COMPENDIUM
Journal of Comparative Studies
Revista de Estudos Comparatistas

Flaubert's Landscapes

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht
Stanford University
sepp@stanford.edu
ORCiD: 0000-0001-6364-7723

FROM THE ARCHIVE:

From the Archive is a special section of *Compendium* dedicated to republishing texts from the Centre for Comparative Studies' two-decade history of academic publishing in book form, giving them a new visibility and easier international outreach online. The choice of book chapters and articles to include in this section is based on the way they directly or indirectly communicate with the Issue, thus reconnecting previous and present debates on a common topic. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's "Flaubert's Landscapes" was originally published in Helena Carvalhão Buescu, João Ferreira Duarte and Fátima Fernandes da Silva, eds. (2004). *Corpo e Paisagem Românticos*. Lisbon: Centre for Comparative Studies/Colibri, pp. 55-70.

DO ARQUIVO:

Do Arquivo é uma secção especial da *Compendium* dedicada à republicação de textos provenientes do historial do Centro de Estudos Comparatistas na publicação académica em livro, com mais de duas décadas, dando-lhes nova visibilidade e facilitando o seu alcance internacional na esfera electrónica. A escolha de capítulos de livros e de artigos a integrar esta secção baseia-se na forma como estes comunicam directa ou indirectamente com o Número, cruzando perspectivas e debates anteriores e

ISSN: 2975-8025 | DOI: 10.51427/com.jcs.2022.0009

actuais em torno de um mesmo tópico. “Flaubert’s Landscapes”, de Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, foi publicado originalmente em Helena Carvalhão Buescu, João Ferreira Duarte e Fátima Fernandes da Silva, ed. (2004). *Corpo e Paisagem Românticos*. Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Comparatistas/Colibri, pp. 55-70.

KEYWORDS:

body; Gustave Flaubert; landscape; Realism; Romanticism

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

corpo; Gustave Flaubert; paisagem; Realismo; Romantismo

At best, this short essay will be a partial answer to a very specific question. The question is what we want to identify as the typical components of that form of experiencing nature that we call "romantic" — and whether such a "romantic" vision of nature was concomitant with some historically specific implications in the way of viewing the human body. Part of why this question promises to be interesting is because finding an answer would enable us to discuss, among other things, whether our contemporary view of nature still relies on a legacy of romantic presuppositions.

Now, my strategy of coming up with an answer to this specific question will be very partial because I shall concentrate, in the first place, on the texts of just one literary author, i.e. on the work of Gustave Flaubert — Gustave Flaubert who, secondly, has never been subsumed under the historiographical chapter heading of "Romanticism" (but has his undisputed status as one of the great representatives of 19th century "literary Realism"). In addition — as if to make things artificially complicated — I will start my argument by relating early 19th century literary perspectives on landscape and on the human body to some historically specific structures within contemporary epistemology, i.e. to the most typical procedures of 19th century knowledge production and knowledge distribution. For only within this context will it become plausible why I associate Flaubert's texts with the concept of "Romanticism".

I will start, then, by describing how 19th century literary Realism — and how, within this context, Gustave Flaubert's way of writing — were in a historically specific relationship to contemporary epistemology. This will enable us, as a second step, to formulate a tentative thesis about how Flaubert's "realistic" views of landscape and of the human body can also be seen as a "romantic" attitude. The third and main part of my essay will present a detailed analysis of some landscape descriptions in Flaubert's four novels and in his *Tentation de Saint Antoine*, leading to a small typology of pertinent textual procedures. This typology will finally be the basis for the development of a second and more complex description of what we may understand as a specifically romantic perspective on literary landscape and on literary evocations of the human body.

1.

We should never speak of "literary realism" (nor of any other type of "realism") outside a historically specific frame of reference. For, quite inevitably, every existing form of human expression has to be "realistic" inasmuch as it cannot escape those particular epistemological structures through which each cultural context shapes its own reality. Seen from this angle, the 12th century Christian epic was as "realistic" as the 19th century novel or as the Renaissance sonnet. If we continue to have the impression, even today, that a certain type of 19th century novel is especially close to our own conception of reality, such an effect is due to a very specific historical configuration, a configuration that still produces an impression of affinity between our present epistemological environment and some genres of 19th century literature, a configuration finally that may well cease to produce the same effect for readers of future ages. More specifically: the type of writing that we call "19th century Realism"

emerged from a range of reactions with which literary authors responded to a profound epistemological crisis that had occurred in the first quarter of their century — and that we have not yet completely left behind ourselves. I am referring here to the very crisis that Michel Foucault so famously described as "*crise de la représentation*" — and that we may also call, with a concept invented by Niklas Luhmann which Luhmann himself never cared to historicize, the "crisis of (the emergence of) the second order observer". Seen from a historical angle, the emergence of the second order observer during the first decades of the 19th century turned into a problematization of the figure of the first order observer with whose institutionalization Western intellectual Modernity has started four or five centuries earlier. As a first order observer, man had thought of himself, since the age of the Renaissance, as eccentric vis-à-vis the world of objects — whereas, during the Middle Ages, he had conceived of himself as being part of the world as a divine creation. Secondly, the first order observer thought of himself as a purely spiritual (since the 17th century: as a purely "Cartesian") entity whose task it was to produce knowledge by interpreting the world of objects from a position of distance. Interpretation was thought to be the movement of finding a meaning "beyond" or "beneath" the purely material surface of things. In this configuration of self-reference, then, knowledge production appeared to be an exclusively human achievement — which marked a contrast in comparison to the reliance of medieval culture on divine revelation. Finally, the results of infinite acts of interpretation were supposed to accumulate in (ever more complex) "world pictures" that would become the basis for all future-oriented planning and acting in human societies.

For reasons about which we can only speculate on a level of abstraction that is too high for any historical illustration, this figure of the early modern world observer turned obsessively self-reflexive from the first decades of the 19th century on. The second order observer is thus a first order observer condemned to observe himself in the very act of observation. This self-reflexive turn had two major consequences. A second order observer could not fail to discover, in the first place, that the knowledge (i.e. the elements of world-representation) that he was producing depended, necessarily, on his perspective of observation, that is on his previously accumulated knowledge and on the specific position from which he was observing. This meant that, for each object of reference, there were as many possible representations as there were potential points of view. It was then easy to understand that, ultimately, the number of possible representations for each object of reference had to be infinite — which consequence would undermine, from the side of representation, the assumption of a coherent and stable object of reference. The second consequence coming from the emergence of the second order observer was the insight that there was no truly disembodied observer and that, therefore, the observer's world appropriation, inevitably, had to be a mixed operation between experience (world appropriation through concepts) and perception (world-appropriation through the senses). What remained unclear, however, was how experience and perception should ever become mutually compatible.

We all know that 19th century philosophy and science found an exuberantly successful solution to the first of these two problems, i.e. the problem of multiple representation. We may characterize this solution as the substitution of a mirror-

like principle of representation through a narration-based principle of representation. If, until the end of the 18th century, phenomena had been described by one-dimensional definitions or images (think of the entries and of the *Planches* in d'Alembert's and Diderot's *Encyclopédie*), 19th century Philosophy of History and contemporary Evolutionism switched to narrative discourses as devices of identification. What gave this switch the status of a solution must have been the capacity of those narrative discourses to absorb the existing multiple representations of individual objects of reference, which had been the first problem produced by the second order observer. The second problem stemming from the emergence of the second order observer, however, the problem regarding the compatibility between experience and perception, never found a convincing solution — which of course made it only more visible in its historical context, not the least due to endless attempts at finding a satisfying response.[1]

Far beyond the confines of academic philosophy, the crisis of the second order observer was broadly experienced as a loss of primary trust in "Reality" as a "ground" for cognition and for existence at large, within 19th century western societies. This is why all those forms of literature and of art that reacted to the epistemological challenge became easily associated with a corresponding function of reassurance — and this is also the reason that makes if historically legitimate to use the name of literary "Realism" for all those 19th century narratives that tried to react to the different problems produced by the second order observer[2]. Of course there were many different discursive modalities referring to the epistemological challenge. They ranged — just to focus on the example of French literature — from Balzac's complex attempts at keeping alive the belief in a kind of cosmological world — and knowledge order (see Gumbrecht and Muller, 1980), via Stendhal's struggles with the principle of world-representation and his growing frustration about it (see Gumbrecht 2000), to Gustave Flaubert's apparent refusal to mediate between different, intrinsically incoherent and even contradicting perspectives of world experience. What characterizes Flaubert's texts within 19th century literary Realism are indeed the radical absence of an auctorial narrator, the blunt juxtaposition of narrative perspectives and of elements of knowledge that do not converge or complement each other and, altogether, the apparent calm — or should one go so far to say: the contemptousness? — with which he appeared to handle the explosion of multiple representations.

2.

Now, is it possible to cast into a single (and certainly complex) concept what we normally appreciate (without the need of reflecting too much about it) as a "romantic" view of landscape, and how could such a concept — if we manage to find one at all — relate to the historical emergence of the second order observer? Perhaps we

[1] For a detailed account of the "second observer crisis", see chapter (II) of my forthcoming book *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford, 2003).

[2] There is reason to insist that the phrase "19th century Realism" ("Realism" with capital "R" indeed!) has the status of a name because it refers to an individual phenomenon. In contrast, I think literary history and art history should refrain from using the word "realism" as a typological concept.

may simply say that a romantic view of landscape *already* includes all the consequences that we attribute, at least today, to the emergence of the second order observer — but that it does *not yet* presuppose the experience of these consequences as a problem, in any epistemological or even a practical sense. In other words: a romantic view of landscape would certainly have allowed for different observers to have different "pictures" of the same mountains and of the same rivers, and it would also have assumed that these "pictures" were constituted by concepts as much as by the bodily senses — without this pluralization of individual "pictures" or this interference of concepts with sensual perceptions raising any concerns.

On the contrary, Romanticism tended to celebrate as an enrichment what 19th century epistemology would later identify as a challenge — if not as a scandal. The aspect in particular that the human body would become, once again, a dimension of resonance for — and thereby part of — man's physical environment seems to have fostered, in the beginning, a new feeling of "romantic" familiarity and closeness vis-à-vis the world. There are multiple examples that can illustrate our formula of the romantic view of landscape and of the body as a second order observer view — before an awareness of its intrinsic epistemological problems began to prevail. No other European author of the early 19th century was as fond as Friedrich Schlegel of observing himself in the world-observing act of writing and of pushing such second order observation to ever higher levels of potentially endless self-reflexivity and self-complexification. Although self-observation also was the central precondition and at the same time the most operative motif for the philosophy of German Idealism, we associate the intense enthusiasm with which Schlegel explored this new dimension of thought as the distinctively romantic flavor of his intellectual style. Or think of the landscape paintings by Caspar David Friedrich. Many of them show a human figure in the foreground — and these figures appear, quite unambiguously, as observers of the thematized landscape. But the perspectives that we can reconstruct, on the one hand, as the perspective of the painter and, on the other hand, the perspectives of the represented observers do not enter yet into any tension or conflict. On the contrary, Friedrich seems to simply welcome such increased complexity in the spatial dimension of his paintings, without yet finding any new problems of world construction in them.

The boldest — and certainly also the most frequently noted — move in this early stage of the historical transition towards the second order observer was a new relation to the material world that French poets would refer to with the concept of "*correspondance*". It pointed to the impression that there was a possibility for the individual to "read" a landscape as if it were the "expression" of the feelings that were prevailing in his or in her soul at a given moment. This new relationship between the landscape and the soul would not only imply the possibility, for the landscape, to be described in concepts similar to those that had traditionally captured the states of the human psyche (only from now on, a landscape could be seen as "melancholic" or as "serene"); it also enabled the landscape to shape specific moments of the individual soul, in the sense that the impression of a landscape could produce, for example, states of "solemnity" or of "jubilation" in the soul. For this new plasticity in the interplay between the human psyche and the spatial environment of the human body, the German language invented the concept of "*Landschafts-Stimmung*".

It might be best translated as "landscape resonance" (after all, "*Stimmung*" primarily refers to an impression of sound), "landscape resonance" in the double meaning of the landscape resonating with the individual psyche and the individual psyche being adaptable to the impressions of different types of landscape. Finally, romantic aesthetics transformed into the promise of synaesthesia the new awareness of a double-leveledness between concepts and the bodily senses (and of the plurality of the different bodily senses) in the appropriation of the physical environment. Far yet from obsessively insisting on the incompatibility between a world appropriation through concepts and a world appropriation through the senses, romantic poetry was still confident that those different modes in the relation between the psyche and the physical world could be brought together in synaesthesia as an overarching feeling of sensual complementarity and harmony.

3.

If we now turn to some of Gustave Flaubert's landscape descriptions, with the goal of giving more conceptual depth and complexity to our first hypothesis about the literary constitution of romantic landscape, it is necessary to emphasize, once again, that there was probably no other European author in the third quarter of the 19th century who was less "romantic" in his writing than Flaubert. It is no overstatement to say that what gives their specific energy to Flaubert's great novels was indeed an attitude of irony vis-à-vis some of the central motifs that made up the romantic style of experience. This attitude of irony — in the sense of a distance within repetition — enabled Flaubert to inhabit the romantic style of experience and, by inhabiting it, to reproduce its discourses in the mode of parody. Only an author who was perfectly familiar with the ecstatic expectations towards individual love evoked by so many romantic novels could draw the devastating picture of their potentially life-destroying impact which is in the center of Flaubert's master novel *Madame Bovary*. Only an intellectual who had lost all illusions about aesthetic education as an existential apprenticeship was able to achieve the ultimate flatness in the description of a "romantic" character which, more than any other feature, characterizes Frédéric Moreau, the hero of *Éducation sentimentale*. In *Salambô*, finally, Flaubert seems to have pushed the discursive modes of irony and parody so far that it became impossible for his readers to distinguish whether his descriptions were the ultimate condemnation of — or the symptom of a secret enthusiasm for — a boundless opulence in the evocation of "purple" (as he himself called them) historical environments. If we trust the "entries" of his *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, Flaubert's notebook for the most common commonplaces that were dear to the contemporary French middle class (a manuscript also that had preceded *Bouvard et Pécuchet* as project for a book on the vulgarity of knowing), if we trust the pertinent "entries" of his *Dictionnaire*, then we certainly gain the impression that Flaubert, throughout his career as an author, was as intellectually distant as possible from the conceptual and emotional repertoire of Romanticism.

And yet, even the most devastating critique — especially if it is articulated in the modes of irony and parody — can never completely escape a potential for

ambiguity in view of its object. This is particularly true for the ways in which Flaubert refers to the romantic rediscovery of the human body as a mode of appropriation but also as a part of the physical world. No description of physical detail beats the grotesque horror of the pages dedicated to the clubfoot operation that occupies — with astonishing arithmetic preciseness — the center of *Madame Bovary*. No other scene goes further in the merciless description of the decadence of a formerly glorious body than the sentences that let the reader imagine the heroine's poisoned corpse at the end of the same novel. Likewise, I know of no other more distant and more miserable literary presence of an infant's body than that of Rosanette's and Frédéric's child in *Éducation sentimentale*. For far from all philosophical concepts this child's body illustrates the 19th century vision of a being that is not ready for the struggle of life. In *Salambô*, the corpses of the mercenaries that remain on the battlefield mark the furthest possible distance from the humanitarian ideals and feelings of compassion, whereas some of the scenes in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* belong to the most ridiculous body images that literature has ever produced.

As I mentioned before, there is no detached narrator's "voice" to coordinate all these discourses that Flaubert inhabits and juxtaposes. Wherever he uses some of the stylistic effects that we consider to be "typically romantic," we cannot pinpoint those other devices through which, at the same time, he takes distance from the romantic tone. And yet the impression of such a distance is irrefutably there — thanks probably to the presence, in the same novels, of those descriptions which, instead of being "romantically" sympathetic or expressive, emphasize what is aggressively ugly and grotesque. This may also be the reason why the reader finds the full range of romantic forms in Flaubert's landscape descriptions and enjoys, at the same time, the privilege of a distance that helps him understand how an anti-romantic author can so perfectly write in the different romantic discourses.

The most famous textual instance where the immediacy of a discursive reproduction and the ungraspable effect of distance come together in the picture of a landscape is of course Emma Bovary's daydream of what a honeymoon should be like. It has been endlessly quoted to illustrate the morphology of Flaubert's most famous form-invention, the *discours indirect libre*:

> Elle songeait quelquefois que c' étaient là pourtant les plus beaux jours de sa vie, la lune de miel, comme on disait. Pour en goûter la douceur, il eût failu, sans doute, s'en aller vers ces pays à noms sonores où les lendemains de mariage ont de plus suaves paresses! Dans des chaises de poste, sous de stores de soie bleue, on monte au pas des routes escarpées, écoutant la chanson du postillon, qui se répète dans la montagne avec les clochettes des chèvres et le bruit sourd de la cascade. Quand le soleil se couche, on respire au bord des golfes le parfum des citronniers; puis, le soir, sur la terrasse des villas, seuls et les doigts confondus, on regarde les étoiles en faisant des projets. Il lui semblait que certains lieux sur la terre devaient produire du bonheur, comme une plante particulière au sol et qui pousse mal toute autre part. (Flaubert, 1986: 100)

An adequate understanding of this paragraph and we know that such an understanding was not easily available for the first generation of Flaubert's readers — will realize that its words evoke the imagination of a woman addicted to a certain type of romantic novel, but that they do so under the effect of a distancing irony. A similar combination may be at place in the scene of Emma's first excursion on

horseback with Rodolphe, the man who will become her lover after the catastrophic failure of Charles Bovary's clubfoot operation. This passage begins with the portraits of a male and of a female figure that I believe are meant to correspond to Emma's and Rodolphe's idealized (and converging) self-images:

> Dès qu'il sentit la terre, le cheval d' Emma prit le galop. Rodolphe galopait à côté d'elle. Par moments ils échangeaient une parole. La figure un peu baissée, la main haute et le bras droit déployé, elle s'abandonnait la cadence du mouvement qui la berçait sur la selle. Au bas de la côte, Rodolphe lâcha les rênes: ils partirent ensemble d'un seul bond; puis, en haut, tout à coup, les chevaux s'arrêtèrent et son grand voile bleu retomba. (Flaubert, 1986: 225)

But the ideal convergence between the self-images of the two future lovers and the rhythm of their joint movement does not extend into the following landscape description. This becomes clear in its very first sentence because it does not establish, as the reader might have expected, a synaesthetic link between the emerging love affair and the *topos* of spring as the season of love — but paints the countryside in the hazy colors of autumn. Instead of turning Emma's physical environment into an expression of her soul, it becomes a complex symbol for the abyss between her dreams and her everyday world. The rhythm of the prose almost abruptly changes from a complex fluidity to *staccato*:

> On était aux premiers jours d'octobre. Il y avait du brouillard sur la campagne. Des vapeurs s'allongeaient à l'horizon, contre le contour des collines; et d'autres, se déchirant, montaient, se perdaient. Quelquefois, dans un écartement des nuées, sous un rayon de soleil, on apercevait au loin les toits d'Yonville, avec les jardins au bord de l'eau, les cours, les murs et le clocher de l'église. Emma fermait à demi les paupières pour reconnaître sa maison, et jamais ce pauvre village où elle vivait ne lui avait semblé si petit.

In the central chapter of *Éducation sentimentale*, the chapter about the days that Frédéric Moreau and his lover Rosanette spend at Fontainebleau, while the Revolution of 1848 is about to explode in Paris, Flaubert seems to have pushed to an extreme some of the ironic techniques of writing that he had already played out in *Madame Bovary*. If we feel that Emma Bovary manages to believe in the effects of her self-deception until the final breakdown occurs, the lovers of *Éducation*, in contrast, no longer manage to compensate for the lack of spontaneous feelings in the same fashion, i.e. by projecting into their environment what they believe romantic love should be. Emma's luxurious daydream of the ideal honeymoon landscape has now contracted into a conventional formula that does not even convince the couple who so desires to conjure up a romantic world: "On leur servit un poulet avec les quatre membres étendus, une matelote d'anguilles dans un compotier en terre de pipe, du vin râpeux, du pain trop dur, des couteaux ébréchés. Tout cela augmentait le plaisir, l'illusion. Ils se croyaient presque au milieu d'un voyage, en Italie, dans leur lune de miel" (Flaubert, 2002: 437). As Rosanette has never acquired any historical knowledge, there is nothing she could possibly associate with the castle of Fontainebleau — except for the embarrassing awareness that she should be able to

transform its scenery into historical imagination. All she remembers during a tour of the historical buildings is that she should remember something:

> Son mutisme prouvait clairement que [Rosanette] ne savait rien, ne comprenait pas, si bien que par complaisance il lui dit:
> "Tu t'ennuies peut-être?"
> "Non, non, au contraire!"
> Et, le menton levé, tout en promenant à l'entour un regard des plus vagues, Rosanette lâcha ce mot:
> "Ça rappelle des souvenirs!" (Flaubert, 2002: 431)

As the protagonists are lacking the images and the knowledge that could transform the empty form of memory into a romantic interplay of *correspondances*, the description of landscape, as an obligatory part in any 19th century love story, is turning into a space that will be filled up with different conventional discourses. In the paragraph that describes the tour of the castle, for example, Flaubert stages a stylistic transition from an impression of scientific objectivity (produced through a vocabulary that is inaccessible to a non-specialist reader) to a tone that transforms trees and plants into the shapes of mythological beings. Above all the reader never gains the impression that these different modes of description could have originated in the minds of Frédéric or Rosanette:

> La diversité des arbres faisait un spectacle changeant. Les hêtres, à l'écorce blanche et lisse, entremêlaient leurs couronnes; des frênes courbaient mollement leurs glauques ramures; dans les cépées de charmes, des houx pareils à du bronze se hérissaient; puis venait une file de minces bouleaux, inclinés dans des attitudes élégiaques; et les pins, symétriques comme des tuyaux d'orgue, en se balançant continuellement, semblaient chanter. Il y avait des chênes rugueux, énormes, qui se convulsaient, s'étirant du sol, s'étreignaient les uns les autres, et, fermes sur leurs troncs, pareils à des torses, se lançaient avec leurs bras nus des appels de désespoir, des menaces furibondes, comme un groupe de Titans immobilisés dans leur colère. (Flaubert, 2002: 435)

It must be the reader's unfulfilled romantic expectation that makes him so keenly aware, in these scenes, of what a romantic *correspondance* between the landscape and the protagonists' states of mind should have been. Given, however, the emptiness of the protagonists' imagination, it rather occurs that the landscape will overwhelm their feelings — while it remains unthinkable that they will ever decipher the same landscape as an expression of their souls. As soon as he feels "the seriousness of the forest", Frédéric begins to hear Rosanette's voice as if it were one of the birds' voices, and he sees her body as a part of the landscape. Quite literally, Rosanette begins to disappear in the textual evocation of multiple objects:

> Le sérieux de la forêt les gagnait; et ils avaient des heures de silence où, se laissant aller au bercement des ressorts, ils demeuraient comme engourdis dans une ivresse tranquille. Les bras sous la taille, il l'écoutait parler pendant que les oiseaux gazouillaient, observait presque du même coup d'oeil les raisins noirs de sa capote et les baies des genévriers, les draperies de son voile, les volutes des nuages; et quand il se penchait vers elle, la fraîcheur de sa peau se mêlait au grand parfum des bois. (Flaubert, 2002: 436f)

Salambô, Flaubert's historical novel, makes me suspect that he was only willing to allow an interplay of *correspondance* between his protagonists' feelings and the landscape around them when romantic poetology would not have suggested the reader to expect such a relationship. As soon as the army of seditious mercenaries finally obeys the order of Carthage to move to a place at a safe distance from the city, the landscape turns into a projection of their state of physical depravation. Bodily needs permeate the perception of the environment. This is why each potential place of arrival disappears as soon as it comes closer, transforming itself into yet another distant horizon:

> La route s'allongeait sans jamais en finir. A l'extrémité d'une plaine, toujours on arrivait sur un plateau de forme ronde; puis on redescendait dans une vallée, et les montagnes qui semblaient boucher l'horizon, à mesure que l'on approchait d'elles, se déplaçaient comme en glissant. De temps à autre, une rivière apparaissait dans la verdure des tamarix, pour se perdre au tournant des collines. (Flaubert, 2001: 85)

Several chapters later, while Carthage, under the guidance of Hamilcar, has regained the political initiative and controls once again the military situation, the mercenaries' perception of the landscape is no longer exclusively determined by their physical depravation. What they now see is conditioned by the fear of an enemy who they know will challenge them but whom they are unable to spot. Once again, the landscape turns into a mirror of their feelings:

> Les Barbares campés à Utique, et les quinze mille autour du pont, furent surpris de voir au loin la terre onduler. Le vent qui soufflait très fort chassait des tourbillons de sable; ils se levaient comme arrachés du sol, montaient par grands lambeaux de couleur blonde, puis se déchiraient et recommençaient toujours, en cachant aux Mercenaires l'armée punique. A cause des cornes dressées au bord des casques, les uns croyaient apercevoir un troupeau de boeufs; d'autres, trompés par l' agitation des manteaux, prétendaient distinguer des ailes, et ceux qui avaient beaucoup voyagé, haussant les épaules, expliquaient tout par les illusions du mirage. Cependant quelque chose d'énorme continuait à s' avancer. (Flaubert, 2001: 217)

It fits the possible logic according to which only the least educated protagonists will be allowed to engage in a relation of *correspondance* with the landscape around them, if Bouvard and Pécuchet, the most aggressively mediocre and intellectually ambitious among all of Flaubert's characters, are those who have no perception whatsoever of their physical environment. The only world that they inhabit is the stale world of knowledge, accessible alone through books and encyclopedias. Bouvard and Pécuchet never pay any attention to the impressions produced by their senses. The one description of a "landscape" that we find in Flaubert's final (and unfinished) novel happens to be the summary of a series of prehistoric scenarios from Cuvier's *Discours sur les révolutions du globe*, published in 1821. Flaubert's text highlights how ridiculously familiar the protagonists think they are with the most advanced paleontological knowledge of their time. It is this feeling of familiarity which makes Bouvard and Pécuchet remark, in passing, that one of the scientific images painted by Cuvier must be a prehistoric view of Montmartre — which implies that Montmartre, for Flaubert's heroes, is rather an image produced by a book than a potential object of immediate experience:

> Après ces lectures [sc.: de Cuvier], ils se figurèrent les choses suivantes.
>
> D'abord une immense nappe d'eau, d'où émergeaient des promontoires, tachetés par des lichens; et pas un être vivant, pas un cri. C'était un monde silencieux, immobile et nu. — Puis de longues plantes se balançaient dans un brouillard qui ressemblaient la vapeur d'une étuve. Un soleil tout rouge surchauffait l'atmosphère humide. Alors des volcans éclatèrent, les roches ignées jaillissaient des montagnes; et la pâte des porphyres et des basaltes qui coulait, se figea. — Troisième tableau: dans des mers peu profondes, des îles de madrépores ont surgit […]. Enfin, sur les grands continents, des grands mammifères parurent, les membres difformes comme des pièces de bois mal équarries, le cuir plus épais que des plaques de bronze, ou bien velus, lippus avec des crinières, et des défenses contournées. Des troupeaux de mammouths broutaient les plaines où fut depuis l'Atlantique; le paléothérium, moitié cheval moitié tapir, bouleversait de son groin les fourmilières de Montmartre, et le cervus giganteus tremblait sous des châtaigniers, à la voix de l'ours des cavernes qui faisaient japper dans sa tanière, le chien de Beaugency trois fois haut comme un loup.
>
> Toutes ces époques avaient été séparées les unes des autres par des cataclysmes dont le dernier est notre déluge. (Flaubert, 1999: 131f)

The definite articles with which they refer to prehistoric animals ("*le* chien de Beaugency") and the possessive pronoun that blurs the epistemological difference between Natural History and the Old Testament ("*notre* deluge") make it clear that this bookish world is indeed the world in which Bouvard et [*sic.*] Pécuchet are living. If their environment, however, sets them apart from the dimension of immediate bodily perceptions, it also makes them helplessly vulnerable — and excitable — for any perception that ever reaches their mind through the senses. This is why the fifty--four-year-old Pécuchet experiences a moment of sexual arousal as "something completely new" when he happens to watch the servant woman Mélie pump water:

> Mélie, dans la cour, tirait de l'eau. La pompe en bois avait un long levier. Pour le faire descendre, elle courbait les reins — et on voyait alors ses bas bleus jusqu'à la hauteur de son mollet. Puis, d'un geste rapide, elle levait son bras droit, tandis qu'elle tournait un peu la tète. Et Pécuchet en la regardant, sentait quelque chose de tout nouveau, un charme, un plaisir infini. (Flaubert, 1999: 243)

La Tentation de Saint Antoine finally, the one text by Gustave Flaubert which, between the discursive traditions of hagiography, philosophical treatise, and allegorical hallucination, defies all historical or systematic concepts of genre, begins with yet another landscape description that is detached from all physical reality and from all immediate perception. But in this case the distance from actual perception frees the text to become a dense expression of the hermit protagonist's complex character. There is quite literally not a single word in this opening paragraph that the reader could not decipher as referring to some specific feature in the personality of Saint Anthony:

> C'est dans la Thébaïde, au haut d'une montagne, sur une plate-forme arrondie à demi-lune, et qu'enferment de grosses pierres.
>
> La cabane de l'Ermite occupe le fond. […]
>
> La vue est bornée à droite et à gauche par l'enceinte des roches. Mais du côté du désert, comme des plages qui se succéderaient, d'immenses ondulations parallèles d'un blond cendré s'étirent les unes derrière les autres, en montant toujours; — puis au delà des sables, tout au loin, la chaîne libyque forme un mur couleur de craie, estompé

> légèrement par des vapeurs violettes. En face, le soleil s'abaisse. Le ciel, dans le nord, est d'une teinte gris-perle, tandis qu'au zénith des nuages de pourpre, disposés comme les flocons d'une crinière gigantesque, s'allongent sur la voûte bleue. Ces rais de flammes se rembrunissent, les parties d'azur prennent un pâleur nacrée; les buissons, les cailloux, la terre, tout maintenant paraît dur comme du bronze; et dans l'espace flotte une poudre d'or tellement menue qu'elle se confond avec la vibration de la lumière. (Flaubert, 1967: 31f)

4.

Returning to the initial question about the historically specific relationship between the body as a medium of world perception and the literary constitution of landscape in the literature of Romanticism, our analysis of some passages from Flaubert's novels allows us to make a very elementary — and yet astonishing — distinction. There are, on the one hand and astonishingly indeed, landscape descriptions that Flaubert stages as having emerged independently from any actual perception of the physical world. This is true, in the style of the most traditional allegorical discourse, for the opening scene of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*; for the science-inspired imagination of prehistoric landscapes in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*; for the picture that Emma Bovary wants to cultivate of herself as well as of the ideal landscapes of love. Wherever, on the other hand, perception is meant to play a role in the ways that Flaubert's protagonists see the world, the relationship between the world and the protagonists' psyche is not one of harmony and of *correspondance*. Rather, the protagonists' openness towards their physical environment tends to produce situations of interference between the protagonists' intentions and those waves of unexpected excitement that invade their psyche. Once the quietness of the forest overcomes Frédéric Moreau, his lover begins to vanish for him; inadvertently watching a female body derails Pécuchet so decisively from a lifestyle exclusively dedicated to the cultivation of knowledge that he will need long sessions of "hydrotherapy" (consisting of many buckets of ice-cold water) to regain his composure; letting finally their desires and their fears interfere with the perception of a desertic landscape weakens the determination of the mercenaries in *Salambô*.

But how is it possible that these non-romantic descriptions provide us with such a complex understanding of the romantic relationship between body and landscape? The answer is that none of the non-romantic descriptions could function without the contrasting background of romantic poetics. Emma Bovary's daydreams would not have had their shocking and sobering effect, if no reader had ever believed that a "*correspondance*" between the individual soul and the surrounding landscape was possible; the scene of Pécuchet's first erection would not be so hilarious, if we did not assume that our bodies, normally, constantly and inevitably react to their physical environment. As Flaubert, different from most other authors of 19th century Realism, had no intention to defend the possibility — or at least the idea — of a harmonious relation between the world and the individual psyche, he was free to evoke the romantic motif of *correspondance* in all its precariousness or, seen from a more blatant perspective, in all its philosophical and psychological impossibility.

This is a less optimistic but also a much more complex view than a reader could ever gain from romantic literature itself.

Flaubert helps us understand that romantic landscape descriptions, on the one side, already presuppose — as their tacit epistemological frame condition — the two key consequences coming from the emergence of the second order observer, i.e. the pluralization of representation and the two-leveledness of world appropriation. On the other side, however — and different from all realistic authors, in particular different from Flaubert — romantic literature had not yet identified these two innovations as potential philosophical and even potential practical problems. Most romantic authors rather indulged both in individualizing the "interaction" between their protagonists and the literary landscape and in imagining complex dimensions of harmony between physical perception and conceptual experience. At least from an intellectual point of view, such dreams must have been so remote for Gustave Flaubert that he could describe and analyze them with astonishment and irony, rather than with feelings of approval, protest or regret.

Works Cited

FLAUBERT, Gustave. 2002. *Éducation sentimentale*. Garnier Flammarion.

——— (2001). *Salambô*. Garnier Flammarion.

——— (1999). *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Garnier Flammarion.

——— (1986). *Madame Bovary*. Garnier Flammarion.

——— (1967). *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*. Ed. Jacques Suffel. Garnier Flammarion.

GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich (2000). "Stendhals nervoeser Ernst". Karl Heinz Bohrer (ed.), *Sprachen der Ironie / Sprachen des Ernstes*. Suhrkamp, pp. 206-232.

GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich and Juergen E. MUELLER (1980). "Sinnbildung als Sicherung der Lebenswelt — ein Beitrag zur funktionsgeschichtlichen Situierung der realistischen Literatur am Beispiel von Balzacs Erzaehlung 'La bourse'". H.U.G., Karlheinz Stierle, Rainer Warning (eds.), *Honoré de Balzac*. Standard Pléiade Edition, pp. 339-389.