are recruited from among the contributors and their friends. Therefore producers have to accept all the consequences of the fact that the only remuneration they can count on will be necessarily deferred – as opposed to 'bourgeois artists' who are assured of an immediate clientele, or to mercenary producers of commercial literature, such as the authors of vaudevilles or popular novels, who can make substantial incomes from their production while assuring themselves of a reputation as a social or even socialist writer, like Eugène Sue.

Eugène Sue is probably one of the first, if not the first, to have tried, more unconsciously than consciously, to compensate for the discredit attached to 'popular' success by invoking a vaguely socialist philosophy. The extraordinary interest he aroused by applying the procedures of the historical novel to a depiction of the dominated classes, and thus offering the bourgeois subscribers to the *Constitutionnel* a fresh form of exoticism, also had another side in the accusations often levelled at him of immorality and of violating good taste. 'Socialism', as with realism in the case of Champfleury, allowed the inauguration of a popular 'novel of manners' in what was both an aesthetic and a political

gambit; which meant that Eugène Sue, if one can believe Champfleury, was worth reading by the bourgeois as a 'moral novelist'.

Some writers, such as Leconte de Lisle, go so far as to see in immediate success 'the mark of intellectual inferiority'. And the Christlike mystique of the 'artiste maudit', sacrificed in this world and consecrated in the one beyond, is no doubt just the transfiguration into the ideal, or into a professional ideology, of the specific contradiction of the mode of production which the pure artist aims to establish. One is in fact in an economic world inverted: the artist cannot triumph on the symbolic terrain except by losing on the economic terrain (at least in the short run), and vice versa (at least in the long run).

It is this paradoxical economy that gives inherited economic properties all their weight – also in a very paradoxical manner – and in particular a private income, the condition of survival in the absence of a market. In more general terms (and against the mechanistic representation of the influence of social determinations which is too often accepted within social history or in the sociology of art and literature), the probable effects of the properties attached to agents – whether in an objective state, such as economic capital and securities, or in an incorporated state, such as dispositions constitutive of the habitus – depend on the state of the field of production. In other words, the same dispositions may engender the taking of very different if not contrary positions, for example on the political or the religious terrain, according to the states of the field (and this is sometimes so even within a single lifespan, as witnessed by the numerous ethical or political 'conversions' that can be observed in the years from 1840 to 1880).

This refutes, for a start, the tendency to make of social origin an independent and transhistoric explanatory principle – in the manner, for example, of those who establish a universal opposition between patrician writers and plebeian ones. If one ceaselessly has to combat the tendency to reduce an explanation relying on the *relation between a habitus and a field* to a direct and mechanical explanation by 'social origin', it is undoubtedly because this form of simplistic thinking is encouraged by the habits of ordinary polemic that make frequent use of the genealogical insult ('son of a bourgeois!') and also by certain research practices, just as evident in monographs ('the man and his work') as in statistics.

As in *Sentimental Education*, 'inheritors' hold a decisive advantage when it comes to pure art: inherited economic capital, which removes the constraints and demands of immediate needs (those of journalism, for example, which overcame a Théophile Gautier) and makes it

possible to 'hold on' in the absence of a market, is one of the most important factors in the differential success of avant-garde enterprises, with their doomed or else very long-term investments. 'Flaubert', Théophile Gautier told Feydeau, 'was smarter than us, [. . .] he had the intelligence to come into the world with some patrimony, a thing which is absolutely indispensable to anyone who wants to make art.' And Flaubert would not have denied this, since he wrote to Feydeau at the time of the death of 'good Théo' about using the exploitation that the latter suffered his whole life as the basis of a biography conceived as 'vengeance'. And there is no better illustration of the condition of 'literary labourer' experienced by Gautier, who was obliged after 1837 to produce his theatrical notices for *La Presse* every week, than the conflicts between him and the director of the paper, Émile de Girardin, notably on the occasion of his trip to Spain, or than Maxime Du Camp's description of his stay in the Orient: 'Each stage of his journey was counted by the pages of copy he sent to his paper: he valued the kilometers by the number of lines that they cost him.'⁶⁴

It is once again money (inherited) that guarantees freedom with respect to money. All the more so since, in giving assurances, guarantees and safety nets, a fortune confers that audacity which fortune smiles on – without doubt more in matters of art than anywhere else. It spares 'pure' writers the compromises to which an absence of income exposes them, as witness the famous pension of Leconte de Lisle or the efforts of Flaubert on behalf of his friend Bouilhet, less wealthy than he: 'Now, about the question of *living*. I promise you that Mme Str[oehlin] could perfectly well ask the Emperor in person for the *place* that you wish. Keep your eye open for one over the next three weeks. Mention your father's service record on the sly. We'll see. You could ask for a pension, but you would have to pay for that in the currency of your trade, that is, in cantatas, epithalamia, etc. – no, never.'⁶⁵

But Flaubert is no doubt also fully justified in getting indignant at the 'convenient barb' ('you are lucky to be able to work without rushing, thanks to your income') his colleagues 'throw back at him'. But if there is no doubt that the objective freedom an income secures in relation to temporal powers and to the powerful may favour subjective freedom, it remains true that it is not a necessary condition (and even less a sufficient one) for independence, or for *indifference* towards worldly seductions of even the most specific kind, such as critical praise and literary success, which only can be assured by an undivided investment in a true intellectual project. 'Success, time, money, publication are relegated to the lowest level of my mind, off

on some very vague horizons that are of no concern to me whatever. All that seems to me dull as dishwater, and unworthy (I repeat the word, *unworthy*) of exciting one's brain about. The impatience of literary folk to see themselves in print, acted, known, praised, I find astonishing – like a madness. That seems to me to have no more to do with a writer's work than dominoes or politics. Voilà. Anybody can do as I do – work just as slowly as I, and better. All you have to do is rid yourselves of certain tastes, and sacrifice a few pleasures. I am not at all virtuous, but I am consistent. And though I have great needs (which I never mention), I would rather be a wretched monitor in a school than write four lines for money.'⁶⁶

Maybe there is here, for those who want it, a rather indisputable criterion of value for all artistic production and, more generally, for intellectual production: to wit, the investment in a work which is measurable by the cost in effort, in sacrifices of all kinds and, definitively, in time, and which goes hand in hand with the consequent independence from the forces and constraints exercised outside the field, or, worse, within it, such as the seductions of fashion or the pressures of ethical or logical conformism – for example, the required themes, obligatory subjects, conventional forms of expression and so forth.

Positions and dispositions

It is only when one has characterized the different positions that one can come back to particular agents and to different personal properties that more or less predispose them to occupy these positions and to realize the potentialities inscribed there. It is remarkable that the whole assembly of champions of 'art for art's sake', who are objectively very close in the political and aesthetic positions they take up,⁶⁷ and who, without forming a group properly speaking, are linked together by relations of mutual esteem and sometimes friendship, also remain very close to each other in their social trajectory (just as, we recall, the champions of 'social art' or 'bourgeois art' were).

So, Flaubert and Fromentin are sons of important provincial doctors, Bouilhet is also the son of a doctor, but of lesser standing (and dying young), Baudelaire the son of a bureau chief in the high legislative Assembly (who claimed to be a painter) and son-in-law of a general, Leconte de Lisle the son of a planter from La Réunion, whereas Villiers de L'Isle-Adam comes from a very old noble family and Théodore de Banville, Barbey d'Aurevilly and the Goncourts from families of the minor provincial nobility. Regarding several among them, biographers

note that the fathers 'wanted a high social position for them' – which explains no doubt why almost all of them took up or pursued law studies (like Frédéric ...): this is true of Flaubert, Banville, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Baudelaire and Fromentin.

Both the talented bourgeoisie and the traditional nobility have in common the favouring of aristocratic dispositions which lead these writers to feel equally alienated from the demagogic declarations of the proponents of 'social art', whom they identify with the journalistic plebs of bohemia,⁶⁸ and the facile entertainments of 'bourgeois artists', who, coming for the most part from the financial bourgeoisie, are in their eyes merely merchants in the temple, past masters of the art of recuperating, by caricaturing them, the values of the great romantic tradition.

Being almost equally endowed with economic and cultural capital, writers from the central positions at the heart of the field of power (like the sons of doctors or members of the 'intellectual' or liberal professions, called in the language of the time 'capacités') seem predisposed to occupy a homologous position in the literary field. Thus the double orientation of the investments of Flaubert's father Achille-Cléophas (bearing on both the education of children and land ownership) corresponds to the indecision of the young Gustave as he confronts an *embarras du choix* between equally probable futures: 'Grand avenues still remain open to me, already trodden paths, habits for sale, job positions, a thousand slots that can be filled with imbeciles. Therefore I will be a cog in society, I will take my place. I will be an honest man, dutiful and everything else you want, I will be like any other, *comme il faut*, like everyone, either lawyer, doctor, subprefect, notary, solicitor, some judge, a stupidity like all stupidities, a man of the world or of the office, which is even more stupid.'⁶⁹

The reader of Sartre's *The Family Idiot* is more than a little surprised when, in a letter from Achille-Cléophas to his son, ritual observations (though not without intellectual pretension) on the virtues of travelling suddenly take on a typically Flaubertian tone, with a vituperative remark about a grocer: 'Profit from your trip and remember your friend Montaigne, who reminds us that we travel mainly to observe the humours of nations and their mores, and to "rub and sharpen our wits against other brains". See, observe and take notes; do not travel like a grocer or a salesman.'⁷⁰ This programme for a literary voyage and the very form of the references to Montaigne ('your friend'), which allows us to suppose that Gustave shared his literary tastes with his father, lead us to doubt, despite what Sartre suggests, that Flaubert's literary 'vocation' could

have found its origin in the 'paternal curse' and in the unhappy relationship with an older brother who outshone him academically and conformed better to the paternal image of success;⁷¹ in any case they testify to the fact that the inclinations of the young Gustave certainly received the understanding and support of Dr Flaubert, and that the latter, if we are to believe this letter and also, among other clues, the frequency of the references to poets in his medical thesis, was not insensitive to the prestiges of the literary enterprise.

But this is not all, and at the risk of pushing a little too far the search for an explanation we may, in reinterpreting Sartre's analysis, notice the homology occurring between the relationship of the artist as the 'poor relation' of the 'bourgeois' or of the 'bourgeois artist', and the relation of Flaubert to his older brother, designated by his precedence of birth to perpetuate the bourgeois lineage by pursuing an honourable career that Gustave, too, ought to have embraced;⁷² and we may hypothesize that this superimposition of redundant determinations might have inclined Flaubert to search for and produce the position of writer, of pure writer, and to feel in a singularly acute manner the contradictions inscribed in that position, where they attain their highest degree of intensity.

Flaubert's point of view

At this point, the analysis characterizes in generic fashion the position occupied by Flaubert, among others, and it only partially grasps his particularity, notably because it does not enter into the specific logic of the work itself, understood in terms of its properly artistic genesis. One can almost hear Flaubert when he asked, after having reproached the critics of his time for simply replacing the grammarian type of criticism in the manner of La Harpe with a historical criticism in the manner of Sainte-Beuve or Taine, 'Where do you know [of] a criticism? Who is there who is anxious about the work in *itself*, in an intense way? They analyse very keenly the setting in which it is produced and the causes leading to it; but as for the unknowing [*inscient*] poetics? Where does it come from? And the composition and style? The author's point of view? Never!'⁷³

To answer the challenge one must, taking Flaubert at his word, reconstitute the artistic *viewpoint* from which the 'unknowing poetics' is defined, and which, as the *view from a point* in the artistic space, characterizes it exclusively. More precisely, we must reconstitute the space of the artistic *position-takings*, both actual and potential, which was the context for the formulation of the artistic

project, and which we may assume, as a hypothesis, is homologous with the space of positions in the field of production itself, as it has been roughly described. To construct the author's viewpoint in this sense is, if you will, *to be put in his place*, but through an approach which is totally different from the sort of projective identification 'creative' criticism strives for.

Paradoxically, we can only be sure of some chance of participating in the author's subjective intention (or, if you like, in what I have called elsewhere his 'creative project') provided we complete the long work of objectification necessary to reconstruct the universe of positions within which he was situated and where what he wanted to do was defined. In other words, one cannot take the author's point of view (or that of any other agent) and come to an understanding – but an understanding very different from that enjoyed, in practice, by the person who actually occupies the point under consideration – unless the author's situation in the space of constitutive positions within the literary field is grasped anew: it is this position that, on the basis of the structural homology between the two spaces, is at the root of the 'choices' this author makes in a space of artistic position-takings (with respect to content and form), defined, themselves also, by the differences that unite and separate them.

When Flaubert embarks on writing *Madame Bovary* and *Sentimental Education*, he actively situates himself, by choices (implying the same number of refusals) in the space of the possibles offered him. To understand these choices is to understand the differential signification that characterizes them within the universe of compossible choices and the intelligible relationship that joins this differential meaning to the difference between the author of these choices and the authors of choices different from his. To give a more concrete idea of this project, we may cite a letter addressed to Flaubert on 7 February 1880 in which Paul Alexis tries to justify the preface he has written for a collection of his stories: 'If every author had done as much for each of his books, and with such sincerity and naïveté, even with his tongue in his cheek, what a precious mine of information for criticism, for literary history! Example: in the preface to *Madame Bovary* this piece of information: "The irritation produced in me by the bad writing of Champfleury and the so-called realists has not been without influence in the production of this book. Signed: Gustave Flaubert." What light that would shed on the literary history of the second half of the nineteenth century! What idiocies spared future teachers of rhetoric!' ⁷⁴ But, lacking 'sincere and naïve' replies to a methodical questionnaire about the ensemble of landmarks, beacons or foils with respect to which the creative project is defined

we have to rely on spontaneous declarations, hence often partial and imprecise ones, or on indirect clues in order to try to reconstitute both the conscious and unconscious parts of the way the writer's choices were shaped.

The hierarchy of genres, and within them the relative legitimacy of styles and authors, is a fundamental dimension of the space of possibles. Even though it is a stake in struggles at all times, it presents itself as a given which must be reckoned with, whether in order to oppose it or to transform it. In choosing to write novels, Flaubert laid himself open to the inferior status associated with belonging to a minor genre. In fact, the novel was perceived as an inferior genre, or rather, to use Baudelaire's words, a 'routine genre', a 'bastard genre', ⁷⁵ despite the acknowledged prestige of Balzac, who, by the way, himself scarcely liked to define his books as novels (he almost never uses this term, unless to designate the subgenre à la Walter Scott or a philosophical-fantastical book like *La Peau de chagrin*). The Académie Française, which held the novel in suspicion, waits until 1863 to crown a novelist – and then it is Octave Feuillet . . . ⁷⁶ And the preface to *Germinie Lacerteux*, the manifesto of the realist novel, must still claim for 'the Novel (with a capital)' the status of a 'great serious form'.

But, through what he invests in his choice – that is, a transformed definition of the novel involving a denial of the rank it has been assigned in the hierarchy of genres – Flaubert contributes to transforming the novel and to transforming the social representation of the genre, starting with his colleagues – all novelists with any ambition, notably the naturalists, treat him as the head of the movement. The recognition he obtains from the best-known writers and critics, and through them, the world of the salons (where, as we have seen, the 'realist' novelists and even the most eminent representatives of the officially dominant genre, the Parnassian poets, are excluded) allows him to impose respect for the genre well beyond the intellectual field properly speaking – and it is a genre already endowed with a long history and distinguished founding fathers, including some he claims himself, like Cervantes, and others who have made an impression on all cultivated minds, like Balzac and Musset. And thus Gustave Planche can write: 'The novel [...] today treads the highest peaks of philosophy and poetry.' ⁷⁷

At the time when Flaubert embarks on writing his first novel, there is no novelist with the scope of Balzac, but there are, in no particular order, Octave Feuillet, Sandeau, Augier, Féval, About, Murger, Achard, de Custine, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Champfleury, Barbara, and one should add to these, as Jean Bruneau observes, ⁷⁸ all the second-

rank Romantics, today totally forgotten, but who were best-sellers then, such as Paul de Kock, Janin, Delavigne, Barthélemy, and so on. In this confused universe, at least looking confused to us, Flaubert knows how to recognize his own. He reacts violently against everything that we could call 'genre literature' – by an analogy (one he suggests himself⁷⁹) with genre painting – such as vaudeville, historical novels à la Dumas, comic opera, not forgetting, obviously, novels à la Paul de Kock (*Mon Voisin Raymond*, *La Pucelle de Belleville*, *Le Barbier de Paris*, etc.) that flatter the public by reflecting back its own image in the form of a hero with a psychology directly transcribed from the daily life of the petite bourgeoisie. He also rails against the idealist platitudes and the sentimental outpourings of an Augier or a Feuillet: the latter will have an immense success in 1858, that is after the appearance of *Madame Bovary*, with *Le Roman d'un jeune homme pauvre*, a Romanesque tale of the woes of Maxime Odier, Marquis de Champcey d'Hauterive, who, ruined by his father and obliged to earn his living as steward to the Laroque family, ends by marrying the Laroque heiress, after extravagant vicissitudes.

But he does not fall either into the camp of novelists labelled 'realist', such as Duranty, Champfleury (or, at the other extreme, that of bourgeois art, Feydeau, About or Alexandre Dumas fils), who are opposed to the same adversaries as he is, but who define themselves above all against Romanticism and against all the major professionals of literature, among whom he would place himself: 'For almost all of them, the absence of classical studies means that, not knowing what metaphysics or psychology or logic are, they do not know how to analyse and how to think. You hear them pronounce the names of Stendhal, Mérimée, Sainte-Beuve, Renan, Berthelot, Taine; but with the exception of Joseph Delorme and the author of *Colomba*, the names were all they knew.'⁸⁰

The first realists, that is, the section of the second bohemia who were accustomed to gather round Courbet and Champfleury in the 1850s, in the Brasserie Andler in rue Hautefeuille or, on the Right Bank, at the Brasserie des Martyrs (people like Duranty, Barbara, Desnoyers, Dupont, Mathieu, Pelloquet, Vallès, Montégut, Silvestre, and also, from the artists and art critics, Bonvin, Chenavard, Castagnary, Préault), are separated, as we have seen, by a whole cluster of social properties, and in particular by their social origin and their meagre cultural capital, from the two camps to which they are opposed on the terrain of symbolic struggles. What unites them, apart from the closeness of their habitus, are an anticonformist rejection of the official conservatism, making them plunge into every current that is slightly new, a taste for exact observation, a defiance

with respect to lyricism, a belief in the powers of science, a certain pessimism, and perhaps above all a refusal of any hierarchy in objects or styles – a rejection which finds its expression in the right to say everything and in the right of everything to be said.

Flaubert and 'realism'

Duranty and Champfleury wanted a literature of pure observation, social, popular, excluding all erudition, and they took style for a secondary property. Better at declaiming in the Brasserie des Martyrs against Ingres and the official fine arts, along with Courbet, Murger and Monselet – that is, at demolishing rather than constructing – they are mediocre theoreticians, only slightly cultivated, who bring to the intellectual field petit-bourgeois dispositions that are perceived as such: a serious mind and militant inclinations, often rather sectarian, which are antithetical and antipathetic to aesthetic casualness. Moreover, as they draw no distinction between the political field and the artistic field (this is the very definition of social art), they also import modes of action and forms of thought current in the political field, conceiving literary activity as engagement and collective action, founded on regular meetings, slogans, programmes.

Their role is decisive at the beginning: it is they who in the 1850s express and organize the youthful revolt and create the discussion places where new ideas are developed, starting with the very idea of a party of novelty which would come to be called the avant-garde. But, as often happens in the history of intellectual movements (one thinks for example of the recent history of the feminist movement), the enthusiasm and passion of the leaders and militants opens the way and then cedes place to the professionalism of creators who have the economic and cultural means to realize in their works those literary and artistic utopias that their less advantaged precursors have already canvassed in cafés and newspapers (like Duranty, who had circulated his critical views in the press); the very means to return once more, at a higher level of exigency and accomplishment, to the aristocratic freedoms and values of the eighteenth century.

The opposition between art and money, which emerged as one of the fundamental structures of the dominant vision of the world at the same time as the literary and artistic field asserted its autonomy,⁸¹ prevents agents and also analysts (especially when their specialty and/or literary inclinations lead them to an idealized vision of the condition of the artist in the eighteenth century) from perceiving that, as Zola says, 'money has emancipated the writer, money has created modern letters.'⁸² In terms very close to those Baudelaire employed, Zola

recalls in fact that it is money which has freed the writer from dependence on aristocratic patronage and public powers and, against the proponents of a romantic conception of the artistic vocation, he calls for a realist perception of the possibilities that the reign of money affords the writer: 'One must accept without regret or childishness, one must recognize the dignity, the power and justice of money, one must abandon oneself to the new spirit . . .'⁸³ (These quotes and references are borrowed from an article by W. Asholt⁸⁴ which analyses the positions of Vigny (in his preface to *Chatterton*, 1834), Murger (in his preface to *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, 1853), Vallès (in his preface to *L'Argent*, 1860) and Zola on the relations between the writer and money.)

Designated as the head of the realist school after the success of *Madame Bovary*, which coincides with the decline of the first realist movement, Flaubert waxes indignant: 'Everyone thinks I am in love with reality whereas actually I detest it. It was in hatred of realism that I undertook this book. But I equally despise the false brand of idealism which is such a hollow mockery in the present age.'⁸⁵ This formula (whose value as matrix I have already mentioned) conveys the principle of the totally paradoxical (almost 'impossible') position that Flaubert is going to constitute; the character it has of being unclassifiable is manifest in the indecisive debates that he arouses between those who want to pull him towards realism and those who, more recently, have wanted to annex him to formalism (and to the 'Nouveau Roman'). It is also manifest in the fact that people often resort to oxymorons in order to characterize him: Francisque Sarcey called him 'the neo-Parnassian of prose', and a historian speaks of him in terms of 'realism of art for art's sake'.⁸⁶ But, for that, he would have to combine the attributes of the realists, who are today totally forgotten (except for Courbet, who *mutatis mutandis* is a little to Manet what Champfleury was to Flaubert), and of those who were quite opposite to them in so many ways, starting with their social position and vision: Gautier (the author of the preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, and the 'impeccable master' of pure form), Baudelaire, and even the Parnassians. This is not to mention Romantics like Chateaubriand, and all the great ancestors, ignored or renounced by the lovers of novelty at all cost, the Boileaus, La Fontaines or Buffons to whom Flaubert resorts assiduously, thereby inscribing his work in the history of literature instead of simply 'placing himself' within contemporary letters – as do those who are concerned about making a place there, with reference to a certain public – and contributing thereby to the autonomization of the field.

Flaubert, we know, said he had written *Madame Bovary* 'in hatred of realism'. And, in fact, preaching, demonstration and declamation, and all the petit-bourgeois dispositions expressed in them, is what

Flaubert tries to escape in that absolute impassiveness which so shocks commentators, progressives as much as conservatives, beginning with Champfleury and Duranty: 'There is neither emotion, feeling nor life in this novel, but rather a great arithmetical force which has measured and assembled every possible gesture, gait or unevenness of ground in the given characters, events and locations. This book is a literary application of the calculus of probabilities.'⁸⁷

The space of position-takings that analysis reconstitutes does not present itself as such to the writer's consciousness; that would oblige us to interpret his choices as conscious strategies of distinction. It emerges here and there, in fragments, notably in moments of doubt about the reality of the difference that the creator intends to assert in his work itself, and quite apart from any deliberate quest for originality. 'I am afraid of becoming another Paul de Kock or producing a kind of chateaubriandized Balzac.'⁸⁸ 'What I am currently writing risks being like Paul de Kock's work if I do not give it a deeply literary form. But how to render trivial dialogue that is well written?'⁸⁹ And the permanent struggle on two fronts that is implicated in a project founded on a double refusal contains the danger of constantly falling between Scylla and Charybdis: 'I pass alternately from the most extravagant emphasis to the most academic platitude. It reads like Pétrus Borel and Jacques Delille by turns.'⁹⁰ But the threat to artistic identity is never as great as when it is presented in the form of an encounter with an author occupying a position in the field which is apparently very close to his own. This is the case when Bouilhet draws Flaubert's attention to *Les Bourgeois de Molinchart*, a novel by Champfleury that was appearing in serialized form in *La Presse* and whose subject, a provincial adultery, is very close to that of *Madame Bovary*.⁹¹ In fact, Flaubert undoubtedly finds this an occasion to affirm his difference: 'I wrote *Madame Bovary* to annoy Champfleury. I wanted to show that bourgeois dreariness and mediocre sentiments could sustain beautiful language.'⁹²

Better still, he invents in practice, in the work by which he creates himself as a 'creator', the veritable principle of this difference: a singular relationship, which makes up the Flaubertian tonality, between the refinement of the writing and the extreme platitude of a subject which he happens to have in common with the realists, the Romantics, or even the boulevard authors;⁹³ a sort of *dissonance*, by which we are reminded at every moment of the ironic or even parodic distance of the writer from what he writes, or from other manners of writing, such as, in this case, the insipid sentimentality of Champfleury's novels or Duranty's novellas. Zola felt this tension keenly, as well as the aristocratic loftiness which is at the root of it and which

does not preclude a strength of negation on a par with that of the realists: 'Yes, the big word is spoken out loud: Flaubert was a bourgeois, and the most worthy, the most scrupulous, the most orderly you could want. He often said so himself, proud of the esteem he enjoyed, his entire life ordered around work, which did not prevent him from slitting the throat of the bourgeois, of striking out at them on every occasion with his lyrical fits of anger [...]. Happily, alongside the impeccable stylist, the rhetorician crazy about perfection, there is a philosopher inside Flaubert. He is the grandest naysayer we have had in our literature. He professes veritable nihilism – an ism that would have infuriated him – and he did not write a page that did not plunge deep within our emptiness.'⁹⁴

One can, by the way, find a proof *a contrario* of the creative virtue of this tension in the extreme feebleness of Flaubert's theatrical works, where, quite precisely, it comes undone. If Flaubert, author of several plays that met with resounding failure, did lamentably badly in the theatre, it is undoubtedly because the contempt he had for the Ponsards, Augiers, Sardous, for Dumas fils and other successful vaudeville writers (all of them, according to him, only good enough to portray puppets and pull their strings, and who left him with an overly simple idea of the theatre) led him to lapse into exaggerating everything that in his eyes defined the inner logic of the theatre.⁹⁵ This can be seen in *Le Candidat*, a satire on politics written in two months, in which he has a go at all parties – at the Orleanistes, at the partisans of the Comte de Chambord, at reactionaries of all stripes as well as at the republicans – and in which he chose to 'do it crudely', to overload traits, to dramatize one-dimensional characters near to caricature, to inflate by using stage whispers insights into actions already too obvious, and to indulge in schematic demonstration. In short, once he accepts rivalling successful authors instead of appropriating their project by redefining it against them, that is, against the facilities they commit, Flaubert ceases writing like Flaubert.

'Write the mediocre well'

'Write the mediocre well':⁹⁶ this formula in the form of an oxymoron concentrates and condenses his whole aesthetic programme. It gives a fair idea of the almost impossible situation in which he has placed himself in trying to reconcile contraries – that is, requirements and experiences ordinarily associated with opposing regions of the social space and of the literary field, and hence socio-logically irreconcilable

ones. And thus he is going to establish, in the lowest and most trivial forms of a literary genre held as inferior – that is to say, in the subjects commonly treated by the realists, as witness the encounter with *Les Bourgeois de Molinchart* by Champfleury – the highest requirements that had ever been asserted even in the noble genre *par excellence*, such as the descriptive distance and the cult of form imposed in poetry by Théophile Gautier, and after him the Parnassians, in order to combat the sentimental effusion and the stylistic facilities of Romanticism.

This tour de force revealed by analysis is not willed as such. Flaubert does not pit Gautier against Champfleury, or vice versa, nor does he aim to reconcile contraries or to combat the excess of the one with the excess of the other. He opposes both of them, and he constructs himself as much against Gautier and Pure Art as against realism. Near, here again, to Baulelaire or Manet, he feels as much antipathy for the false materialism of a realism that wants to ape the real and that overlooks its true *matter*, that is to say the language that *writing* worthy of the name treats as resonant material (the 'blasting mouth') charged with meaning, as he feels for the adulterated and gratuitous idealism of bourgeois art: 'Art should not be toyed with, even if I am a partisan just as passionate about the doctrine of art for art's sake, understood in my own manner (of course).'⁹⁷

Flaubert calls into question the very fundamentals of the current way of thinking, that is to say, the common principles of vision and division that, at any one moment, ground the consensus about the common meaning of the world: poetry against prose, the poetic against the prosaic, lyricism against vulgarity, conception against execution, idea against writing, subject against technique, and so on; he revokes the limits and the incompatibilities that ground the perceptual and communicative order on the prohibited that is the sacrilege of the mixture of genres or the confusion of orders, prose applied to the poetic and especially poetry applied to the prosaic. In this sense, one could agree with the first critics of *Madame Bovary* who saw in this book (in the manner of Manet's critics denouncing in the painter of Olympia the representative of 'democracy within art')⁹⁸ the first expression of a democracy in letters (so long as one does not make the link these critics were evidently establishing between democracy or democrats in politics, on the one hand, and 'democracy' or 'democrats' in the literary field, on the other). But one cannot make a break with the 'logical conformism' and 'moral conformism' that are at the basis of the social and mental order without suffering consequences. And it is understandable that the

enterprise may have appeared constantly to itself as a form of *folly*: 'It is perhaps absurd to want to give prose the rhythm of verse (keeping it distinctly prose, however) and to write of ordinary life as one writes history or epic (but without falsifying the subject). I often wonder about this. But on the other hand it is perhaps a great experiment, and very original too!'⁹⁹

To want, as he says again, 'to blend lyricism and the vulgar' is to undergo the untenable and disturbing testing which goes with the task of effecting the collision of opposites. In fact, all the time he is writing *Madame Bovary* he does not stop mentioning his suffering, which sometimes turns into despair: he compares himself to a clown performing a tour de force, obliged to execute 'furious gymnastics'; he blames the 'fetid' and 'dissolute' material for preventing him from blasting away on lyrical themes, and he awaits with impatience the moment when he can once more get drunk on fine style. But he says over and over that he does not know, properly speaking, what he is doing, or what the outcome will be of the effort against nature, against his nature anyway, which he is forcing on himself. 'What this book will be, I don't know; but I can say that it will be written.' The only assurance in the face of the unthinkable is the feeling of a tour de force conveyed by the experience of the immensity of the effort, corresponding to the extraordinary difficulty of the enterprise: 'I will have done true writing, which is rare.' 'True writing': for any mind structured according to the principles of vision and division shared by all those who get involved between 1840 and 1860 in the grand battle over 'realism', the expression is by all evidence an *oxymoron*. To say of a book, or rather a piece of writing, as does Flaubert, that 'it is written' has nothing to do with tautology. It is to affirm more or less what Sainte-Beuve means when, with respect to *Madame Bovary*, he declares: 'A precious quality distinguishes M. Gustave Flaubert from other more or less exact observers, who, these days, pride themselves on faithfully rendering reality, and sometimes succeed at it: he has style.'¹⁰⁰

This then is the singularity of Flaubert, if we may believe Sainte-Beuve: he produces writings taken to be 'realistic' (no doubt by virtue of their object) which contradict the *tacit* definition of 'realism' in that they are written, that they have 'style'. This is something, as we see more clearly now, which by no means goes without saying. The programme announced in the formula 'write the mediocre well' is here deployed in its truthfulness: it is a matter of nothing less than *writing* the real (and not describing it, imitating it, or letting it somehow produce itself as a natural representation of nature); that is to say, it is a matter of making that which properly defines literature,

but with respect to the real that is most dully real, the most ordinary, the most whatever is, in contrast to the ideal, not made to be written.¹⁰¹

The challenge to the prevailing forms of thought presented by the symbolic revolution and the absolute originality of what it engenders have as their counterpart the absolute solitude implied by transgressing the limits of the thinkable. This thought which has thus become its own measure cannot really expect that minds structured according to the very categories that it challenges will be able to think this unthinkable. So it is noticeable that critical judgements, when applying to works the principles of division that these works undermine, undo the inconceivable combination of contraries, reducing it to one or the other of the opposed terms. Thus this critique of *Madame Bovary*, trusting in ordinary associations, infers from the vulgarity of objects a vulgarity of style: 'The style of Champfleury (that says it all) – common to pleasure, and trivial, lacking force or breadth, without grace or delicacy. Why should I fear revealing the most outstanding fault of a school which does have its good qualities? The Champfleury school, which we clearly see Flaubert belonging to, considers that style is not good enough for it; it snaps its fingers at it, looks down on it, is full of sarcasm for authors *who write*. Write? What for? Let me be understood, that's enough! But it is not enough for everybody. If Balzac sometimes wrote badly, he always had style. This is what the Champfleurists don't dare acknowledge.'¹⁰²

So there are those who, privileging content, associate *Madame Bovary* with *Les Bourgeois de Molinchart* by Champfleury, with *Les Amours vulgaires* by Vermorel or with *La Bêtise humaine*, a satire on bourgeois life by Jules Noriac – references which must have struck at Flaubert's heart – and on the other hand, people like Pontmartin, putting together the novels of Flaubert and of Edmond About in the same article entitled 'Le roman bourgeois et le roman démocrate', or who, like Cuvillier-Fleury in *Les Débats* of 26 May 1857, link Flaubert and Dumas fils. ('Look,' writes Flaubert, 'someone affects to confuse me with young Alex. Now my *Bovary* is a Lady of the Camellias. Bang!')

But there are also rarer critics, who are more attentive to tone and style and situate Flaubert in the line of the formalist poets. Whereas Champfleury deplores the abuse of description and Duranty the absence of 'sentiment, emotion, life', Jean Rousseau, in *Le Figaro* of 27 June 1858, sees in Gautier the direct inspiration for Flaubert's descriptive style. And Charles Monselet, a renegade from the realist group now become one of the incarnations of the boulevard spirit, dramatizes in a satire entitled *Le Vaudeville du crocodile* a Flaubert

and a Gautier who declare they want to suppress humanity in favour of description: 'In an Egyptian vaudeville,' says the Gautier figure, 'there should be neither men nor women; human beings spoil the landscape, they cut off the lines disagreeably, they alter the smooth curve of the horizon. Man is out of place in nature.' And the Flaubert character replies, 'Yes, by Jove!'¹⁰³

It is not surprising that Baudelaire is the only one to avoid this divided view, and to restore in his receiving it the experience of the tension that is at the root of the tour de force that consists of extracting a universal from 'that subject [which] is the most hackneyed, the most prostituted, the most like the hurdy-gurdy's stalest tune – adultery': 'a style that is vigorous, picturesque, subtle, and exact', finding 'the most ardent and the most heated emotions in the most trite love affair'.¹⁰⁴

What makes for the radical originality of Flaubert, and what confers on his work its incomparable *value*, is that it makes contact, at least negatively, with the totality of the literary universe in which it is inscribed and whose contradictions, difficulties and problems he takes complete responsibility for. It follows that the only chance of truly recapturing the singularity of his creative project and fully accounting for it depends on proceeding exactly inversely to those who are content with chanting the litanies of the Unique. It is by completely historicizing it that one can completely understand how he tears himself away from the strict historicity of less heroic destinies. The originality of his enterprise cannot be truly extracted unless, instead of making an inspired but incomplete guess about such and such a position in the actual field (like the Nouveau Roman – labelled by the famous but poorly interpreted phrase of the 'book about nothing'), we reinsert it into the historically reconstituted space inside of which it was constructed; if, in other words, taking the viewpoint of a Flaubert who was not yet Flaubert, we try to discover what the young Flaubert was obliged to do and wanted to do in an artistic world not yet transformed by what he did – as is the world to which we tacitly refer him in treating him as a 'precursor'. It is in fact our familiar world that prevents us from understanding, among other things, the extraordinary effort that he had to make, the unprecedented resistances that he had to overcome, starting within himself, in order to produce and impose what today, in large part thanks to him, seems to us to be something that can be taken for granted.

In truth, there does not exist in the field one pertinent possible he does not refer himself to in practice, and sometimes explicitly so. First of all there are those possibles which have already been mentioned, such as the insipid Romanticism of the bourgeois theatre

or the 'respectable novel' (to quote Baudelaire), or Champfleury's realism or even Vermorel's (he would have taken, according to Luc Badesco,¹⁰⁵ the opposite course to the author of *Amours vulgaires*, in his portraits of Tricochet and Gaston especially). To these should be added all those he explicitly acknowledged: obviously Gautier, the Quinet of the *Ahasverus* that he knows by heart, and all the poets who, as with Boileau whom he rereads ceaselessly, provide him with antidotes to the bland language of *Graziella*, the clichés of *Jocelyn* and the sentimental outpourings of Musset, whom he reproaches for having only ever sung about his own passions; Baudelaire; Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, with whom he communed in the cult of style, a passion for antiquity and a love of the outrageous remark and caricature; and Heredia, whose preface to the translation of the *Journal de Bernal-Diaz* he admires. Nor should we forget Leconte de Lisle who, despite his disdain for the novel, related his admiration for *Salammbô* and *Les Trois Contes*, and who, in the 1850s, had formulated in various prefaces an aesthetic based, like Flaubert's own, on condemnation of romantic sentimentalism and the poetry of social propaganda; he and Flaubert share a concern for impassivity, the cult of rhythm and plastic exactitude, and also a love of erudition.

In this age when philologists, notably Burnouf, with his *Introduction à l'histoire du bouddhisme*, and even more the historians (Michelet in particular, whose *Histoire romaine* he admired in his youth), are fascinating to writers, in particular to his friends Théophile Gautier and Louis Bouilhet (whose first book *Melaenis*, appearing in 1851, is an archaeological tale), Flaubert takes on an immense labour of research, notably in the preparation of *Salammbô*. His contemporaries see in him a poet doubled with a scholar (Berlioz, who addresses him as a 'scholar poet', consults him over the costumes for *Les Troyens à Carthage*, and his friend Alfred Nion regrets that his modesty prevented him from accompanying the text of *Salammbô* with erudite notes).¹⁰⁶

But the era is also that of Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Lamarck, Darwin, Cuvier, of theories of the origins of species and evolution: Flaubert, who also wants to overcome the traditional opposition between art and science, like the Parnassians, borrows from the natural and historical sciences not only their erudite knowledge but also their characteristic mode of thought and the philosophy drawn from them – determinism, relativism, historicism. He finds there among other things a legitimation of his repugnance for the preaching of social art and his taste for the cold neutrality of the scientific viewpoint: 'What is beautiful in the natural sciences is that they do not want to prove anything. And what breadth of facts and what immensity of thought!

We should treat mankind like mastodons and crocodiles!' Or again: 'treating the human soul with the impartiality that one puts into the physical sciences.'¹⁰⁷ What Flaubert learned from the school of biology, from Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire especially, 'this great man who has shown the legitimacy of monsters',¹⁰⁸ leads him very close to the key Durkheimian dictum 'social facts should be treated like things' that he puts into operation with much rigour in *Sentimental Education*.

One feels that Flaubert is wholly there, in this universe of relationships that would have to be explored one by one, in their double dimension, both artistic and social, and that he nevertheless remains irreducibly beyond it: is this not because the active integration that he effects implies an overcoming? In situating himself, as it were, at the geometric intersection of all perspectives, which is also the point of greatest tension, he forces himself in some fashion to raise to their highest intensity the set of questions posed in the field, to play out all the resources inscribed in the space of possibles that, in the manner of a language or a musical instrument, is offered to each writer, like an infinite universe of possible combinations locked in a potential state within the finite system of constraints.

Return to *Sentimental Education*

It is no doubt *Sentimental Education* that offers the most accomplished example of this confrontation with the set of pertinent position-takings. By its subject, the work is inscribed at the intersection of the romantic and realist traditions: on the one hand, Musset's *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* and Vigny's *Chatterton*, but also the so-called intimist novel that, as Jean Bruneau notes, 'recounts events of daily life and asks the essential questions about them' and which, 'down-to-earth and often moralizing', prefigures the realist novel and the thesis novel;¹⁰⁹ and on the other hand, the second bohemia, whose intimate journal in the romantic manner (as with Courbet's intimist painting of the world familiar to the painter) is converted into the realist novel when, with *Les Scènes de la vie de bohème* by Murger and especially *Les Aventures de Mariette* and *Chien-Caillou* by Champfleury, it registers in a faithful manner the often sordid reality of rawboned daubers' lives, their garrets, watering-holes and love affairs ('It is in reality the saddest life,' writes Champfleury in a letter of 1847, 'consisting of not dining, not having boots, and making about all that a quantity of paradoxes.')

In tackling such a subject, Flaubert comes up against not only

Murger and Champfleury, who are not of his stature: he also confronts Balzac, not just the Balzac of *Un Grand Homme de province à Paris*, the story of nine poor young men, or *Un Prince de la bohème*, but more especially the author of *Le Lys dans la vallée*. The great precursor is explicitly invoked, in the book itself, by means of Deslauriers's advice to Frédéric, 'Remember Rastignac in the *Comédie humaine*.' This reference by one character in a novel to another character in a novel marks the access of the novel to a reflexivity that, we know, is one of the foremost manifestations of the autonomy of a field: the allusion to the internal history of the genre, a sort of wink at a reader able to appropriate this history of works (and not only the story/history recounted in this work), is even more significant in that it is inscribed in a novel that encloses within itself a reference – a negative one – to Balzac. In the fashion of Manet, who introduces into a tradition of rather scholastic imitation a form of distanced imitation, ironic if not parodic, Flaubert performs with regard to the founding father of the genre a deliberately ambiguous bow, which perfectly fits the ambivalent admiration he holds for him. As if to make clearer his rejection of the Balzacian aesthetic, he takes a subject typical of Balzac but erases its Balzacian resonances, thus showing that one can make a novel without 'doing a Balzac' or even, as the defenders of the Nouveau Roman liked to say, that 'one can henceforth no longer do a Balzac' (or do a Walter Scott, as in the 'Légende de Saint Julien' in the *Trois Contes*, where the parodic intention is signalled by direct allusions). As with Manet's references to the grand masters of the past, Giorgione, Titian or Velázquez, Flaubert's references speak both reverence and distance, marking that rupture in the continuity, or that continuity in the rupture, which makes up the history of a field reaching autonomy. This is the complexity of the artistic revolution: under pain of excluding oneself from the game, one cannot revolutionize a field without mobilizing or invoking the experiences of the history of the field, and the great heretics – Baudelaire, Flaubert or Manet – inscribe themselves explicitly in the history of the field, mastering its specific capital much more completely than their contemporaries, so that revolutions take the form of a return to sources, to the purity of origins.

Flaubert does not compete with Balzac (emulation is a sort of defeated identification that leads to dissolution within alterity) and his profound choices undoubtedly owe nothing to the search for distinction. The work necessary for 'doing a Flaubert' – and for making Flaubert – implies a taking of distance from Balzac that does not need to be conceived as such – even if one cannot totally exclude, with either Flaubert or Manet, an intention to mystify the reader or

the viewer by this play on irony, or parody: how for example can one not see in *Un Coeur simple* an affectionate parody of George Sand? And we know that Flaubert had anticipated presenting his *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* in a preface 'so phrased that the reader does not know whether his leg was being pulled'.

In placing the reference to Rastignac in the mouth of Deslauriers, an accomplished incarnation of the petit-bourgeois, Flaubert authorizes us to see in Frédéric – as everything else suggests – the 'counterpart' (as the logicians say) of Rastignac, and this does not mean a failed Rastignac, or even an anti-Rastignac, but rather an equivalent of Rastignac in another possible world, the one Flaubert creates, and which as such competes with the one by Balzac.¹¹⁰ Frédéric contrasts with Rastignac in a universe of possible literary worlds that really exists, at least in the minds of commentators, but also in the universe of a writer worthy of the name. What separates the 'conscious' writer from the 'naïve' writer is precisely that the former masters the space of possibles well enough to sense the meaning that the possible which the writer is in the midst of realizing may acquire from its being put into a relationship with other possibles, and in order to avoid undesirable links which might sidetrack the intention. As proof there is this note by Flaubert in the notebook published by Mme Durry: 'Beware of *Le Lys dans la vallée*.' And could Flaubert not have been thinking as well of *Dominique* by Fromentin, and especially of *Volupté* by Sainte-Beuve, one of those anticipated readers all writers have in mind and even write for, especially when they are writing against them: 'I made *Sentimental Education* in part for Sainte-Beuve. He died without seeing a line of it.'¹¹¹ And how could he not have had in mind *Les Forces perdues* by Maxime Du Camp, that book borrowing from shared memories that appeared in 1866 and of which he said to George Sand that it resembled in many respects the *Education* he was working on?¹¹²

But this is not all. In choosing to write, with the impassivity of a paleontologist and the refinement of a Parnassian, the novel of the modern world, without overlooking a single one of the burning events that divide the literary and political worlds – the 1848 revolution, the artistic debates of the day about 'worker poets', industrial art, the comparison of 'village songs' to the 'lyrics of the nineteenth century' – he smashes a whole series of obligatory associations: the ones that tie the so-called 'realist' novel to the 'literary rabble' or to 'democracy', the 'vulgarity' of objects to the 'baseness' of style, or the 'realism' of the subject to humanist morality. He breaks in one stroke all interdependencies founded on support for one or another of the constitutive terms of convenient pairs of

contraries: thus, more than with *Madame Bovary*, he is fated to disappoint all those who expect literature to demonstrate something, to disappoint defenders of the moral novel as well as proponents of the social novel, conservatives and republicans, those who are sensitive to the triviality of the subject as well as those who reject the aesthetic coldness of the style and the deliberate flatness of the composition.

This series of ruptures of all relationships that, like moorings, could attach the work to groups, to their interests and their habits of thought explains better than the conjuncture (which is often invoked) the reception given by critics to the book, no doubt one of the worst received and also the most inadequately read in Flaubert's whole oeuvre. These ruptures are totally analogous with those accomplished by science, but are not willed as such and operate at the deepest level of the 'unknowing poetics', that is to say, in the work of writing and the work of the social unconscious fostered by the work on form, the instrument of an anamnesis that is both favoured and limited by the denegation involved in the imposition of form. The writing is by no means an outpouring, and there is a gulf between Flaubert's objectification operating in the *Education* and Gustave's subjective projection onto the character of Frédéric seen by commentators in it: 'One does not write what one wants,' says Flaubert. 'And it is true. Maxime [Du Camp] writes what he wants to, or close to it. But that is not writing.'¹¹³ Nor is it a pure documentary account, as those sometimes seen as his disciples seem to think: 'Goncourt is very happy when he has seized upon a word in the street that he can stick in a book, and I am well satisfied when I have written a page without assonances or repetitions.'¹¹⁴

The imposition of form

It is not by chance that the quasi-explicit project of adding up requirements and constraints which seem irreconcilable, being associated with opposite positions in the literary space (hence with the generative dispositions of 'antipathies' and 'incompatibilities of temperament', of exclusions and exclusivities), leads with *Sentimental Education* to an extraordinarily successful (and quasi-scientific) objectification of Flaubert's social experiences and the determinations weighing on them, including those attaching to the writer's contradictory position in the field of power. The work of writing leads Flaubert to objectify not only the positions to which he is opposed in the field together with the people occupying them (like Maxime Du Camp,

whose liaison with Mme Delessert furnishes him with the generative scheme for the relationship between Frédéric and Mme Dambreuse), but also, through the system of relationships that links him with other positions, the whole space in which he is himself enclosed, and hence his own position and his own mental structures. In the chiasmic structure that is obsessively repeated throughout his work, and under the most diverse forms – doubled characters, intersecting trajectories, etc.¹¹⁵ – and in the very structure of the relationship he draws between Frédéric and the benchmark characters in *Sentimental Education*, Flaubert objectifies the structure of the relationship that unites him, as a writer, to the universe of positions constitutive of the field of power or, what amounts to the same thing, to the universe of positions homologous with preceding ones in the literary field.

If he is able to overcome by his work as a writer the incompatibilities instituted in the social world in the form of groups, circles, schools and so forth, and also instituted in the mind (not excluding his own) in the form of principles of vision and division (such as those pairs of notions as -isms that he so detested), it is perhaps for this reason. In contrast to the passive indetermination of Frédéric, the active rejection of all determinations associated with a determined position in the intellectual field,¹¹⁶ to which he was inclined by his social trajectory and the contradictory properties that were at its core, predisposed him to a higher and broader view of the space of possibles, and at the same time to a more complete use of the freedoms concealed by the constraints.

Thus, far from annihilating the creator by the reconstruction of the universe of social determinations that exert pressure on him, and reducing the work to the pure product of a milieu instead of seeing in it the sign that its author has known how to emancipate himself from it (as Proust seemed to fear in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*), sociological analysis allows us to describe and to understand the specific labour that the writer had to accomplish, both against these determinations and thanks to them, in order to produce himself as creator, that is, as the *subject* of his own creation. It even allows us to take account of the difference (ordinarily described in terms of *value*) between works that are the pure product of a milieu and a market, and those that must produce their market and may even contribute to transforming their milieu, thanks to the work of emancipation of which they are the product and which is accomplished, in part, through the objectification of that milieu.

It is not by chance that Proust is not the absolutely unproductive writer who is the narrator of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Proust the writer is what the narrator becomes in and through the work that

produces the *Recherche*, and that produces him as a writer. It is this liberating rupture, creative of the creator, that Flaubert symbolized in dramatizing, in the shape of Frédéric, the powerlessness of a being manipulated by the forces of the field – and this, in the very work whereby he surmounted that powerlessness by evoking the adventure of Frédéric, and, beyond it, the objective truth of the field in which he was writing this story and which, because of the conflict among its rival powers, could have reduced him, like Frédéric, to powerlessness.

The invention of the 'pure' aesthetic

The logic of the double refusal is at the root of the invention of the pure aesthetic that Flaubert achieves, but in an art like the novel that seems dedicated – more or less to the same degree as painting, where Manet will achieve a similar revolution – to the naive search for the illusion of reality. Realism is in effect a partial and abortive revolution: it does not really challenge the confusion of aesthetic value and moral (or social) value that Victor Cousin erected as a 'theory', and that still influences critical judgement when it expects a novel to carry a 'moral lesson' or when it condemns a work for its immorality, its indecency or its indifference. If realism questions the existence of an objective hierarchy of subjects, it is only to invert it, out of a concern to rehabilitate or to take revenge (critics speak of a 'rage to disparage') – not to abolish it. This is why one tends to recognize the existence of a hierarchy in the nature of the social milieux represented rather than in the more or less 'low' or 'vulgar' ways of representing them (which often go together): 'Realism, at the time the word started to be used, had only one meaning: the appearance in a novel of characters who were formerly despised [...]. Realism, *La Revue des Deux Mondes* asserts, is the "depiction of particular worlds and demi-mondes".¹¹⁷ Thus Murger himself is perceived as realist because he presents 'mediocre subjects' and heroes who dress badly, speak disrespectfully of everything and are unaware of social proprieties.

This privileged link with a particular category of objects must be broken by Flaubert in order to generalize and radicalize the partial revolution that realism effected. In particular, this is why – as Manet will do when confronted with a similar problem – he depicts at the same time, and sometimes in the same novel, the highest and lowest, the noblest and the most vulgar, bohemia and high society. Like Manet (in a painting such as *La Blonde aux seins nus*, for example),

he subordinates literal and literary interest in the subject to its interest for representation, he sacrifices sensuality or sentimentality to the sensibility of the literary or pictorial medium – which leads him to reject subjects which touch us too emotionally or to treat them in such a manner as to lower their dramatic interest by a sort of *muting* effect.

While the pure gaze can attach a special interest to objects socially designated as hateful or contemptible (such as Boileau's serpent or Baudelaire's carrion), by reason of the challenge they represent and the prowess they call for, it deliberately ignores all the non-aesthetic differences between objects, and so it may find in the bourgeois universe, notably because of the privileged link that unites it to bourgeois art, a particular occasion to affirm its irreducibility. 'In literature there are not', says Flaubert, 'beautiful subjects for art and [...] So Yvetot is as good as Constantinople.'¹¹⁸ The aesthetic revolution cannot be carried out except aesthetically:¹¹⁹ it is not sufficient to constitute as beautiful that which is excluded by the official aesthetic, to rehabilitate modern, base or mediocre subjects; a power must be affirmed that belongs to art to constitute everything aesthetically by virtue of form ('to write the mediocre well'), to transmute everything in a work of art by the efficacy peculiar to writing. 'It is for this reason that there are no noble subjects or ignoble subjects; from the standpoint of pure Art one might almost establish the axiom that there is no such thing as subject – style in itself being an absolute manner of seeing things.'¹²⁰

But it is not sufficient either to affirm, as do the Parnassians, or even Gautier, the primacy of pure form that, becoming an end in itself, says nothing other than itself. No doubt someone could contradict me here with the famous 'book about nothing', so enchanting to the theoreticians of the Nouveau Roman and the semiologists, or with Baudelaire's oft-quoted passage from the article devoted to Gautier in Cr  pet's *Anthologie des po  tes fran  ais*: 'Poetry [...] has no goal other than itself; [...] and no poem will be so great, so noble, so truly worthy of the name Poetry as that which will have been written solely for the purpose of writing a poem.'¹²¹ In both cases, one condemns oneself to a partial and mutilated reading if one does not hold together the two facets of a truth determined and defined by opposing two opposite errors. Thus, against all those who 'imagine that the aim of poetry is a lesson of some sort, that it must now fortify the conscience, now perfect morals, now *prove* something or other which is useful', in short, against 'the heresy of teaching a lesson', common to Romantics and realists, and its corollaries, 'the heresies of passion, truth, morality',¹²² Baudelaire places himself

alongside Gautier. But even while praising him he dissociates himself imperceptibly from Gautier, by lending him (in a strategy classic to prefaces) a conception of poetry which is not in the least formalist – his own: 'If one considers that with this marvelous faculty [style and knowledge of the language], Gautier combines an immense innate understanding of universal *correspondences* and symbolism, that repertory of all metaphor, one will realize why, without fatigue as without fault, he can always define the mysterious attitude which the objects of creation assume in men's eyes. There is in the work, in the *Logos*, something *sacred* which forbids us to turn it into a game of chance. To know how to use a language is to practice a kind of evocatory magic.'¹²³

It is not, it seems to me, to force the meaning of the last sentence to see there the programme of an aesthetic founded on the reconciliation of possibles unduly separated by the dominant representation of art: a *realist formalism*. What does Baudelaire say in fact? Paradoxically, it is pure work on pure form, a formal exercise *par excellence*, that causes to surge up, as if by magic, a real more real than that which is offered directly to the senses and before which the naive lovers of reality stop, ready to bring in outside moral or political significations which, like the caption of a painting, guide the gaze and divert it from the essential. In contrast to a Parnassian and to Gautier, Baudelaire wants to abolish the distinction between form and substance, style and message: he demands of poetry that it integrate the spirit and a universe conceived as a reservoir of symbols whose language can capture the hidden meaning by drawing on the inexhaustible depths of the universal analogy. The divinatory search for equivalences among data collected by the senses allows them to recover the 'expansion of infinite things' by conferring on them, by the power of the imagination and by the grace of language, the value of symbols capable of melting into the spiritual unity of a common essence. Thus, to the sentimental lyricism of Romanticism (French, at least), that conceives of poetry as the refined expression of feelings, and to the pictorial and descriptive objectivism of Gautier and of the Parnassians that renounces the search for a reciprocal penetration of mind and nature, Baudelaire opposes a sort of mysticism of sensation enlarged by the game of language: an autonomous reality, with no referent other than itself, the poem is a creation independent of creation, and nevertheless united with it by profound ties that no positivist science perceives, and which are as mysterious as the correspondences uniting between themselves beings and things.

This is the same formalist realism defended by Flaubert with

completely different expectations, and in a particularly difficult instance, since the novel is seemingly given to the search for the reality effect at least as rigorously as poetry is given to the expression of sentiment. His mastery of all the requirements of form allows him to assert almost limitlessly the power he possesses to constitute aesthetically any reality in the world, including those which, historically, realism had taken as its chosen objects. Moreover, as we have seen, it is in and through the work on form that evocation (in Baudelaire's strong sense) is effected, the evocation of this real which is more real than are sensory appearances given over to a simple realistic description. 'The idea is born from the form': the work of writing is not a simple execution of a project, a pure imposition of form onto a pre-existing idea, as classical doctrine believes (and as the painting academy still teaches), but a veritable search, similar in its way to that practised by initiatory religions, and destined in some fashion to create conditions favourable to the evocation and the growth of the idea that is none other, in this case, than the real. To reject the stylistic proprieties and conventions of the established novel and to reject its moralism and sentimentalism is all of a piece. It is through work on the written language, involving at the same time and in turn resistance, struggle and submission, a handing over of oneself, that works the evocatory magic which, like an incantation, makes the real rise up. It is when writers manage to let themselves be possessed by words that they discover that words think for them and reveal the real to them.

The research that could be called formal on the composition of the work, the articulation of the stories of different characters, the correspondence between the settings or situations and the behaviours or 'character types', as well as on the rhythm or the colour of phrases, the repetitions and assonances that must be hunted out, the received ideas and conventional forms that must be eliminated, is all part of the conditions of the production of a reality effect more profound than the one analysts ordinarily designate by this term. Unless one sees as a sort of completely unintelligible miracle the fact that analysis can discover in the work – as I have done for *Sentimental Education* – profound structures inaccessible to ordinary intuition (and to the reading of commentators), it must be acknowledged that it is through this work on form that the work comes to contain those structures that the writer, like any social agent, carries within him in a practical way, without having really mastered them, and through which is achieved the anamnesis of all that ordinarily remains buried, in an implicit or unconscious state, underneath the automatisms of an emptily revolving language.

Finally, to make of writing an indissolubly formal and material search, trying to use the words which best evoke, by their very form, the intensified experience of the real that they have helped to produce in the very mind of the writer, is to oblige the reader to linger over the perceptible form of the text, with its visible and sonorous material, full of correspondences with a real that is situated simultaneously in the order of meaning and in the order of the perceptible, instead of traversing it as if it were a transparent sign, read and yet unseen, in order to proceed directly to the meaning. It constrains the reader to discover there the intensified vision of the real that has been inscribed by the magical evocation involved in the work of writing. We can cite a critic of the time, Henry Denys, who describes well the effect Flaubert's first novel might have produced in comparison with painting: 'it contains dazzling pages of audacity and truthfulness. In addition, the everlasting friends within this fiction with rosy fingers, whose head rests in the half-light and the rest of the body in gauzy folds, would perhaps be upset by too harsh a light: the long use of falsifying glasses has given them a weak look, indecisive and superficial.'¹²⁴ And it is doubtless because he succeeds truly in obtaining from the reader, by the force peculiar to the writing, this intensified look at an intensified representation of the real – and of a real methodically overlooked by ordinary convention and proprieties – that Flaubert (like Manet, who did more or less the same thing in his sphere) arouses the indignation of readers who are nevertheless full of indulgence towards works which are devoid of the evocatory magic of his writing. This explains, too, why critics, however accustomed to the precious eroticism of 'respectable' novelists and official painters, have been so numerous in denouncing what they call Flaubert's 'sensualism'.

The ethical conditions of the aesthetic revolution

The revolution of the gaze effected in and through the revolution in writing both presupposes and brings forth a rupture of the link between the ethical and the aesthetic, which goes hand in hand with a total conversion of lifestyle. This conversion, to be accomplished in the aestheticism of the artistic lifestyle, could only be half completed by the realists of the second bohemia, because they were blinkered by the question of the relations between art and reality, between art and morality, but also and especially by the limits of their petit-bourgeois ethos, which prevented them from accepting its ethical implications. All the partisans of social art, whether it is Léon Vasque

talking of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, or Vermorel judging Baudelaire, or Proudhon stigmatizing the habits of artists, see very clearly the ethical foundations of the new aesthetic: they denounce the perversion of a literature that 'becomes venereal and turns to the aphrodisiac'; they condemn the 'minstrels of the ugly and squalid', combining 'moral ignominies' and 'physical corruptions'; they are especially indignant that there are method and artifice in this 'cold, reasoned, studied depravity'.¹²⁵ Scandalously perverse indulgence, but also scandalously cynical indifference to infamy and scandal. One such critic, in an article on *Madame Bovary* and the 'physiological novel', reproaches Flaubert's pictorial imagination for 'shutting itself in the physical world as if it were an immense attic peopled with models that all have the same value in his eyes'.¹²⁶

In fact, the pure gaze which in those days it was a matter of *inventing* (instead of being content with putting it to work, as today), at the cost of breaking the links between art and morality, requires a posture of impassivity, indifference and detachment, if not a cynical casualness which is poles apart from the double ambivalence, composed of horror and fascination, of the petit-bourgeois with respect to the 'bourgeois' and the 'people'. For example, it is Flaubert's violent anarchistic humour, his sense of transgression and the joke, along with this capacity to hold himself at a distance, which allow him to draw the most beautiful aesthetic effects from the simple description of human suffering. Thus, when he regrets that with *Les Amoureux de Sainte-Périne* Champfleury had spoiled a good subject, he states: 'For I don't see that it is comic: I should have made [it] atrocious and lamentable'.¹²⁷ And we can once more evoke that letter in which he encourages Feydeau, then at the side of his dying wife, to draw an artistic profit from this experience: 'You are having and you are going to have "important" experiences, and you are going to be able to turn them into "important" writings. It's a high price to pay. The bourgeois little suspect that we give them our hearts to eat. The race of gladiators is not dead; every artist is one. He amuses the public with his agonies'.¹²⁸

Aestheticism taken to its limit tends towards a sort of moral neutralism, which is not far from an ethical nihilism. 'The only way to live in peace is to place yourself in one leap above all of humanity, and to have nothing to do with it but an ocular relation. This would scandalize the Pelletans, the Lamartines and the whole sterile and *dried-up* race (inactive in the public good as in the ideal) of humanitarians, republicans, etc. – Too bad! They should start paying their debts before preaching charity. Be just respectable, before wanting to be virtuous. Fraternity is one of the most beautiful

inventions of social hypocrisy'.¹²⁹ This freedom with respect to the moral proprieties and humanitarian conformities binding 'respectable' people into Pharisaism is no doubt what profoundly unites the group of guests at the Magny dinners, where, between literary anecdotes and obscene stories, the separation of art and morality is advocated. It is this which grounds the particular affinity between Baudelaire and Flaubert, which the latter invokes when he writes to Ernest Feydeau, during the editing of *Salammbô*: 'I am reaching rather dark tones. We are starting to wade through gore and to burn the dying. Baudelaire would be happy!' And the aesthetic aristocratism which is stated here in the mode of a provocative sally is betrayed in a more discreet and no doubt more authentic manner in a judgement on Hugo such as this one, very close to that formulated by Baudelaire: 'Why did he sometimes proclaim such a ridiculous morality which so diminished him? Why the politics? Why the Académie and the received ideas, the imitation, etc.?'¹³⁰ Or on Erckmann-Chatrian: 'How very boorish! Here are two nuts, who have very plebeian souls'.¹³¹

Thus the invention of the pure aesthetic is inseparable from the invention of a new social personality, that of the great professional artist who combines, in a union as fragile as it is improbable, a sense of transgression and freedom from conformity with the rigour of an extremely strict discipline of living and of work, which presupposes bourgeois ease and celibacy¹³² and which is more characteristic of the scientist or the scholar. The great artistic revolutions are not the act either of the (temporally) dominant, who here as elsewhere have no quarrel with an order that consecrates them, or of the simply dominated, who are usually condemned by their conditions of existence and dispositions to a routine practice of literature and who may supply troops equally to the heretics or to the guardians of the symbolic order. Revolutions are incumbent on those hybrid and unclassifiable beings whose aristocratic dispositions, often associated with a privileged social origin and with the possession of large symbolic capital (in the case of Baudelaire and Flaubert, a sulphurous prestige straight away ensured by scandal), underpin a profound 'impatience with limits', social but also aesthetic limits, and a lofty intolerance of all compromises with the times. 'To seek an honour no matter what, seems to me, besides, an act of incomprehensible modesty'.¹³³

This distance from all positions that favours formal elaboration – it is the work on form which inscribes it into the work itself. It is the pitiless elimination of all 'received ideas', all the typical commonplaces of any group and all the stylistic traits marking or betraying

adherence to or support for one or another of the attested positions or position-takings; it is the methodical use of a free indirect style that leaves as indeterminate as possible the relationship of the narrator to the facts or persons of which the tale speaks. But nothing is more revealing of Flaubert's point of view than the *very ambiguity of viewpoint* marked in the *composition* so characteristic of his books, and so it is with *Sentimental Education*, which critics have often reproached for being made out of a series of 'bits put together', by virtue of the absence of a clear hierarchy of details and incidents.¹³⁴ As Manet will do later, Flaubert abandons the unifying perspective taken from a fixed and central point of view in favour of what one could call, with Panofsky, an 'aggregated space', meaning a space made of juxtaposed pieces and without a privileged point of view. In a letter to Huysmans about *Les Soeurs Vataud*, he writes that it 'lacks, like *Sentimental Education*, the falseness of perspective! There is no progression of effect.'¹³⁵ And we may remember that declaration he made one day to Henry Céard, again about the *Education*: "It is a condemned book, my dear friend, because it does not do *that*" – and, joining his long hands elegant in their robustness, he simulated the shape of a pyramid.¹³⁶ The rejection of a pyramid construction, that is, one with an ascending convergence towards an idea, a conviction, a conclusion, itself contains a message, and no doubt the most important, that is to say a vision – if not to say a philosophy – of the story/history [*histoire*], in the dual meaning of the word. A bourgeois who is fervently anti-bourgeois, Flaubert has at the same time absolutely no illusions about the 'people' (although Dussardier, the sincere and disinterested plebeian – who, believing he is defending the Republic, kills a heroic insurgent – turns out to be an abused innocent and the only luminous figure in the *Education*). But, in his absolute disenchantment, he preserves an absolute conviction concerning the task of the writer. Against all preachers with sterling souls descending from Lamennais (antithesis of Barbès of whom he says to George Sand: 'he loved freedom, that one, and without mincing words, like a man of Plutarch'), he asserts, in the only way that matters, that is, *without mincing words*, and by the very structure of his discourse, his refusal to grant the reader the false satisfactions offered by the false Pharisaic humanism of the vendors of illusions. That text which in refusing to 'make a pyramid' and to 'open up perspectives' declares itself as a discourse of the here and now, and from which the author is effaced (though like Spinoza's God, he remains immanent and coextensive with his creation), there, then, is Flaubert's point of view.

2

The Emergence of a Dualist Structure



If I had Paul Bourget's fame, I would show myself every night in a G-string in a burlesque show and I guarantee I would be big box-office.

ARTHUR CRAVAN

Having evoked the state of the intellectual field in the phase of its formation – a heroic period when the principles of autonomy that will later be converted into objective mechanisms, immanent in the logic of the field, still reside to a large extent in agents' dispositions and actions – in this chapter the wish is to propose a model of the *state* of the literary field as it is established in the 1880s. In fact, one would need to construct a true chronicle of events to get a concrete appreciation of how this universe, anarchic and wilfully libertarian in appearance (which it also is, thanks in large part to the social mechanisms that authorize and favour autonomy), is the site of a sort of well-regulated ballet in which individuals and groups dance their own steps, always contrasting themselves with each other, sometimes clashing, sometimes dancing to the same tune, then turning their backs on each other in often explosive separations, and so on, up until the present time . . .