European Journal of Literary Studies
ISSN: 2601–971X
ISSN-L: 2601–971X
Available on-line at: http://www.oapub.org/lit

DOI: 10.46827/ejls.v3i1.280 Volume 3 | Issue 1 | 2021

SARTRE, BOURDIEU, AND GUSTAVE FLAUBERT: FROM INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND SOCIAL DETERMINISM IN THE FIELD OF LITERARY CREATION

Emma Barrett Fiedler[i]
University of Aix-Marseille,
IDEMEC (Institut d'ethnologie européenne, méditerranéenne et comparative),
France

Abstract:
Drawing from the analysis of Sartre's monumental biography of the French writer Gustave Flaubert and Bourdieu's critical response to it, this article explores anew the dialectics of agency and coercion through the lenses of sartrian philosophy and bourdieusian sociology. From his birth to his childhood and his death in 1880, the biographical elements of the life of *Madame Bovary*'s author and the contents of his literary works were depicted by Sartre and Bourdieu in a dialogue questioning the writer's individual goals, strategies, limits and fate. Put in a historical perspective, this socio-philosophical confrontation between the theoretical aims and methods of existentialist psychoanalysis and structuralist socio-analysis reopens the oldest of debates between actor-centered philosophy of action and socio-centered logic of practice, between the transcendence of ego and the transcendence of social, or freedom and determinism.

Keywords: Bourdieu/Sartre; Gustave Flaubert; literature; structuralism/phenomenology; psychoanalysis; existentialism

1. Introduction

As Sartre was observing a waiter in the Parisian Café de Flore, his inspiration led him to make a thick description of the role enactment pursued by the subject of his analysis: "*By virtue of his gaze, his gestures and his elegant way of balancing a full tray of drinks while he swings in a seemingly nonchalant way through the kitchen doors, he gives a clear expression of embodying the status of the waiter, turning it into a role and thereby an art*" (Eriksen 1995: 55). This well-known passage of *Being and Nothingness*[ii] is often regarded as paradigmatic of the sartrian philosophy of action, which tends to meticulously describe how actors reflect upon, define and adapt themselves to given situations and play their parts in a highly self-conscious way; this perspective on social interactions would even have inspired

[i] Correspondence: email emma_maeve@hotmail.fr
[ii] Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1957. *Being and Nothingness: An essay on phenomenological ontology*. London: Methuen.

Erving Goffman's "*impression management*" analysis developed in *The presentation of Self in everyday life*[iii]. Sartre's "*garcon de café*" is - in existentialist terms - a being-for-itself (*être-pour-soi*), who unlike an object-in-itself (*objet-en-soi*) would definitely be "*condemned to be free" and therefore to desire and "exist" before simply "being*".

Several decades later, Bourdieu gave a critical commentary on Sartre's analysis, offering at the same time his own interpretation of the waiter's scene: "*The waiter doesn't play the part of a waiter, like Sartre would like him to (…). His body espouses his function, that is to say a history, a tradition (…) and a certain habitus, which is the one of a waiter*" (Bourdieu 1980: 8). In bourdieusian terms, the waiter's body would only express an embodied "structured and structuring structure" in accordance with his particular class of conditions and professional occupation, and moreover without a "*conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them*" (Bourdieu 1990: 53). Even if the bourdieusian Habitus is originally thought as a means of reaching a position beyond Objectivism and Subjectivism, its definition as "*spontaneity without consciousness or will*" (Bourdieu 1990: 57) makes it rather the expression of a typically structuralist anti-subjectivism, in which the margin of maneuver of the agents confronted by social laws is quite limited. Bourdieu dedicates a whole chapter of *The logic of practice* to the critique of what he calls "the imaginary anthropology of subjectivism" (Bourdieu 1990: 42), that is to say the "paradigmatic illusion" of "*those who describe practices as strategies explicitly oriented by reference to ends explicitly defined by a free project or even, with some interactionists, by reference to the anticipated reactions of other agents*", further especially denouncing sartrian phenomenology and existentialism, which in "*refusing to recognize anything resembling durable dispositions or probable eventualities*", makes "*each action a kind of antecedent-less confrontation between the subject and the world*" (Bourdieu 1990: 42).

If however Sartre never had the opportunity to respond to Bourdieu's longstanding critique, the orientation of his micro-sociological philosophy of action can be considered as going in the opposite direction than Bourdieu's structuralist logic of practice, which voluntarily chose to express "*the transcendence of social*" over "*the transcendence of ego*" (Bourdieu 1990: 44), reaffirming in the durkheimian tradition the dominance of the principle of coercion over the principle of individual freedom in the field of sociological studies. Bourdieu's critique of sartrian philosophy even found an original object in the publication of his *Règles de l'Art*[iv], a macro-sociological analysis of the genesis and the structure of the Parisian literary field in the second half of the nineteenth-century, answering to Sartre's meticulous and actor-centered biography of Gustave Flaubert (*L'Idiot de la famille*[v]) published two decades earlier.

The aim of this article is to confront the two very different versions of the life and literary vocation of *Madame Bovary*'s author given by Sartre and Bourdieu, the first one oriented by the method of "existential psychoanalysis" adapted to Flaubert's case, in which the laws of social determinism can and have to be surpassed by individuals, the

[iii] Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The presentation of Self in everyday life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
[iv] Bourdieu, Pierre. 1995. *The rules of art. Genesis and structure of the literary field*. Stanford University Press.
[v] Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1981. *The family idiot. Gustave Flaubert from 1821 to 1857*. University Chicago Press.

other obeying to the rules of a structure-centered "socio-analysis" in which Flaubert's subjectivity and voluntarism play a diminished role, and finally to resituate this precise confrontation into the larger field of sociological analysis, traditionally polarized between the scopes of individual autonomy and social heteronomy, or in other words between "agency" and "structure". The explanation of how the little Gustave, as the son of a provincial medical doctor, became Flaubert, one of the most important French writers of the nineteenth-century, differs typically from one perspective to another, giving at the same time the opportunity of a "concrete" anthropology, which like in the work of a novelist - or precisely of Flaubert depicting the tragic destiny of Madame Bovary - takes the existence of one person as its object of analysis.

I/ The family idiot, or Sartre's Flaubert

Sartre envisaged his monumental biography of Flaubert as a "true novel" (*un "roman vrai"*[vi]), drawing from a set of biographical facts (he refers to the novelist's complete correspondence, youth writings and especially Flaubert's biography written by his niece, Caroline de Commanville) a piece of "real" fiction in order to understand in his own terms the existence of Gustave and Flaubert: "*I have to admit it, this is a fable: nothing proves that it really happened like this*" (Sartre 1971: 139). The project of this "novel" would have been motivated by one essential questioning: "*What, at this point in time, can we know about a man? It seemed to me that this question could only be answered by studying a specific case: what do we know -for instance- of Gustave Flaubert?*" (Sartre 1971: 7). Based on the assumption that each man is not only an individual, but rather a "singular universal" ("*universel singulier*") whose life can be understood from the outside (Sartre 1971: 7), the work of empathy and imagination to which the biographer can and must proceed is called by Sartre "totalization", and the method employed in order to obtain this result - existential psychoanalysis - had already been theorized in his *Questions de méthode*[vii] and applied to the cases of Genet[viii] and Baudelaire[ix]. The ambition of "totalization" consists here in "*the reconstitution of all the phases of the dialectical movement in which Flaubert managed to become the author of Madame Bovary*" (Sartre 1971: 659).

2. The method of existential psychoanalysis

If we believe the brief summary text written on the cover of the *Family idiot*'s first edition in 1971, Sartre's biography would intend to "integrate Psychoanalysis and Marxism into a brand new form of *anthropology*, which would be able to give an account of Man - of one man - in his totality". If the program is quite appealing, it can also sound very surprising coming from the main theorizer and defender of the existentialist cause[x]: How

[vi] *Le Monde*, 20th May 1971.
[vii] Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1957. *Questions de méthode*. Paris, Gallimard.
[viii] Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1952. *Saint-Genet, comédien et martyr*. Paris, Gallimard.
[ix] Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1947. *Baudelaire*. Paris, Gallimard.
[x] Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1946. *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*. Paris, Editions Nagel.

indeed could Sartrian philosophy admit the existence of the Freudian unconscious and the Marxist principle of false consciousness without threatening the existentialist ideal of a Man potentially able and morally obliged to surpass every obstacle life would put in his way in order to attain his goals? Sartre refers in fact to a very personalized version of Freudism and Marxism, two schools of thought which constituted an omnipresent trend in the French field of humanities in the 1970's. If it is undeniable that sartrian psychology uses without moderation Freudian terms, Sartre never questions the sovereign power of consciousness in the orientation of human conduct, and if it is also clear that Sartre insists on the "class-being" ("*être de classe*") of all the characters he chooses to analyze, the game of social forces always takes place on an individual scale and resembles much more a behavioral psychology than a Marxist analysis (Merle 2005: 5). Indeed, Sartre confirms in *Being and Nothingness* that "*the principal result of existential psychoanalysis should be to make us renounce to the spirit of seriousness*" (Sartre 1943: 674), or in other words to the principles of the objective world: "*There is seriousness where we attribute more reality to the world than to ourselves*" (Sartre 1943: 626), and the result of such a spirit is the sartrian major concept of "bad faith" ("*mauvaise foi*"), that is to say the escape from individual liberty and responsibility in a given situation. As the world is only the immanent expression of one's subjectivity, there is according to Sartrian philosophy no objective situation to be described, but only situations which are to be subjectively understood: "*An environment cannot exert any control on the subject, given that the subject understands and transforms his own environment. There is therefore no need of an objective description of this environment*" (Sartre 1943: 618).

With the help of his "regressive-progressive" method as a constant back-and-forth movement between Gustave's childhood and Flaubert's adulthood, Sartre nevertheless aims a certain "final objectivation" in the "*true comprehensive knowledge that follows the man in his social world and in his praxis, or in the project which throws him in the possible*" (Sartre 1971: 182). But with its emphasis on the "project" chosen by the subject of his analysis, the sartrian existential psychoanalysis actually reverses the direction of the classical Freudian therapy: Instead of understanding the present action with the help of the past removed from oblivion and unconscious obscurity, it thrives to explain it with the end it projects (Merle 2005: 5). Sartre's analysis is animated by the quest of an "existential discovery", a sort of "unique experience" that would have left its mark on each existence he studies: Genet, Baudelaire and Flaubert would all have had their own experience of a "conversion of consciousness" ("*conversion de conscience*") after a decisive event of their life (Merle 2005:4). If Sartre takes care not to fall on the side of destiny and determinism, he gives in his study of Flaubert's character a great importance to the writer's "original project" ("*projet originel*") - in the sense of initial and primordial - which consisted since the first age of childhood in the constitution of his literary vocation, against the obstacles encountered in his prime familial environment.

3. The "constitution" and the "family planning"

3.1. The family trinity: father, brother, mother

Gustave Flaubert was born in 1821 in Normandy - like the character of Emma Bovary - as the second son of the Achille-Cléophas Flaubert family, whose patriarch was the head-surgeon of Rouen's hospital. The father had benefited from the opportunities of social ascension offered to meriting young men under the Napoleonic regime ("*he spent his youth under an authoritarian regime and owed everything to Napoleon*"- p.67), receiving from the First Consul after his service in the imperial armies the right of a grant in order to study medicine in Paris. Achille-Cléophas was the first of his rural family to reach such an honorable position: "*This young ambitious man, whose childhood took place in the rural custom, got to heal people when his brothers healed only the cattle, he moved from the fields to the great city and became an intellectual petit-bourgeois under the Empire. The ascension continues under the Restauration; his Science, the ideology of the eighteenth century, the opinions of the liberal bourgeoisie, everything contributes to give him a philosophy which doesn't entirely reflect his new lifestyle*" (Sartre 1971: 67). From his rural origins, Achille-Cléophas Flaubert preserved a conservative conception of family and duty, projecting on his oldest son his ambition of social ascension, which now constituted the collective familial burden: "*At the time when the liberal bourgeoisie was revolting against the reestablishment of birthright, Achille-Cléophas, bourgeois and liberal himself (…) wouldn't hesitate to give advantage to the eldest of the Flaubert sons, to the detriment of the youngest*" (Sartre 1971: 68).

Achille was the name of Gustave's elder brother, and his medical career following the exact steps of the father - he will de facto inherit the office of head-surgeon of Rouen's hospital after the premature death of Achille-Cléophas - came as evidence in the paternal "familial planning": "*There was indeed a patrimony to conserve, not only made of acres of land, but rather of the science of the father, his technical merits and social function; being a doctor, he would make doctors out of his sons*" (Sartre 1971: 69). Nine years older than Gustave, Achille fulfilled the ambitions of the father with a remarkable docility, showing even a great talent at it: "*Brilliant school-pupil and distinguished student, he would complete his doctoral thesis at the age of twenty-eight, at the same moment when the nineteen-year old Gustave was still interrogating with anxiety his uncertain future*" (Sartre 1971: 102). The pride of the father for his eldest son was so great, that he personally wanted him to proceed to the risky thigh operation he needed after falling ill, an intervention from which he would never recover. The authoritarian figure of the father had always exerted a great influence on Gustave's mother, who remained all her life a very "*relative being*" (Sartre 1971: 69), accomplice of her husband's hegemony in the domestic space. If Caroline Flaubert entirely devoted herself to Achille-Cléophas, it is mainly because her marriage offered her a stability she had never enjoyed before: Born in Pont-l'Evêque as the daughter of a medical doctor, she endured "*the most miserable childhood*" (Sartre 1971: 81), by losing at the same time her mother on the day of her birth and the love of her father, who indeed loved his wife very much and died of a long depression ten years later. Caroline grew up as an orphan in the patronage of distanced relatives, and swore to herself - or so imagines Sartre - that she

would somehow regain the love of her deceased father by one day marrying a doctor who would look just like him. She would have found, at the age of sixteen, the perfect husband and father in Achille-Cléophas, who happened to believe in Science as much as she believed in God. From the seven children to whom she gave birth to, only three would survive: Achille, Gustave, and Caroline. Even if the little Caroline doesn't play any active role in Sartre's version of Flaubert's constitution, it is clear to him that she was - exactly like Achille was the reproduction of his father - the desperate repetition of her mother: "*A failed childhood - as it is well known - finds a new opportunity and beginning with another child. (…) Madame Flaubert would have come full circle: Enjoying an eternal childhood under the fatherly authority of her husband, she would have erased her own childhood in order to succeed in the person of her daughter. The proof of this profound desire is that she named the little girl the head-doctor procreated after her."* (Sartre 1971: 89).

3.2. The youngest son or the family idiot

The result of this familial configuration would have been dramatic for Gustave: Deprived from the ambitious pride of his father, he would have also missed the true consideration of maternal love. If the *Pater familias* would never have shown any attention to the young Gustave, the meticulous but unloving care of a *Genitrix* fulfilling her maternal role with a strict sense of duty and without any affection would have definitely shaped Flaubert's passive nature: "*It is the pious and cold zeal of the mother that constituted Gustave as a passive agent; Madame Flaubert is responsible for this nature and this weakness*." (Sartre 1971: 179). Gustave was indeed a very contemplative child and showed a "*profound disgust for action*": Constituted as passive object, "*he was at the beginning deprived of the categories of praxis*" (Sartre 1971: 1942), in an environment that cherished pragmatism, practical activity and efficacy over everything else. "*He saw therefore his destiny as the unavoidable result of someone else's willpower*" (Sartre 1971: 1942) and would not recover the status of subject before the event that would finally lead him to adulthood. But even after that, a reminiscence of his passive constitution was to notice here and then, for instance during his long stay in Egypt, where Flaubert enjoyed the delights of the baths: "*He went to the hammam (…) for his own submission, to be roughly massaged by the kellaks*" (Sartre 1971: 689) and in order to interiorize again the dead body passivity that was his as a child, under the urgent care of his mother's hands. Or in his choice of strong and dominant women too: "*The women who played an important role in his love life were always mothers, older than him, enterprising, and aggressive*" (Sartre 1971: 704). Sartre tells us that "*all the matter is to be summarized in these words: Gustave was never really able to leave his childhood behind him. He tells it, we know it: This adult was during all his life alienated to the miserable monster he used to be*." (Sartre 1971: 54).

The ostracism from which Flaubert had to suffer as a child came mainly from his "*difficult relation to words, which would later decide of his literary career*" (Sartre 1971: 11). Under the authority of his mother, the future writer didn't learn to read properly until the age of nine: "*The Flaubert family was very concerned. For a long time, Gustave could not understand the elementary connections that make a syllable out of two letters, and a word out of*

several syllables. (…) And the doubt started consequently to appear: Wasn't the child, after all, an idiot?" (Sartre 1971: 14). Gustave also had difficulty speaking: "*He could stay during hours with a finger in his mouth, with a stupid look on his face. He didn't feel the need to speak like the others around him, words didn't come to him, and he didn't want to use them anyway*." (Sartre 1971: 24). This bad relation to words would even have shaped his aesthetic ideals: "*He saw words from the outside, like things, even if they were in him: It was this disposition of spirit that led him to think of words as sensible realities*" (Sartre 1971: 25). Gustave would never become a remarkable school-pupil, or a brilliant student, but he definitely later took his revenge over words in the choice of a literary career: "*This is something we are sure of: At the age of nine, Gustave decided to write because he could not read at the age of seven*." (Sartre 1971: 38).

4. The "personalization" and the "neurotic planning"

4.1. The "pre-neurosis": 1838-1844

Gustave left the family house after his mediocre success in the *Baccalauréat* examination in the College Royal of Rouen, with the intention of dutifully fulfilling the "familial planning" that had been prepared for him - as he didn't show the same abilities in exact and natural sciences as his brother - in beginning law studies in Paris. Despite his passive submission to the familial pushiness and project of social ascension, the intellectual capacities of the young man refused however to function when he had to learn the Civil Code by heart: "*Always this same anguish: Blockage of memory and intelligence, he didn't understand anything he was reading*" (Sartre 1971: 1685). He spent several years trying to end his law studies with the final exterior and fatherly ambition to "take office" ("*prendre un état*") as lawyer in the province, but without any passion or interest in it he constantly failed to pass his term exams. In such a difficult situation, Gustave regularly took refuge in the fictional world of writing he had created for himself since he was nine-years old, producing little romantic novels and developing a passion for poetry and theater (he would even envisage at some stage of his Parisian life to become comedian). He became friends with young men who were to play an important role in his literary life, such as Alfred de Poittevin, who transmitted him - so says Sartre - his taste for "pure Art" ("*Art pur*") and the sense of devotion to Beauty for itself: "*Against utilitarianism, it declares itself pure and imperative: In other words, Art is not at the service of Man, it is Man who has the duty to serve Art*" (Sartre 1971: 981).

Since the age of seventeen and the internalization of his familial destiny, the young Gustave had discovered his "bourgeois-being" ("*être-bourgeois*") directed towards utility, pragmatism and therefore mediocrity, without having the courage to revolt against his own "constitution" and the "familial planning" elaborated for him (Sartre 1971: 1485). Since his prime childhood, his forced passivity and submission had created in him the symptoms of a life-long melancholy: "Something important here, is that the child - even before his failure with words - bears life like a burden. He wrote himself in his correspondence: "*It is thanks to hard work, that I can appease my profound and native*

melancholy. But the old traumas, and the prime sadness, always reappear after a while." (Sartre 1971: 46). There was in him a deep boredom and exhaustion: "*The fatigue of life is certain: It won't leave him. He will dissimulate it but without convincing: Until the end, his contemporaries will describe his overwhelming sleepiness during the day, his regular faintness and constant state of lethargy*" (Sartre 1971: 49). "*Born with the desire to die*" (Sartre 1971: 388), he will endure this depressive state during his adulthood too, never losing an irrepressible desire for death, never finding the courage to commit suicide: "*Gustave, like these insects that are paralyzed when they feel threatened, always looked for a false death in order to have a chance to be born again (…) Something was going to happen to him, for sure, something atrocious (…) and then he would be someone else (…)"* (Sartre 1971: 1753).

4.2. The Event, or neurosis as freedom instrument

On an evening of January 1844, as Gustave was on his way to the family house in Rouen, he suddenly lost all consciousness and fell on the floor of the cabriolet, which had just arrived in Pont-L'Evêque. His brother Achille, who was accompanying him from Paris where he had to be for a few days, thought at first that he was dead, until Gustave regained life after a few minutes (Sartre 1971: 1771). This false death and this symbolic resurrection would constitute the "archetypical event" of the young man's transitive neurosis: "*In the case of Flaubert, everything happens as if this unique moment had been sufficient to permit his passage from the normal to the pathological state*" (Sartre 1971: 1784). Gustave would spend several months trying to recover from the spectacular event of Pont-L'Evêque, in an atmosphere of voluntary sequestration in his mother's house in Croisset, suffering regularly from the same symptoms, abandoning himself to his nervous sickness, but finally finding the necessary justification to put an end to his law studies in order to dedicate himself to literature.

The diagnosis of Sartre is clear: "*The troubles of Pont-L'Evêque organized themselves under the direction of an autonomous and vigorous scheme that we can call psychosomatic, as it imposed itself to the body and the sensibility of Flaubert for years before the final crisis*" (Sartre 1971: 1854). Against the conventional idea interpreting Flaubert's symptoms as those of epilepsy (Young-Rae 2007: 60), Sartre affirms that the future writer suffered in fact from a deep neurosis, and that his "*hysterical engagement*" (Sartre 1971: 1854) had started several years before, during a long phase of pre-neurosis lasting from 1838 to 1844, in which he had to take a decision for good. As he wrote to a friend in a letter dated from February 1842, he had come to a "*decisive moment*", in which he was being forced "*to move forward or to move backwards*", to make his definitive choice between a "*materialistic and trivial life*" or "*the enchantment of writing*" (Sartre 1971: 1679), between security and boredom or passion and risk, between familial duty and his own individual desire. Here lies the core of the sartrian explanation of Flaubert's "*neurotic planning*" understood as a positive strategy, "*the dialectical movement by which the artistic project and the neurotic project mutually conditioned one another, to the point when literature becomes neurosis and neurosis, literature*" (Sartre 1971: 1930).

Neurosis or epilepsy? The nature of Flaubert's sickness created a debate since the 1860's between his friends and contemporaries, as between his future biographers (Young-Rae 2007: 61). If most of the commentators attributed the symptoms to a physical derangement, the psychosomatic determination of it is particularly important to Sartre's Flaubert, especially because the issue at stake is nothing less than the liberty of one individual in a given situation, an essential topic of sartrian philosophy: "*Gustave's disease expresses in its entirety what has to be called his liberty*" (Sartre 1971: 2150). Sartre is indeed convinced that the crisis of Pont-L'Evêque was the desperate result of an intention, of a life choice which had already been made by Flaubert himself. This wasn't or couldn't be an accident, or a random organic disease of the body: Flaubert had decided, in all consciousness, to become sick in order to become a writer. Sartre's work of "totalization", the portrait of Flaubert as he imagines him and the needs of his argument, lead him to divert the classical signification of a Freudian term, in making it the mark of consciousness and individual responsibility, when a "neurosis" is traditionally the symptom of an unconscious truth (Young-Rae 2007: 63). Moreover, the sartrian Flaubert needed a sole event in order to become the author of *Madame Bovary*. The young Gustave had no reason to become one of the best writers of the nineteenth-century, before he enjoyed this "conversion of consciousness" that made him think of himself as a writer rather than as a "petit-bourgeois" lawyer. The preparation of the final crisis during his pre-neurosis constituted the transition between the "family planning" that had constituted Gustave as he had to be in order to please his environment, and the "neurotic planning" which *telos* was to institute Flaubert as the man he wanted to become. In the passage from Gustave's "constitution" to Flaubert's "personalization" lies therefore a teleological realization of Gustave Flaubert's "original project", against the social forces which could have otherwise dominated his existence. Flaubert, against Gustave, renounced "bad faith" and created the conditions of his literary vocation and carrier, using his individual responsibility in order to *exist* instead of simply being.

Flaubert used to say of Emma Bovary that she was like himself ("*Emma, c'est moi*"), eternally unsatisfied and profoundly, irremediably melancholic for the exact same reason. As Sartre told it the day after the publication of *The family idiot*, what he described in his analysis was not Flaubert as he really was, "*but much more Flaubert as he imagined him*" (Young-Rae 1971: 63). It is probable that Sartre was inspired by his own traumas when he wrote it: The difficult relation to words, the intellectual authority of a medical doctors family, the misery of the bourgeois background, all these topics are also present in his autobiographical work[xi]. Nevertheless, this demonstration of psychoanalytical fiction gives a concrete illustration of Sartre's conception of individual freedom against social determinism.

II/ The *Rules of Art*, or Flaubert's literary field

Bourdieu had already given in his *Logic of practice* - the first part of which was named "Critique of theoretical reason" in response to Kant's *Critique of practical reason* - a severe

[xi] Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1964. *Les Mots.* Paris, Gallimard.

analysis of the philosophical illusion of pureness and spontaneity in the realm of thought, and extends with the *Rules of Art* his criticism to the realms of visual art and literature: "*In this respect, there is no better example than that of art history, which finds in the sacred character of its object every pretext for a hagiographic hermeneutics more concerned with the opus operatum than with the modus operandi, and treats the work of art as a discourse to be decoded by reference to a transcendent code (…). It forgets that artistic production is also - to various degrees depending on the art and on the historically variable ways of practicing it - the product of an "art", as Durkheim (1956: 101) says, or, to put it another way, a mimesis, a sort of symbolic gymnastics, like ritual or dance; and that it always contains something "ineffable", not through excess, as the celebrants would have it, but through absence*." (Bourdieu 1990: 34). As a demonstration of possible and necessary "sociology of art and literature", Bourdieu's *Rules of Art* are therefore to be considered as a meta-analysis denouncing the historical and social contingency of *pure* aesthetics, a controversial position which recalls the post-scriptum of the *Distinction*[xii] as "elements for a vulgar critique of pure critiques".

Bourdieu's preface opens on a paradigmatic citation, illustrating the contestation which generally encounters every attempt of rationalization in the consecrated literary field: "*Will we let social sciences reduce the literary experience - the most venerable one can have together with love - to poll surveys concerning our leisure time, when it really does concern the sense of our lives?"* (Sallenave 1991: 24). And Bourdieu to comment: "*Such a sentence, coming from one of these innumerable defense speeches in favor of true literature and culture, would certainly have inspired Flaubert the same furious irony as conformist banalities*" (Bourdieu 1992: 1). (…) The claim to the autonomy of literature, which found its best expression in Proust's *Contre Sainte-Beuve*[xiii], implies that the reading of literary texts can only be literary (…). But from where comes such an urgent need to denigrate rational knowledge, such a rage to affirm the irreducibility of the piece of art, or to put it another way, its transcendence? (…) Why does one, in a word, oppose such resistance to social analysis? (Bourdieu 1992: 11). Bourdieu answers to this irrational "resistance" with the affirmation that social science can paradoxically help to reach a true position of freedom in taste and even an intensification of literary emotion by the explanation of social determinisms: "*Against the idea that science would threaten the liberty and singularity of literary experience, we have to recall that the capacity procured by science to explain and understand this experience, and to give therefore the possibility of a real freedom against its determinations, is offered to every analyst ready to appropriate it for himself*" (Bourdieu 1992: 13). Here exactly lies the first critique Bourdieu addresses to Sartre's analysis of Flaubert's biography: The philosopher wouldn't have proceeded to the necessary methodological shift - "*a conversion in the traditional manner of thinking intellectual and artistic life*", a "*sort of épochè of the belief generally attributed to the things of culture*" (Bourdieu 1992: 305) - in order to understand in a rigorous and scientific way the position occupied by Flaubert in the Parisian literary field in constitution in the second half of the 19th Century. The first "biographical illusion" produced by Sartre would be the "*conceptual monster which is the*

[xii] Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction. Social critique of the judgement of taste*. London Routledge.
[xiii] Proust, Marcel. 1954 (Posthumous). *Contre Sainte-Beuve*. Paris, La Bibliothèque libre.

notion of original project, as a free and conscious act of auto-creation by which the creator would build his own life project. With this founding myth of the belief in the "uncreated" creator - which is to the notion of habitus what the Genesis is to the theory of evolution - Sartre inscribes at the origin of every human existence a sort of free and conscious act of auto-determination (…)" (Bourdieu 1992: 311).

The sociologist reserves the last part of the *Rules of Art* (called "Questions of method" as an obvious reference to Sartre's eponymous book) for the critical analysis of Sartre's Flaubert, which would suffer from a serious lack of sociological lucidity: "*How can he ignore the fact that the one he describes as the youngest son and idiot of the Flaubert family is also, as a writer, the idiot of a very well-off family? (…) The obstacle forbidding him to see and to know what really matters in his analysis - that is to say the social position of the writer in the social world, in the field of power, and in the intellectual field as a universe of belief where the fetishism of the creator reaches an increasing importance - is precisely everything that he has in common with Flaubert (…)*" (Bourdieu 1992: 313). In other words, where Sartre identifies Flaubert's "bourgeois-being" as an obstacle to his literary ambitions, which has to be surpassed, Bourdieu only sees in Flaubert's privileged social origins the first possibility of his literary career. Without pleading for a mechanical and direct relationship between the social world and the system of literary production, Bourdieu expresses nevertheless the need of a scientific analysis of the social conditions of the production and the reception of literature, and therefore pleads for a socio-analysis of Flaubert's trajectory, which has to be recontextualized in his social world and his literary field.

5. The method of Socio-analysis

Bourdieusian sociology in general has to be understood as an opportunity of "unveiling" the functioning of social laws by the "objectification of objective structures", and should work for most individuals as a sort of "maieutics" leading to lucidity and consciousness. In an article named "Introduction to socio-analysis", Bourdieu exposed the methodology of a work in which the sociologist plays the role of a "delivery doctor" of sociological explanation: "*We have chosen to interrogate people who are ill-at-ease ("mal dans leur peau") because they are in a bad position ("mal dans leur position"); who, suffering from tensions and double-binds (…) inscribed in the social places they live in, cannot deliver the most intimate information about themselves without at the same time giving the most profound truth of a social position, which acts on them and in them. (…) These structural victims express with the help of the sociologist everything that the institution has put in them, that is to say contradictions, incoherencies, unresolved conflicts and ambiguities*." (Bourdieu 1991: 1).

If the sociologist did not have here the opportunity to interview Gustave Flaubert in person, he undertakes with his biography the same kind of socio-analysis, understood as "objectification" of a person and of one's life trajectory. Bourdieu makes it clear: Against the psycho-analytical and mainly internal Sartrian approach of Flaubert's existence, he wants to demonstrate the pertinence of the "*sociological eye*", "*this look which one can call Spinozist, because it takes things and people exactly as they are, and because it always*

aims to understand them with the reasons which made them the way they are" (Bourdieu 1991: 3) even if these reasons are unknown to them. There are, in other words, always "reasons to be" which are potentially unconscious to the individuals, and which can help explain a biography, its own social conditions of possibility and impossibility, which are at the basis of conducts, discourses, perspectives and tastes. As Bourdieu exposed it in an article named "*The literary field*" and also published one year before *The rules of Art*, "*to try to explain a career or a life as if it was a unique sequence of events, the only link between these events being the association with a subject (…), is exactly as absurd as the attempt of explaining a journey in the subway without taking into account the structure of the network, that is to say the matrix of objective relations between the stations*." (Bourdieu 1991: 4). The socio-analyst doesn't have to investigate how a dead writer came to be the way he was with the help of a reconstructed coherency - "*retrospective and biographical illusion*" says Bourdieu - but rather how, given his social origin and the social properties and collective habitus attached to it, he was able to occupy a certain position as a writer in a given literary field at a given time (Bourdieu 1991: 5).

6. Social structure of Flaubert's *Education sentimentale*

6.1. Between reality and fiction, sociology and literature

Bourdieu compared in his "Introduction to socio-analysis" the work of the sociologist to the work of the novelist: "*It is because one can objectify oneself, that one can, by staying at the same time in one's own assigned social position, make a move in thought to the place where the object of one's analysis finds himself, that is to say to fundamentally understand that if one was at the other's place, one would be and think exactly like him or her*" (Bourdieu 1991: 3). "To live every life" ("vivre toutes les vies") as Flaubert used to say, was also the work he had assigned to himself as a writer. He had already lived the boring and tragic life of a provincial housewife[xiv] when he undertook the project of living the life of a young man with literary ambitions during the tumults of 1848's revolution in Paris[xv].

Bourdieu considers *L'Education sentimentale* and the story of Frédéric Moreau as student and lover in Paris to be a fictional reflection of Flaubert's life: "*The Education sentimentale, this novel which has been commented a thousand times, and maybe never really understood, furnishes all necessary instruments for its own sociological analysis: The structure of the novel, which only an internal comprehension can reveal, that is to say the structure of the social space in which the adventures of Frédéric take place, happens also to be the structure of the social space in which the author himself evolves*." (Bourdieu 1992: 19). If most literary commentators have seen in this novel a Flaubertian psychological masterpiece oriented towards the interior life of Frédéric (as the title "Sentimental education" suggests it), Bourdieu reads in it an officious sociological analysis of Flaubert's social world by himself: "*One would maybe think that the sociologist, projecting his own interrogations, makes of Flaubert a sociologist, moreover able to give a sociology of Flaubert (…). But the strangest thing*

[xiv] Flaubert, Gustave. 1857. *Madame Bovary (Mœurs de province)*. Paris, Michel Lévy frères.
[xv] Flaubert, Gustave. 1869. *L'Education sentimentale (Histoire d'un jeune homme)*. Paris, Michel Lévy frères.

is that this structure, so obvious as soon as one enounces it, has been invisible to the most attentive literary interpreters" (Bourdieu 1992: 19). The novel, however, is not to be considered as an autobiography (Flaubert never said, like after the publication of *Madame Bovary*, "*Frédéric, c'est moi*"), but much more as a demonstration of socio-analysis in the Bourdieusian sense: "*We have here to comment on the core of the relationship uniting Flaubert as a writer to Frédéric as a character. Where one usually sees the complaisant and naïve projections of the autobiographical genre, one has rather to see an enterprise of objectification of oneself, of auto-analysis, of socio-analysis*." (Bourdieu 1992: 57). If Flaubert shows himself, in the process, as being a better sociologist than Sartre - at least according to Bourdieu - his socio-analysis remains nevertheless incomplete and fatally flawed because not fully committed: *"What is, indeed, a discourse that talks about the world as if it didn't talk about it (…)?*" (Bourdieu 1992: 20). The entire first part of the *Rules of Art* (named "Flaubert analyst of Flaubert, a reading of the *Education sentimentale*") attempts therefore to restitute the Parisian social world in which Frédéric Moreau evolves in its complete structure, correcting some of Flaubert's shortcomings identified by Bourdieu.

Frédéric arrives at the age of eighteen from his native province - maybe Normandy - in 1840 in order to study in Paris, where he meets Madame Arnoux, the wife of an art trader who owns a famous boutique on the Faubourg Montmartre - certainly the alter ego of Elisa Schlesinger, one of Flaubert's most important Parisian mistresses - and falls desperately in love with her. He nourishes at the same time deep literary, artistic and mundane ambitions, and tries to gain admittance into the social circle of Mr. Dambreuse, a very influential banker who happens to be in close contact with the political elite of the Monarchie de Juillet (1830-1848). The dualist structure of the social space in which Frédéric enters lies in the confrontation between these two families and their own social universes: "*Frédéric's whole existence, like the whole space of the novel, organizes itself around two main poles, represented by the Arnoux and the Dambreuse: On one side "Arts and Politics", and on the other side "Politics and Affairs*"" (Bourdieu 1992: 22). The Parisian field of power depicted by Flaubert is divided, in other words, between the industrial and business high bourgeoisie ("simply and fully dominant") embodied by the Dambreuse couple and the cultural and artistic bourgeoisie ("dominant and dominated") embodied by the Arnoux couple.

6.2. From "sentimental education" to "social aging"

Frédéric and his young friends will make the experience of this elitist social world and will endure a process of what Bourdieu calls "social aging" ("vieillissement social", a new name for Flaubert's "sentimental education"): "*Flaubert establishes the conditions of a sort of sociological experimentation: Five young adults - one of them being Frédéric - temporarily united by their common status of students, will be released in this space, like particles in a physical force field, and their trajectories will be determined by the relation between these forces and their own inertia. This inertia is inscribed on one side in the dispositions they owe to theirs origins and trajectories, and which imply a tendency to persevere in the same manner of being - that is to say a probable trajectory- and on the other side in the capital they have inherited, which contributes to*

define the possibilities and the impossibilities assigned to them in the field. (…) The field of power is also a field of struggle: All incorporated properties - elegance, ease and poise, or even beauty - and all sorts of capital - economic, cultural, social - constitute important assets which will command the manner to play and the success acquired in the game (…)." (Bourdieu 1992: 31).

If Flaubert's narrative contains - at an implicit level - all these elements, it is clear to Bourdieu that the writer gives a *reflection* of this social world without sociological reflexivity: "*Indeed, the Education sentimentale restitutes with an extraordinary exactitude the structure of the social world in which it was produced and even more the mental structures which, shaped by this social structures, constitute the generative principle of the novel in which these structures reveal themselves*" (Bourdieu 1992: 68). In other words, Flaubert's analysis of Flaubert lacks the same principle as Sartre's analysis of Flaubert, that is to say the inflexible objectivity of the sociological eye: The writer has the tendency to let appear and depict "sentimental relationships" between the characters, when "social structures" - which make part of his own social world and have therefore become obvious to him, in a perfect harmony between social and mental structures - are actually the key explaining these relationships (Bourdieu 1992: 44). According to Bourdieu, Flaubert's novel describes as intersubjective relationships something that, as a matter of fact, corresponds to socially determined relationships, in part because "*the sensible translation dissimulates the structure (…)*" (Bourdieu 1992: 68). This literary dissimulation of social reality is what the sociologist choses to call, paradoxically inspired by Freudian vocabulary, an act of "denegation" ("*Verneinung*"), even if he finally admits that this tendency is what makes the "charm" of literature itself: "*It talks about the most serious things of the world without - to the difference of science - claiming the right to be taken seriously*" (Bourdieu 1992: 70).

Flaubert depicts in the end Frédéric as a very passive being, who cannot make a decision between the arms of the sensible Madame Arnoux - despite love at first sight - and the cynical Madame Dambreuse, between the world of financial bourgeoisie and the artistic elite: "*Frédéric doesn't want to, cannot dedicate himself to the games of money or art offered by this world*" (Bourdieu 1992: 36). Like Madame Bovary, and Flaubert himself as a young man, Frédéric encounters profound difficulties in the process of "entering adult life" ("*entrer dans la vie*") and is already disillusioned. Like Emma and Gustave, he belongs to "*those who take fiction seriously because they cannot seriously take the real world as it is*" (Bourdieu 1992: 36), in the pure tradition of "Bovarysm", understood as the inability of being satisfied with one's reality. Flaubert, according to Bourdieu, was himself a dreamer who chose the "world of fiction" instead of the "fiction of the world", and made an act of "sublimation" - another Freudian term - of his own destiny in depicting Frédéric's existence: "*Flaubert sublimates the indeterminacy of Gustave, his profound apathy, by the retrospective appropriation of himself, which he assures by writing the story of Frédéric*" (Bourdieu 1992: 60).

7. Constitution of the literary field's rules under the Second Empire

7.1. The conquest of autonomy

If Flaubert's aesthetic orientations were only evoked in Sartre's *Family Idiot*, they constitute a major topic of Bourdieu's Flaubert, for the good reason that they correspond to the main literary innovation of the nineteenth century in which the writer of *Madame Bovary* played a major part, the concept of autotelism of literature: "*Flaubert, as we know it, has contributed a lot - together with Baudelaire - to the constitution of the literary field as a world in itself, submitted to its own laws. To reconstruct Flaubert's point of view, that is to say the place of the social space from which his vision of the world emerged, and this social space itself, is to give the real opportunity to situate oneself at the origins of a world which functioning has become so familiar to us, that we tend to forget the laws and regularities to which it obeys*" (Bourdieu 1992: 86). Those of Flaubert and Baudelaire's generation who undertook to claim the autonomy of Art and Literature from political power, created in the process the movement of "Art for Art's sakes" ("*l'Art pour l'Art*"), which intrinsic and disinterested value was to contrast with all form of moral, political, didactic or utilitarian function. Their conquest was considered by their followers as heroic, especially because of the conformist hostility it encountered: "*Their cult for form and impersonal neutrality made them appear as the defenders of an immoral art, precisely when, like Flaubert, they appeared to put their quest of formal esthetics to the service of the discredit of bourgeoisie and its little world*" (Bourdieu 1992: 129). Baudelaire - like Flaubert because of the scandal created by *Madame Bovary* - endured a trial in 1857 after the publication of his poetry volume called *Les Fleurs du mal*, and instituted for the first time a discrepancy between commercial and avant-garde literary editions, provoking hereby "*the process of institutionalization of anomy, which is correlative to the constitution of the field in which every creator is authorized to institute his own nomos with a piece of art which brings with itself the ideally unprecedented principle of its own perception*" (Bourdieu 1992: 118). The constitution of this literary avant-garde is considered by Bourdieu as the result of the political tumults of the second half of the nineteenth century: "*How can we not suppose that the political experiences of this generation, after the defeat of 1848's revolution and Napoleon III's coup, and the long desolation of the Second Empire, played a role in the elaboration of a disenchanted vision of the social and political world, a vision that goes so well with the vision of Art for Art's sakes?*" (Bourdieu 1992: 104). Finally, to those who would still have a doubt about Flaubert's esthetic orientations - mainly because he had to defend himself from being immoral during his trial and was forced to admit his allegiance to the realist school - Bourdieu refers himself to a passage of his correspondence dated from 1857 in which the writer expresses his indignation and disgust: "*Everybody thinks I am in love with reality whereas I hate and despise it; It is precisely because of this hatred of realism that I undertook to write Madame Bovary*." (Bourdieu 1992: 157).

7.2. A dualist structure: Art for Art's sakes Versus Art bourgeois

On the opposite side of the field, the tenants of social art - who happened to be especially successful before and during the revolutionary tumults - condemned the "egoistic art" of the tenants of Art for Art's sakes, and claimed that literature has to fulfill a social and political function. Nevertheless, social realism and disinterested art still had something in common, as they both opposed themselves to the category of Bourgeoisie and commercial bourgeois art, considered as the spearhead of conservatism and the emanation of mediocrity: "*Something more abominable and even worse than the Bourgeois, is the figure of the Bourgeois Artist*", used to say Baudelaire (Bourdieu 1992: 150), or in other words - according to Bourdieu - bourgeois writers who wanted to, or simply had no choice but to earn money with their prose because they didn't enjoy the material comfort of a family income, at a time when the literary field functioned like an inverted economic world, in which economic and symbolic capital had nothing to do together ("*Those who entered it had all interest in pure disinterest*" - Bourdieu 1992: 144). It is therefore no coincidence if poetry held the top of the literary hierarchy under the Second Empire, as it had preserved all the prestige as quintessence of pure Art that romantic tradition had given to it a few decades earlier (Bourdieu 1992: 194), whereas the literary "feuilletons" appearing in bourgeois journals were considered by true artists as outstandingly mediocre and vulgar.

The introduction of an avant-gardist principle accompanying the constitution of Art for Art's sakes' ideology would have created the irreversible character of the history of artistic and literary fields, pushed together in a constant quest of innovative creation. In the newly constituted literary field, the quality of Boldness ("*Audace*") in the act of writing and painting was to become a major symbolic asset, but according to Bourdieu's analysis it remained a very socially determined one: "*Being all equally endowed in economic and cultural capital, the tenants of Art for Art's sakes were all sons and heirs of medical doctors or intellectuals, and seemed to be predisposed to occupy a central position in the literary field*" (Bourdieu 1992: 148), where the courage of "Boldness" in creation was a luxury facilitated by the inheritance of material wealth on one side, and the inheritance of a certain cultural, artistic and literary perspective on the other side. Bourdieu refutes therefore in its entirety the analysis of Sartre when the philosopher identifies Flaubert's father and his socio-cultural identity as the main obstacle to a literary career: "*The inclinations of the young Gustave have without any doubt met the comprehension of the doctor Flaubert who, if we believe the letters sent to his son and the frequency of literary references in his medical thesis, was far from being insensitive to the prestige of literary initiative*." (Bourdieu 1992: 148). If Bourdieu denies all mechanistic perspective between social position and literary creation, he draws nevertheless a link between social position, dispositions, and esthetical stance ("*prise de position*"): "*It is vain to try to establish a direct relationship between the piece of art and the social group which produced the creator*", but it is hard to ignore that "*to different positions in the social world correspond different views in the literary field*" (Bourdieu 1992: 152).

One of the major concerns of the Parisian literary field of the second-half of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly the "*monopoly of literary legitimacy*", that is to say

"*the monopoly of the power to tell with authority who was authorized to call oneself a writer and who was not*", or in other words the "*monopoly of consecration of the literary producers and literary products*" (Bourdieu 1992: 259). This struggle for monopoly was a conflict of definition in which every member of the literary field was unavoidably involved, each of them trying to shape the contours of it in their own interests. But according to Bourdieu, "*it is not enough to say that the history of the field is the history of the struggle for the monopoly of imposition of perception and judgement of taste categories; it is this struggle itself that made the history of the field, and it was temporalized precisely through this struggle. The aging of the authors, of their works, or of the schools to which they belonged, is very far from being - as one usually imagines - the product of a mechanical time process: It is much more the result of a fight between those who went down in history and struggled in order to last in the field, and those who couldn't possibly go down in history without definitively sending the others to oblivion (…)*" (Bourdieu 1992: 261). Finally, the sociologist wants to attest to the great relativity of the value of a masterpiece, which could never be intrinsically valuable in itself: "*The producer of the value of a piece of art is not the artist but the field of production as a universe of belief, which gives all its value to a given piece of art as fetish, by producing the belief in the sole creative power of the artist*" (Bourdieu 1992: 283).

The response to Sartre's Flaubert is much more a militant essay in favor of the constitution of a reliable sociology of arts - literature being only one of them - and therefore a scientific enterprise of demystification of artistic creation and emotion, than a biography of Flaubert (who, even if he played an important role in the constitution of the literary field of the second half of the nineteenth century, cannot possibly constitute the sole object of a Bourdieusian sociological study). In an article named "The literary field" and published one year before *The rules of Art*, Bourdieu gave with a great clarity and not without a militant tone the reasons why he undertook the study of literature as a social system of relations and determinisms: "*Non-content of disappointing, we have to shock by using a supremely disenchanting vocabulary, that of economy and industrial activity, against which all theories of pure art, literature, science or philosophy have constituted themselves; and by taking the risk to be identified to the most simplistic paleo-Marxists of the tribune by using such rude and vulgar terms against those who ignore their significations, words that are generally banned from all conversations in good company, words like production and consumption, supply and demand, capital, interest and market, position, carrier and profit. All this in order to make clear that even the purest stances, even those of the most critical intellectuals, always have something to do with impure causes and reasons, which most of the time are invisible to the professionals of good taste and lucidity themselves*". (Bourdieu 1991: 1).

This article gives also a detailed commentary on the preexistent "attempts" of sociology of art - which according to Bourdieu were not satisfying enough to be a true sociology - which have tried, already decades before the contribution of Bourdieusian analysis, to scientifically analyze the system of artistic works: "*It is remarkable that all those who undertook the project of a science of works (science des oeuvres), all with very different theoretical and methodological approaches, have all forgotten to take into account the social spaces in themselves, in which are situated the agents who contribute to produce cultural goods, and*

which I call fields (literary, artistic, or even scientific and philosophical…)"(Bourdieu 1991: 1). For instance, the well-known analysis of Howard Becker[xvi] , "if it has the quality to treat artistic production like a collective action, breaking hereby with the naïve representation of the individual creator", would nevertheless "mark a regression" in comparison to Bourdieu's field theory: Indeed, the world of Art cannot be analyzed as "a sum of individuals" linked by "simple interactions". According to Bourdieu, the most important point of the analysis has to be "*the objective relationships, which are constitutive of the structure of the field*". (Bourdieu 1992: 1).

8. Conclusion

"*Mr. Tarde's proposition is purely arbitrary. He may of course state that in his personal opinion nothing really exists in society but what comes from the individual, but proofs supporting this statement are lacking and discussion is therefore impossible. It would be only too easy to oppose to this the contrary feeling of a great many persons, who conceive of society not as the form spontaneously assumed by individual nature as it blooms outwards, but as an antagonistic force restricting individual natures and resisted by them*!" (Durkheim in his debate against Tarde at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in 1903)[xvii]

Flaubert had been buried in the family grave of Croisset since 23 years already when two contenders in the French field of social sciences had to discuss the nature of society and consequently the goals which sociology as a discipline had to give to itself. Durkheim, against Gabriel Tarde's psycho-sociological theory of Imitation[xviii], had to defend the theoretical plus-value of his work on *Suicide*[xix], that is to say the conviction that "everything is social" - even facts which in appearance are the most intimate and individual, such as the decision to commit suicide - and that all social facts have therefore to be scientifically studied as objects. Moreover, the intuition that social institutions would function like "antagonistic forces restricting individual natures", hereby limiting the conscious action of "subjects", will leave an indelible print in the realm of French sociology, as it was - in the end and despite the popularity of Tarde's perspective - institutionalized by Durkheim.

If Bourdieu was perfectly at ease with his Durkheimian theoretical inheritance, one shall recall that he nevertheless originally intended, through his conceptualization of Habitus, to reach a position beyond Subjectivism and Objectivism - through the individual internalization of social structures - within the debate which had already started a century earlier. However, *The Rules of Art* may give another demonstration of his failed attempt to transcend the traditional dichotomy between structure-less agents and agent-less structures: "*What the analysis of (…) esthetical experience describes is in reality*

[xvi] Becker, Howard. 1982. *Art worlds*. Los Angeles, University of California Press.
[xvii] « The Debate between Tarde and Durkheim » was staged at the initiative of Bruno Latour in 2007 for the first time and published in its English translation in 2008.
[xviii] Tarde, Gabriel. 1890. *Les lois de l'Imitation*. Paris, Editions Kimé.
[xix] Durkheim, Emile. 1897. *Le Suicide. Etude de sociologie*. Paris, Félix Alcan.

an institution that exists twice: In things in themselves, and in the brains. In things in themselves, under the form of an artistic field, a relatively autonomous social universe which is the product of a slow emergence; In the brains, under the form of dispositions (…). When things and dispositions are perfectly in harmony, everything appears as immediately obvious to the agents." (Bourdieu 1992: 471). This obviousness of the social world ("*Illusio*") is the Bourdieusian equivalent of Marx's false consciousness, a theoretical stance that deprives individual *subjects* - understood as *objects* of analysis - of the possibility to act consciously, or to move themselves within the social world by using their "freedom" of thought and action (others would say "agency"). To the Sartrian principles of subjective immanence, social indeterminacy and individual autonomy, Bourdieu feels obliged to oppose an overwhelming definition of social transcendence, coercion and heteronomy, making hereby literature nothing more than an epiphenomenon of social life.

The person of Gustave Flaubert, taken hostage within this debate, appears like a pretext to Bourdieu's systematic critique of sartrian philosophy, exactly like it already was a pretext to Sartre's concrete demonstration of existentialist theory. Gustave's bourgeois constitution had to be surpassed by Flaubert's willpower in order to become the author of *Madame Bovary*, says Sartre? No, Flaubert's privileged position in the social world is exactly what led to his central position in the Parisian literary field of his time, replies Bourdieu. It is possible, and even necessary, for a given individual facing given social determinisms, to find the strength to actively exist instead of letting oneself to be defined by them, claims Sartre. It is structurally impossible for social agents catched by the social game and mesmerized by its *Illusio*, to find the opportunity to get rid of the incorporated dispositions put in them by social institutions, and therefore to concretely change their conditions, claims Bourdieu. To the Sartrian principle of a rational "original project" as the key to one's freely chosen existence, Bourdieu opposes the logic of a social world which imposes its laws and beliefs to individuals.

At the same time, the sociologist wishes to reaffirm the meta-character of his scientific analysis over what he identifies as the "narcissistic spontaneism" of sartrian phenomenology: "*The charismatic representation of the writer as creator leads to forget everything that is inscribed in his position in the field of production and the social trajectory which led him to it: On the one hand the genesis and structure of the specific social space in which the creator is inserted and constituted, and where his creative project is shaped; On the other hand, the genesis of the generic and specific dispositions, common and singulars at the same time, which he has imported in this position*." (Bourdieu 1992: 314). But can the study of the dialectic between social positions and individual dispositions be sufficient in order to explain the existence, passion, talent, career, choices and esthetic stances of a concrete person, as Gustave Flaubert used to be?

If we do agree with Bourdieu that "everything is social", and that every social thing should be the object of social analysis, it is also possible to affirm that everything is not only social, and that sociology cannot explain everything on its own. If Bourdieu's field theory permits to circumscribe the universe of possible in matter of artistic creation at a given time, in a given place, for a given person with a given habitus, his hegemonic

vision of sociological explanation and social regularity makes him forget the principle of "uncertainty" which should nevertheless remain present in the study of human action (Boltanski 1991: 292). As Sartre used to say about another writer than Flaubert: "*Paul Valéry is a petit-bourgeois writer, but not every petit-bourgeois writer is Paul Valéry*" (Fortin 1993: 74).

Conflict of interest statement

The author has no conflict of interest to declare. She has seen and agrees with the contents of the manuscript and there is no financial interest to report. She certifies that the submission is original work and is not under review at any other publication.

About the Author

Emma Barrett Fiedler is a doctoral researcher in social and cultural anthropology at Aix-Marseille University (IDEMEC, Institut d'Ethnologie Européenne, Méditerranéenne et Comparative). Her actual doctoral research observes the consequences of current legal immigration administration on migrants' exilic subjective experience in France and Germany, from integration courses towards naturalization. Her research interests reach from anthropology to sociology and philosophy, psychanalysis and literature studies.

Bibliography

Baudelaire, Charles. 1857. *Les fleurs du mal*. Paris, Poulet-Malassis et De Broise.

Becker, Howard. 1982. *Art worlds*. Los Angeles, University of California Press.

Boltanski, Luc & Thévenot, Laurent. 1991. *De la justification. Les économies de la grandeur*. Paris, Gallimard.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1980. Le mort saisit le vif (Les relations entre l'histoire réifiée et l'histoire incorporée). *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Vol. 32, p 3-14.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction. Social critique of the judgement of taste*. London Routledge.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The logic of practice*. Cambridge, Polity.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. Le champ littéraire. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Vol. 89, p.3-46.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1992. Introduction à la socioanalyse. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*. Vol.90, p. 3-5.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1995 (1992). *The rules of art. Genesis and structure of the literary field*. Stanford University Press.

Durkheim, Emile. 1897. *Le Suicide. Etude de sociologie*. Paris, Félix Alcan.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 1995. *Small places, large issues*. University of Chicago Press.

Flaubert, Gustave. 1857. *Madame Bovary (Mœurs de province)*. Paris, Michel Lévy frères.

Flaubert, Gustave. 1869. *L'Education sentimentale (Histoire d'un jeune homme)*. Paris, Michel Lévy frères.

Fortin, Andrée. 1993. Pierre Bourdieu: les règles de l'art. *Nuit blanche, magazine littéraire*, N°51, p.74-75.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The presentation of Self in everyday life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Kant, Emmanuel. 2000 (1790). *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Latour, Bruno & Karsenti, Bruno. 2008. The Debate between Tarde and Durkheim. *Society and Space*, Vol.26, p. 761-777.

Merle, Jean-Christophe. 2005. La psychanalyse existentielle et morale chez Sartre. *Le portique –en ligne*, N°16.

Proust, Marcel. 1954 (Posthumous). *Contre Sainte-Beuve*. Paris, La Bibliothèque libre.

Sallenave, Danièle. 1991. *Le don des morts*. Paris, Gallimard.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1946. *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*. Paris, Editions Nagel.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1947. *Baudelaire*. Paris, Gallimard.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1952. *Saint-Genêt, comédien et martyr*. Paris, Gallimard.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1957. *Being and Nothingness: An essay on phenomenological ontology*. London: Methuen.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1957. *Questions de méthode*. Paris, Gallimard.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1964. *Les Mots.* Paris, Gallimard.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1981 (1971). *The family idiot. Gustave Flaubert from 1821 to 1857*. University Chicago Press.

Tarde, Gabriel. 1890. *Les lois de l'Imitation*. Paris, Editions Kimé.

Young-Rae, Ji. 2007. La reconstruction sartrienne de la vie de Flaubert. *Recherches & Travaux –en ligne*. N°71.