

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI[®]

.

A

Cervantes, Flaubert, and the Quixotic Counter-Genre

by

Soledad Fox

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy,
The City University of New York.

2001

UMI Number: 3008827

Copyright 2001 by
Fox, Soledad Carmen

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3008827

Copyright 2001 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

© 2001

SOLEDAD FOX

All Rights Reserved

This dissertation has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

4/25/01
Date

Vincent Capozzi
Chair Examining Committee

4/25/01
Date

W. E. Cole
Executive Officer

Professor David Kleinbard
Professor Catherine MacKenna
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

CERVANTES, FLAUBERT, AND THE QUIXOTIC
COUNTER-GENRE

by

Soledad Fox

Adviser: Professor Vincent Crapanzano

In this study, Cervantes's *Don Quixote* is considered as a point of departure for tracing the development of the *quixotic* novel as a unique type of prose fiction that initially arose as a counter-genre to existing classifications of both poetry and prose. *Don Quijote*'s modernity is examined vis-à-vis its own epoch, and in terms of its perennial afterlife. The impact of Cervantes's innovations are broadened and illuminated by juxtaposing his novelistic innovations to those of one of his key "disciples": Gustave Flaubert. This study uncovers specific traces of Cervantes's literary heritage in the work of Flaubert, and shows how Flaubert's own conception of the novel, and of his vocation, is deepened when seen in light of his *quixotic* foundations. Flaubert strove to assert and renew the supremacy of the prose novel in his own time—to reposition it as a counter-genre—and saw himself as a direct heir to Cervantes's struggle and vision. *Don Quijote* can be found lurking in the shadows of several of Flaubert's works, however, the *quixotic* legacy is most explicitly incarnated in *Madame Bovary*. Emma Bovary, like Alonso Quijano, attempts to mold her identity and

fuel her desires according to the models provided by the outmoded popular novels she reads. The strategy of making the main character an avid consumer of literature is the central *quixotic* move. While seeming to champion fantasy vs. “reality”, I argue that the central concern of the *quixotic* novel is in fact its own supremacy over rival fictions. For Cervantes and Flaubert, literary conventions, not reality, are presented as the true threat to literature. Their works openly acknowledge their literary competitors and influences, and proceed to dismantle them by ironically, and mimetically, exposing their conventions. The significance of Flaubert’s contributions to the novel’s evolution and his seminal connection to *Don Quixote* suggest that a particular *quixotic* history of the novel can be retold from the standpoint of Cervantes. The exploration of this history is the goal of this study.

Contents

Introduction: Cervantes and Flaubert	1
I. Reconsidering Cervantes	4
II. The <i>Quijote</i> : A Selective Genealogy	38
Cervantes and Erasmus	42
Cervantes and the Italian Renaissance	52
III. The Principle of Self-Consciousness	61
The Irony of Cervantes	65
Imitation	77
Exemplarity and the Reader	86
Chivalric Romances and Their Readers	91
Readers of the Romances in the <i>Quijote</i>	117
The Dialogue with the Canon	124
IV. Flaubert: Lyric Romanticism	138
Early Readings	144
<i>Mémoires d'un fou</i> and <i>Novembre</i>	149
The Great Leap: <i>L'éducation sentimentale</i>	159
<i>La tentation de Saint Antoine</i> 1848-1849	171
V. <i>Madame Bovary</i>	176
The Theme of the Reader	217
VI. <i>Madame Bovary</i> and <i>Don Quijote</i>	228
The Prosaic Fusion of the Ideal and the Real	242
<i>Lucie de Lamermoor</i> and the Conventions of Sentimental Romances	253
Linguistic Games	266
Inns	273
The Rustic Wedding	278
Those Evil Novels	281
Aristocrats: Rodolphe de Boulanger and the Duke & Duchess	285
Emma/Charles compared to Don Quijote/Sancho	291
Death	295
Conclusion	306
Bibliography	311

Flaubert and Cervantes Introduction

Je crois à la *race* plus qu'à l'éducation. On emporte...la patrie à la semelle de ses talons et l'on porte au coeur, sans le savoir, la poussière de ses ancêtres morts. Quant à moi, je ferais la-dessus personnellement une démonstration par A+B. Il en est de même en littérature. Je retrouve toutes mes origines dans le livre que je savais par coeur avant de savoir lire, *Don Quichotte*...

--Flaubert, *Correspondance*¹

(I believe more firmly in race than in education. In every step we carry our heritage with us, and in our hearts—unbeknownst to us—is the dust of our dead ancestors. As to me, this can be demonstrated as simply as A+B. The same is true for literature, I can find all my origins in the book that I knew by heart even before I learned to read: *Don Quixote*.)

In this study of the *quixotic* novel, I show that our perspective on Cervantes is broadened and illuminated by juxtaposing his novelistic innovations to those of one of his key “disciples”: Gustave Flaubert. The first section—which begins a century before Cervantes’s time—situates Cervantes in his historical context and examines certain cultural and personal circumstances that converged to provoke his aesthetic prescience. Within the literary landscape of the period, Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* is considered as a point of departure for tracing the development of the *quixotic* novel as a type of prose fiction that initially arose as a counter-genre to existing classifications of both poetry and prose.

¹ Flaubert, Gustave. *Correspondance*.v.II. (ed. Jean Bruneau) Paris: Gallimard. 1980. P. 111

Because the *quixotic* novel arises from a particular understanding of literary art in general, and of prose and the prosaic in particular, it can be seen as the paradigm for the prose novel itself. Since the late eighteenth century, Cervantes's *quixotic* poetics of prose has infiltrated and shaped all aspects of the evolution of prose fiction. The second part of this study uncovers specific traces of Cervantes's literary heritage in the work of Gustave Flaubert, and shows how Flaubert's own conception of the novel, and of his vocation, is deepened when seen in light of his *quixotic* foundations. Flaubert strove to assert and renew the supremacy of the prose novel in his own time—to reposition it as a counter-genre—and saw himself as a direct heir to Cervantes's struggle and vision.

Don Quijote can be found lurking in the shadows of most of Flaubert's works, however, the *quixotic* legacy is most explicitly incarnated in *Madame Bovary*. Emma Bovary, like Alonso Quijano, attempts to mold her identity and fuel her desires according to the models provided by the outmoded popular novels she reads. The strategy of making the main character an avid consumer of literature is the central, brilliant quixotic move. Though many readers of *Don Quijote* and *Madame Bovary* will identify the drama unleashed by this move as being that of literature against life, or reality against fantasy, it is in fact a more incestuous war that both authors wage: that of literature against literature. The idea behind *Madame Bovary* surely was not to show that Walter Scott fueled fantasies are better than the *moeurs* of real life in provincial

France, any more than the idea of *Don Quijote* was to glorify the protagonist's chivalric dreams.

Quite to the contrary, the quixotic novel is not concerned with the supremacy of fantasy over "reality" but with its own supremacy over rival fictions. It openly acknowledges its literary competitors, and proceeds to destroy them by ironically exposing their conventions. As Marthe Robert puts it "Like those insects who protect themselves against their nearest and strongest enemies by mimetic ruse, quixotism apes the manner, tone, and gestures of its anonymous adversary, whose indifferent, self-interested or simply lazy conformity it perceives on all sides."² Generic conventions, not reality, are presented as the true threat to literature. The significance of Flaubert's contributions to the novel's evolution and his seminal connection to *Don Quixote* suggests that a particular *quixotic* history of the novel can be retold from the standpoint of Cervantes.

² Robert, Marthe. *The Old and the New*. Translated by Carol Cosman. Berkeley & Los Angeles: UCLA press, 1977. P. 27

Reconsidering Cervantes

This first chapter is an attempt to question certain assumptions, and reconsider Cervantes's position within his own time, as well as within literary history. While Cervantes has clearly found many loyal and intelligent allies in literary critics writing about *Don Quijote*, he has also found far too many well-intentioned foes. In this second category we may place the critics who find Don Quijote, *the character*, to be a perfectly independent person whose genius, greatness, and intelligence far surpass his author's assumed intentions! Celebrated thinkers—including Miguel de Unamuno just to mention one—do not hesitate to accuse Cervantes of unconsciousness and even stupidity, and see him as unworthy of the genius of his creation. But Cervantes was not invented by Don Quijote, it was the other way around.

Numerous other scholars (including Samuel Putnam, well-known translator of *Don Quijote*) have emphasized the numerous errors, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the work as evidence of Cervantes's lack of awareness and control over his creation. While the style of *Don Quijote* does in fact abound with incongruities, it is, and this is of primordial importance, because Cervantes imitates the careless style of the chivalric romances throughout the work. *Amadís de Gaula*, *Tirant lo blanc* and the other chivalric romances parodied by *Don Quijote*, are teeming with errors, inconsistencies,

and contradictions. Their authors were writing stories to entertain and paid little attention to consistency or details. Cervantes parodies not only the content of these works, but also their careless style. Since there are no such “mistakes” or contradictions in Cervantes’s other works, the obvious conclusion is that they are featured in *Don Quijote* on purpose.¹ Far from being a defect, these contradictions are really an integral part of the art of this novel.

As Tom Lathrop points out in the introduction to his edition of *Don Quijote*, how could a man such as Cervantes, whose erudition and memory were so vast that he was able to cite, in this book alone, 104 mythological, legendary, and biblical characters; 131 chivalric, pastoral, and poetic characters; 227 historical persons or lineages; 21 famous animals; 93 well-known books; 261 geographical locations; 210 proverbs; and who created 371 characters (230 of whom have speaking roles)² have *forgotten* from one paragraph to the next the name of Sancho Panza’s wife? The fact that she is called, variously, Juana Gutierrez, Mari Gutierrez, Juana Panza, Teresa Panza, and Teresa Cascajo—and that these different names appear within lines of each other—shows that Cervantes imitated the careless style of the romances, not that he was senile, incompetent, or otherwise incoherent. Ridiculous though these attacks on Cervantes may seem, they are common enough to oblige us to

¹¹ For more on this see Lathrop, Tom. “Contradictions in the *Quijote* Explained” in *Jewish Culture and the Hispanic World*, ed. Mishael M. Caspi and Samuel Armistead. (Berkeley: Judah Magnes Museum, 1999). pp. 242-6

² These numbers, cited by Lathrop, were originally published in the appendices to Américo Castro’s edition of the *Quijote* (Mexico: Porrúa, 1960) prepared by Jose Bergua.

briefly defend the author's vision and position in order to help understand his novelistic strategy. It is necessary to emphasize Cervantes's intense literary and social self-consciousness in order to grasp, in a profound way, the transcendence of *Don Quijote*, and to answer fundamental questions, addressed in this study, regarding the work's afterlife.

Why, despite the fact that the character Don Quijote became an immediate legend, did it take nearly two centuries for Cervantes to be recognized as a writer of universal stature? This question is usually dismissed, but isn't it essential to our understanding of his work? Why was he finally recognized as such not by Spaniards but by readers and critics in Germany, France, Russia, and England? Why is *Don Quijote* still considered by many to be a work outside of the Western literary and intellectual tradition? Why is Cervantes still often denied his due credit as a forward thinking author? Two samples of this widespread critical stance (one from the early part of the century, one from this decade) exemplify what I see as slightly limited visions of *Don Quijote*. The first is from Eric Auerbach's conclusion to his chapter in *Mimesis* "The Enchanted Dulcinea". Auerbach's chapter on the *Quijote* is important, however his view of the work is, if I may say so, indicative of a narrow conception of the work, of Cervantes, and of the disturbing cultural and social violence that typified the Spain of the time:

Elsewhere in Europe men had long begun to question and to doubt, and even to begin building anew with their own materials. But that was in keeping neither with the spirit of his country nor

with his own temperament, nor finally with his conception of the office of a writer....So universal and multilayered, so noncritical and nonproblematic a gaiety in the portrayal of everyday reality has not been attempted again in European letters.”³

Nearly half a century later, the Cervantes scholar Félix Martínez Bonati's *Don Quijote and the Poetics of the Novel* echoes Auerbach's view:

In a work of the magnitude of the *Quijote*, the revealing impulse of the imagination goes not only beyond views consistent with the theological and philosophical doctrines of the era but also beyond what Cervantes could have conceptualized. Consequently, it can be said that the thought of the *Quijote* is not the thought of Cervantes.⁴

Then, whose thought is it? The views of Auerbach and Martinez Bonati (among many others including the hispanist Anthony Close) leave us a somewhat naïve *Don Quijote*. It is either limited by its author's epoch and nationality, and or it surpasses limitations but only because it simultaneously surpasses its author. One of the goals of this dissertation is to demonstrate how and why *Don Quijote* is not a work contingent to its time and place, and that this is precisely because of Cervantes, and certainly not despite him. It is not, of course, Cervantes's merit as a writer that needs emphasis, yet to understand Cervantes's universality without ignoring his necessary relationships to his country and his era remains a complicated subject. For indeed Cervantes both was and was not of the Spain of his time and we must understand how these

³ Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis*. Translated by Willard Trask. (New York: Doubleday, 1957)

⁴ Martinez Bonati, Felix. *Don Quijote and the Poetic of the Novel*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1992).

two states of being are manifest in his work. Américo Castro⁵—in his elucidation of Cervantes's innovative developments of the novel form, and his historical situation of these innovations-- manages to synthesize these two aspects of Cervantes, and it is along the lines of his approach that this current discussion will unfold.

The first step here is to state that if Cervantes is considered exceptional today (as he of course is for a variety of reasons) it should come as no surprise that Cervantes was in fact exceptional vis-à-vis his time and place. Only by accepting this small fact can we slowly approach the broader idea of his work's stature vis-à-vis other times and places. Without briefly considering the many factors that contributed to Cervantes's unique position in sixteenth century Spain, we can neither fully understand his vision of the novel nor his *Don Quijote*, nor, for that matter, can we link *Don Quijote* to any significant ideas outside of its time and place. Without first giving Cervantes his due credit as a prescient thinker, we would be hard pressed to understand how thinkers as modern as Friedrich Schlegel or Gustave Flaubert (and a long line of others including Thomas Mann, Julio Cortazar, Gabriel García Márquez, Jorge Luis Borges, Mario Vargas Llosa etc.) have found a model for prosaic innovation in *Don Quijote*. Of course, it may be argued that Cervantes's work can't possibly be so modern and that it must be modern readers who superimpose their modern views on the work. This is the idea that modern readers (beginning

⁵ Castro in *Hacia Cervantes* (Madrid: Taurus, 1957) and *Cervantes y los casticismos españoles*

most famously perhaps with Friedrich Schlegel) have projected “modern” readings onto *Don Quijote* to fit their own purposes and have refused to look at it for what it really is. I argue that this is just another ploy offered by those intent on ignoring Cervantes’s singular position within the literary and cultural traditions of his time. Not only did *Don Quijote* (as Lukács argues in *The Theory of the Novel*) anticipate the novel’s future, and not only was Cervantes not unconscious of this, he gave a new meaning to self-consciousness in literature.

Cervantes’s views of, and position within, Spanish culture as an outsider, a defender of individualism, and a man of letters—in a society where these were among the worst things one could be—all have great bearing on his work and must be taken into account. Only then can Cervantes’s literary innovations and their impact upon the subsequent literary tradition be understood.

Before delineating a perspective on what the *Quijote* may be, I would like to mention what, in my opinion, it is not: *Don Quijote* is not merely a comedy, its purpose is not merely to destroy the “pernicious” works of chivalry, the main character is not merely a madman, and Cervantes was not a merely a Spaniard who somehow happened upon the creation of this work of universal stature. In this first chapter, based on historical information that has

come to light in the latter part of the twentieth century⁶, I show how Cervantes did indeed question and doubt—a position which is hardly surprising for him to have had, given his education, and his own tragically errant itinerary through a life made up of failures and exclusion.

While the character of Don Quijote is clearly not realistic, neither is he the only figure from “golden age” Spain to have confused novelistic ideals with life: fiction and history borrowed indiscriminately from one another. His decision to be an errant knight and to live a novel has a deeper resonance when seen in the historical context of the relationship between romances and reality. First of all, the emulation of chivalric heroes (along with saints and other religious figures) did not begin with Don Quijote. It had begun in the Middle Ages during which the practice of knighthood and the literature of chivalry were strongly linked. Spanish, French, and English knights in the fifteenth century had devoted themselves to the imitation of heroes and adventures from the romances. Twelve of Cortés’s men, for example, took vows strictly following the model of the vows described in a romance; and the conquistadores borrowed the name *California* from the fantastic island in Montalvo’s *Las Sergas de Esplandián* (the fifth book in the *Amadís de Gaula*

⁶ While these ideas are by no means new, they bear emphasis as their importance is often disregarded.

series).⁷ Fray Gaspar de Carvajal described fighting tribeswomen in South America as the Amazons of *Amadís de Gaula*'s sequel, *Sergas de Esplandián*, and Bernal Díaz del Castillo remarked in his *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España* that his first impression of Tenochtitlan was that it was just like a vision from the chivalric romance *Amadís de Gaula*.⁸ Conversely, real people from 1492 onwards—especially the *conquistadores*—were the inspiration for many chivalric romances. Those of Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo were based on endeavours of the archetypal figure of Columbus. On the other hand, the chroniclers of the *Conquista* tended to colour the exploits of the *conquistadores* by envisioning them as knightly adventures. In the Renaissance, the tradition continued as heroic and religious biographies were written with the sole object of offering up models to be imitated.

It is, of course, the above-mentioned chivalric romance, *Amadís de Gaula*, which Alonso Quixano uses to create his new identity as Don Quijote in Cervantes's novel. This entanglement between history and fiction existed despite the Inquisitorial indexes that existed to censor literature in both the Old and "New" Spains. The indexes, beginning in 1506, and regularly expanded, banned or expurgated all fantastic works including *Amadís de Gaula*. *Don Quijote* would eventually also fall prey to the censorial procedure. The attempt

⁷ From Riley, E.C. *Introducción al Quijote*. Traducción de Enrique Torner Montoya. (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1990).

on behalf of the Spanish Inquisitorial powers to put an end to fictional works must be kept in mind while considering Don Quijote's prologue and its professed mission of destroying the novels of chivalry. Since these works had already fallen out of fashion by the time Cervantes was writing, and he himself enjoyed them immensely, his statement can be read not only as a gentle parody of the outmoded genre, but also of the *royal* mission to ban these "evil" works.

The satirical and parodic elements of *Don Quijote* are the point of departure for understanding Cervantes. The character, Don Quijote, can be read at one level as a parody of the *conquistadores*: men who set out, with chivalric visions of grandeur, to seek glory, to right the wrongs of the "barbarous", and of course, to conquer a new world. As the *conquistadores* promised (though never delivered) their soldiers kingdoms as rewards for their support, Don Quijote promises his "squire" Sancho Panza an island to rule. As the "heroic" trajectory both to and within the New World was errant and haphazard, Don Quijote's wanderings through Spain are led by nothing more than the will of his nag Rocinante.

Satirical works —often anonymous—abounded in Spain and the New World in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and were a form of inverting the limited officially sanctioned discourse of the inquisition and Spain's illusory self-image. Picaresque narratives, unveiling the hypocrisy of the glorious, Christian image of Spain that scantily hid a brutal and ignorant

⁸ Greer Johnson, Julie. *Satire in Colonial Spanish America: Turning the New World Upside Down*.

society, such as the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*, abounded. As Dunlop points out in his *History of Prose Fiction*, by the time of *Don Quijote* 's publication, the Spanish public who had fifty years before been occupied with Soldems of Babylon and Emperors of Trebizond (from the chivalric romances) entertained themselves chiefly with

...the adventures of their swindlers and beggars...the indolence of the lower classes...and the ridiculous pride of the *hidalgos* (noblemen) who, while in want of provisions and every necessary of life, strutted with immense whiskers, long rapiers, and ruffles without a shirt, through the streets of Madrid and Toledo. The miserable inns, the rapacity of officers of justice, and ignorance of medical practitioners also afforded ample scope for the satire contained in the romances of the period...⁹

However, Cervantes's *Don Quijote* is not merely satirical, nor is it merely a parody of existing literary genres. While it contains elements of parody and satire, its novelty does not lie in this satirical criticism: many other works, *satires à thèse*, whose sole purpose it was to expose hypocrisy and corruption in Spanish society had already existed. *Don Quijote*'s main concern, and its innovative contribution to the literary landscape, is the process of literary creation or the becoming of the self through literature. Cervantes's attack on society—a society that represses fantasy while condoning a “reality” falser than that found in any chivalric romance—is an attack on a culture which precludes the development of the individual.

(Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993)

⁹ *History of Prose Fiction*. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1988). p.323

As we will see, while *Don Quijote* deliberately incorporates and plays with elements of both the chivalric and picaresque traditions, it was a work that surpassed the limits of what was conceivable from the point of view of the literature of its time. To be able to understand the work today (an understanding that is always problematic) it would be useful to keep this in mind. The literary and social circumstances of Cervantes's epoch are as present in his work as they are rejected and upbraided. What is important to recognize is that *Cervantes, in his time, took a singular prosaic route*. As we will see, he managed to both distance himself from, yet dialectically assimilate all available models: the classical epic, the romances of Chivalry, the pastoral novel, the picaresque, neo-Aristotelian poetics, Renaissance ideals, the irony of Erasmus, etc. As opposed to his contemporary Lope de Vega, who as we shall shortly see, set forth to delight and support the prejudices of the *vulgo necio* (the stubborn and foolish masses), Cervantes chose the opposite direction, a lonelier, individual one for which he would have to invent his own style. As he says in the prologue to *Don Quijote* "No quiero irme con la corriente del uso ("I don't want to take the common path").

Cervantes stands apart from the ideology of Inquisitorial Spain for a number of reasons. His Jewish ancestry (long suspected¹⁰ and finally documented by Américo Castro in 1971) is significant—though we must not

¹⁰ His mother had a converso name, his father was a surgeon and he himself a tax-collector (both converso professions), the family moved errantly around the country, and Cervantes was consistently denied positions which otherwise he logically should have been given.

confuse this reality with the fantasy that Cervantes was a practicing Jew. He was, by all accounts, a *new Christian*—the meaning of which we will get to later. Culturally, however, his Jewish descent may have been crucial in shaping his life. His education in letters, his passion for classical scholarship, his disdain for outward manifestations of Christianity, and his continuous exclusion from Spanish society were all elements that perpetuated his isolation from the majority, an isolation which is echoed in all his works. In these particular and fundamental characteristics, needless to say, Cervantes had a good deal in common with his character Don Quijote.

In many works he parodies the all-encompassing ideal (if one can call it that) and single-minded value put forth by Spanish society to its citizens: that they all had to be “old Christians of pure lineage” (*cristianos viejos*). With few exceptions, everyone posed as an “old Christian” in inquisitorial Spain –and needless to say there were only a handful of “real” ones given the centuries of cohabitation in Spain of Moors, Jews, and Christians, and the intermarriages which abounded during the assimilation of the *conversos*. Of course, this “old Christian” pose was therefore a fictional act and demanded more than just the claim to pure blood, it rested on upholding a series of behaviors which as presented in Cervantes’s works show a world that is truly upside down and ridiculous. We must keep in mind that while the second wave of the inquisition (from 1492 onwards) had given Jews the so-called option of conversion or expulsion, converse Jews (*conversos*) were by no means readily accepted into

Spanish life. The prejudice against Jews was as much (if not more) based on racism as on religious beliefs. Thus, while conversion was a means to avoid expulsion from Spain and/or execution, the lives facing those who were known to be converts—and even in later generations, those who were known to be descendants of converts—were marginalized. The only way for converts to enjoy the status and acceptance of old Christians was to disguise their *converso* lineage by behaving as old Christians and by re-inventing their identities through wandering or re-settling in a new place where their lineage wasn't known.

Cervantes's critical views of the "old Christian" fanatic mentality that ruled Spanish life are wonderfully illustrated in his 1615 play "El retablo de las Maravillas". In this work he portrays the overwhelming obsession with "pure blood" and adherence to religious dogma that ran rampant in the inquisitorial Spain of his time. The play depicts a group of villagers who are willing to pretend to see a nonexistent spectacle in order to avoid social censure. In this farce, a travelling puppeteer visits a Castilian village and pretends to put on a magic show which is supposedly *invisible to anyone of illegitimate or racially impure ancestry*. Of course, they see nothing at all, for there is no play within the play. Yet, terrified of risking their Old Christian reputations, and intent on proving that they have no trace of Jewish blood they pretend, under the puppeteer's direction, until they convince one another that the entire social group (but no single person in isolation!) is seeing the non-existent show. One

villager goes as far as to dance with a partner he cannot see. The social myth of blood purity, officially important in Golden Age Spain as the basis of national Christian honor, was thus portrayed by Cervantes as a hilarious process of social mystification worthy only of illiterate peasants.¹¹

The old Christian—considered the cream of Spanish society—was, at his best, a gentleman landowner. As such, he had supposedly inherited his worldly goods and would not deign to work (an ungentlemanly and therefore un-Christian endeavour). To work was to take initiative and to show ambition for a decidedly un-Christian end: money. The making of money, as everyone knew, was an interest relegated to Jews. In short, this old Christian gentlemanly pose (anti-initiative, anti-work, anti-education, etc.) gave license to inquisitorial citizens to stagnate in sloth, decadence, poverty, and ignorance. These characteristics were a natural consequence of the inquisition:

The Spanish middle classes were born with the bureaucracy which was established in the sixteenth century to administer the inquisition...Such middle-class virtues as there were in Spain were not created of *necessity*: if they existed, they were cultivated theoretically. In an absolutist state the middle class had no independent power and so the virtues of initiative, industriousness, non-conformism, thrift, scientific curiosity, had no reason to exist. On the contrary, the history of the Spanish middle class *had encouraged the very opposite traits*. The Inquisition had insisted upon the most rigid orthodoxy, both religious and racial: Jews and Moors were considered inferior races: a violent and hieratic snobbery had been developed. Equally, the state

¹¹ Rivers, Elias, *Quixotic Scriptures: Essays on the Textuality of Hispanic Literature*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983). p.107

bureaucracy had discouraged initiative and put a premium on safe laziness. It came to be thought that to work hard was to lose one's dignity. (my italics)¹²

Enforcement of the adherence to these old Christian “values” was simple. During the inquisition public reprobation weighed heavily on the totality of existence, making the “*qu'en dira-t-on*” the slogan governing everyone's actions or, more frequently, lack thereof. Beliefs, good or bad, were blindly supported by *quantity*—and when a million people or more held the same belief there was obviously nothing to be done. This popular opinion was upheld and defended by “chivalric” bravery, brutality, and manly “honor”—again, all qualities considered absent from those of Jewish heritage. The profile of the *cristiano viejo* was thus conceived throughout as a negative reflection of the Jew in every sense, down to the detail of the importance of publicly consuming ham on every possible occasion to prove one's clean lineage.

Aside from the reluctance to work, the effect of these attitudes was perhaps most palpable in the paralysis of intellectual activities. Learning, like money-making and initiative, was seen as a Jewish pursuit. With this in mind, the *cristiano caballero* shunned scholarship and even literacy. As Castro points out, Cervantes incessantly mocks the pigheadedness of a people determined to

¹² Berger, John. *The Success and Failure of Picasso*. (New York: Vintage, 1989). Berger's history of Spain in the first chapter of this book is succinct. His point—and therefore the history is important in his discussion of Picasso's formative years—is that Spain changes very little from the tenth through the twentieth centuries.

relate illiteracy with “clean lineage”, to disdain the pursuit of any study which did not lead to a mayor’s staff or a bishop’s miter, and to confuse “do as others” with “do nothing”. Cervantes intuited the symptoms of the collective Spanish disease: Universities were nothing more than trade schools for professionals (whether secular or ecclesiastic)—not seedbeds of knowledge. This is marvelously illustrated by the character in *Don Quijote* Don Diego de Miranda (an old Christian) who insists that his son, Don Lorenzo, is wasting his life studying ancient poetry and philosophy. He hopes to “rectify” the boy and have him trained in theology or law. Of course, unlike the boy’s father, Don Quijote is delighted to find a like-minded friend and spends days discussing poetic matters with Don Lorenzo.

In *Don Quijote* the dialectic between old Christian and new Christian (of *converso* lineage) is most explicitly set up between Sancho and Don Quijote, respectively. Sancho—who incessantly proclaims his clean lineage, is a peasant and swine-herd (*porquero*), illiterate, lazy, and coarse, while Don Quijote (who in a notable absence does not discuss his own lineage¹³) is cultivated, gentle, and all too full of initiative. Sancho is ambitious, but only for a title and the riches and land that go with it (passive, institutional status is acceptable for old Christians). As the pair plot their future successes in one scene, Sancho reassures Don Quijote that once the latter is king, he won’t have

¹³ Regarding Don Quijote’s omission of any reference to his lineage, Cervantes’s advice that he should be praised not so much for what he includes in Don Quijote, *but rather for what he has wisely left out*, comes to mind.

any problem making Sancho a Count, thanks to Sancho's pure blood. Sancho knows that—not *despite*, but precisely *because of* his peasant lineage-- he's got what it takes to have prestige in his nation. He knows that “one doesn't need much ability nor literacy to be a governor; there are hundreds out there who can barely read, and they govern like birds of prey (*girifaltes*)”.¹⁴ Sancho says that he's an old Christian and that, in order to be a Count, that's enough (“*con eso me basta*”).¹⁵ “And it's even more than enough”(aun te sobra) is Don Quijote's reply, for when he is king, a person won't be measured by lineage. This exchange is one of many that make clear Cervantes's own views on the “pure blood” mythology.

What Cervantes seizes upon in these inverted values of the supposedly old Christian *hidalgo* class—so dominant in the culture—is significant. While this class had been satirized before in literature, Cervantes shifts the focus from their hypocrisy—which would imply that they are deliberately duplicitous—to showing that this cultural illness is in fact much deeper than hypocrisy. Everyone actually believes this fiction handed down from one generation to another and supports unanimously the idea that the best one can possibly hope for in life is to be an old Christian. In his novella *Rinconete y Cortadillo* he shows the chasm between exterior and interior Cervantes depicts a small time mafia of thieves and prostitutes who in the privacy of their underworld all say their prayers daily.

¹⁴ DQ, I, 33

Sadly, in Cervantes's time the only stance considered "clean" and respectable was that of irrationality. As Quevedo prescribed so ironically, and accurately:

To be a nobleman or gentleman, even if you are a Jew or an Arab, write with a poor hand, speak slowly and coarsely, ride a horse, owe many debts, *go where you're not known* and you'll be one.¹⁶

For of course, one could, as so many did, reinvent oneself as an old Christian. This was one of the only ways to dodge the relentless suspicions of society. The advisors of Carlos V concluded that aside from the *hidalgos* of old families, the only citizens not suspect of Jewish lineage were those of peasant lineage, which is to say those whose parents were uncultivated and illiterate (i.e. Sancho). The typical Spaniard of Cervantes's time (and through and well into most of the twentieth century one might add) found in him/herself nothing firm and indisputable to lean on save the "old Christian" mythic identity.

Cervantes's departure from this dominant mythology is manifest throughout his works. In particular, *Don Quijote*'s background has conflictual situations that are characteristically Spanish, and was born and developed in a dialectical debate with the forms which preceded it: novels of chivalry, romances which were more lyric than epic, picaresque novels, and pastoral novels. *Don Quijote* engaged the contemporary literary world in its dialectic as

¹⁵DQ, book I, XXIII

¹⁶ *Libro de todas las cosas*

well by questioning the vision of Spain offered by the popular (in both senses) *comedia* of his arch-rival, Lope de Vega.

Don Quijote's challenging of the Spanish status quo has affected the novel's afterlife amongst Hispanists. The rivalry between Lope and Cervantes lasts through to the twentieth century! Why? One sensible answer would seem to be that, as John Berger so succinctly puts it:

Spain is a country tied on an historical rack—the symbolic equivalent of its own inquisition's instrument of torture. It is stretched between the tenth and the twentieth centuries. Between them there have not arisen, as in other countries, those contradictions which can lead to further development...¹⁷

For the same reasons why at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Lope was a success and Cervantes wasn't, many twentieth century Hispanists have defended Lope's superiority. One example is the critic Manuel de Montoliu's 1939 declaration that Cervantes was not worthy of being the national representative of Spanish literature (1939, with Franco's victory was a year to look for such national figures). He claims that *Don Quijote*'s universal reputation was posthumous and the enterprise of foreign writers and men of letters who saw in the work a transcendence which had never in the slightest been suspected by their colleagues in Spain. In contrast, Lope's fame, he reminds us, was immediate and widely popular—signs of true success for

¹⁷ Berger, p.22

Montoliu. Lope's was "a theater of *gentlemen*, made for an audience of *gentlemen*".¹⁸ Unfortunately, Cervantes

... in his work, also depicts men of great lineage, yet he constantly shows his preference for the needy and disgraceful...his sympathy goes spontaneously towards all those humble people that swarm around his works living willy-nilly, exempt from the mortal anguish of human foresight...The *Quijote* is not a work for the Spain of today...it's main character does not offer us the exemplarity needed in these transcendental moments of Spanish history.¹⁹

The literature of the sixteenth century, from the tragicomedy of *Calisto y Melibea* and the theater of Juan del Encina, was overcome by sentiments of either luminous optimism *or* by bitter and often desperate melancholy. The latter possessed a dimension of social satire and aired the wishes and critical reactions of the *conversos*-- a minority that had been passed over. The theater of the first half of the century abounded in information and social criticism (Lope de Rueda and Vasco Díaz Tanco de Frenga--the latter of *converso* lineage) and was thus suppressed by the Inquisition which explains why so much of it was lost and why only a few rare works were preserved. The bitterness in a great deal of this satirical literature came from the disillusionment of many *conversos*. Initially, many had hoped to belong to a world based on the ideas of liberty and equality promised in the teachings of

¹⁸ It must be remembered that "gentleman" always incorporates the attribute of Christian: Cristiano calballero

Christ they had been forced to embrace. But this hope waned steadily throughout the century. Perhaps the most extreme example of this disappointment is exhibited in the *Guzmán de Alfarache* by the *converso* Mateo Alemán. Cervantes, though not with the destructive bitterness of Mateo Alemán, also aimed his shots at the institution of clean blood, that “vertebrae of the Spanish soul” as it is called by Américo Castro²⁰. As Don Quijote expresses it again and again, in different words, “blood is inherited, and virtue is acquired, and virtue alone is worth what blood isn’t”.²¹ For the Spain of Cervantes’ time, this was a radical pronouncement.

From a literary point of view it is important to remember Cervantes’s outsider perspective in order to understand his art and his style. Throughout his works there is the tension between the isolated spirit of the writer and the resistance put up by society; between he who feels superior and enlightened and the shapeless and oppressive masses. In many works—*Los Baños de Argel*, *El Licenciado Vidriera*, *La Gran Sultana*, Cervantes focused on the caste conflict in Spain, and the centrality of this theme grew as he became more and more disillusioned and marginalized from society.

In 1590 Cervantes still believed that the king would give him a post in the New World. This was clearly not an attractive option as we can see from

¹⁹ Castro, *Cervantes y los casticismos espanoles* pp25-26 from: Montoliu, Manuel de. “En busca del poeta nacional de Espana”. *La Prensa*. Buenos Aires, 23 de Octubre, 1939.

²⁰ *Cervantes y los casticismos espanoles*

²¹ DQ, Book II, 42

this quasi-autobiographical description of the prospect from *El Celoso*

Extremeño:

Seeing himself bereft of money and with few friends, he took refuge in the solution which many other lost souls in that city (Sevilla) take asylum; which is to go to the Indies, refuge and shelter for all the *desperate* men of Spain”²²

It is clear from his numerous petitions to the king that Cervantes did not have a satisfactory position within Spanish society. Yet not even this desperate refuge (outside of Spain) was not granted to Cervantes—it was denied him as had been every other high office in the public service which he had applied for. As the courageous military hero that he was, Cervantes –had he been of old Christian lineage—would surely have been granted a choice office. However, nothing he did to bring glory to his country brought him honor or security. From the late fifteenth-century onwards, public offices were consistently denied to anyone suspected of impure (*converso*) blood. Penniless, having lost the use of an arm in heroic deeds (for no glory), imprisoned repeatedly, he was doomed to travel Spain as an errant tax collector. Only in *Don Quijote* was Cervantes able to conceive a world in which people were worth something because of who they were intrinsically, not for what they became extrinsically after having their lineage dissected. What counts in the world of his greatest work is “the *cleanliness of virtue* and the beauty that a good reputation holds in

²² *Cervantes y Los casticismos españoles*, p. 97

*itself*²³; for “comparisons of one lineage to another are always odious and badly received”²⁴

Compared to existing works, *Don Quijote* represented the expression of a pulling away from society and the church into a private world of the individual. This tendency stemmed from a combination of Cervantes’s lonely marginalized position within his culture, and was most likely compounded by his studies in his youth with Lope de Hoyos, the Erasmian scholar. Erasmus, and his disciples, rejected the outward manifestation of Christian practices in favor of the development of an interior development of the individual Christian spirit.²⁵ Yet *Don Quijote* is not a work of heresy or a declaration of enmity towards the church (it could of course never have been published had it been) although Cervantes frequently ironizes religious practices—especially public displays of faith. However, throughout the work, exterior is subordinated to interior. This emphasis on interiority, as the basis of true Christian virtue, is one of the elements that gives the novel its “modernity”.

In numerous passages the exterior practice of religion--unaccompanied by a felt and intimate spirituality—is devalued. Yet the converse is never true. As Cervantes aimed for interiorization, not heresy, his stance may seem quite tame from our contemporary world-view, yet we must remember that this was not the case in Inquisitorial Spain. The notion of “interiority”—that a person

²³ DQ I, 33

²⁴ DQ, Book II, 1

could have an interior life independent of the social and Christian fabric of the inquisition—was a radical idea for the time. Erasmus had been the main proponent of this type of spirituality in Spain and his works were banned. In a similar fashion, allusions to this idea were expurgated from *Don Quijote* by the inquisitorial indexes. Just one example of this is the fact that the Expurgatorial Indexes of Cardenal Zapata (Sevilla, 1632) instruct as follows: “ Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quijote* Part II, Chapter 36, in the middle. Erase: ‘charitable acts undertaken with a lukewarm or lazy will, have no merit and are worthless’”. This was just one of many passages suppressed by the Inquisition. It is notable for two reasons. The first, because it shows the extremity of the indexes: the sentiment expressed by Cervantes is by no means heretical, it comes from St. Paul. Secondly, this one line was suppressed at least as late as the 1839 edition of the Biblioteca de Autores Españoles! The fate of this one line thus shows the breadth and longevity of Inquisitorial decrees in the Spanish literary world. Luckily, the inquisition could not outsmart Cervantes. While it is a shame—though of course not surprising-- that his work was tampered with at all, censorship detracted minimally from its vision: the novel as a whole is far too permeated with the celebration of independent, individual spirit

What had been previously, and still continued to be, relegated to spiritual and mystical domains—interiority-- was artistically structured in *Don*

²⁵ For more on Erasmus and Cervantes, see Marcel Bataillon’s *Erasme en Espagne*

in the *Quijote*. Cervantes develops the problem of creating one's personality simultaneously publicly and privately. Cervantes also redirected the course of traditional fiction by making his main characters wish, in the depths of their souls, for goals that were plainly inaccessible in Spain in 1600, e.g. a regal court for Don Quijote and an island for Sancho.

Before *Don Quijote*, the novelistic figure existed embedded in the course of the action, he didn't *strip himself of it* as Don Quijote, Sancho, Anselmo, or Don Diego de Miranda do. And the only contexts available for a person's intimate being were the pastoral genre or religious writings. Cervantes is the first to offer a third option for the development of the intimate self: freedom. In *Don Quijote* he makes society—the church, the city—parenthetical. Don Quijote is continuously trying to free other characters (with varying degrees of success) from their respective oppressive situations. He helps Marcela escape, he frees the chains of galley slaves, and he accosts a master in the midst of beating his young slave. We are reminded of Cervantes, who as a prisoner of the Turks engineered two elaborate escapes from his jail cell. Both attempts were failures, however they earned him the respect of his captors.

Cervantes also frees himself from existing literary constraints—which had already been visited and re-visited by Spanish and Italian novelists-- by putting a distance between himself and the past. Specifically, and most obviously, he refers to the novels of chivalry as a measure of *what he is*

putting a distance between himself and the past. Specifically, and most obviously, he refers to the novels of chivalry as a measure of *what he is discarding and what he is keeping*. While the predictable situations of the chivalric novels take place in cities, regal courts, grand houses, battlefields, etc. with established types as characters, Cervantes situates his novel away from society, in dry plains, run-down inns, and peoples this landscape with characters never seen before.

Nothing about *Don Quijote* fell into the realm of the predictable or the expected for the public of its time. The figure of the illusory chivalric knight could not be related to anything accessible to the *vulgo* that composed the audience of the popular theaters. *Don Quijote* exceeded the limits of what was conceivable and thus aroused the ire and censorship of many in Spanish literary society. Lope de Vega, the king of the *vulgo* audiences, wrote the following opinion of Cervantes in a letter to his patron, the Duke of Sesto in 1604: “Of poets...there is none as bad as Cervantes, and none as thickheaded as he who praises *Don Quijote*”²⁶

Before Cervantes, writers had taken from a selection of conventions: what was offered by the literary panorama was pre-formed and situated in a world of ideals with which they either agreed (chivalric romances, Lope de Vega’s plays) or disagreed (the bitterness and satire of the *converso* Mateo Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache*; the anonymous picaresque *El Lazarillo de*

Tormes). Cervantes rebelled against this situation. For him, the human figure in art could not be a “stock figure”, nor a consequence of a pre-designated fate over which they had no control. As Américo Castro says, this focus, on “...how the imaginary figure sees itself existing within the goings on, instead of simply narrating or describing these goings on” was something truly new in fictional narratives.²⁷ There was either pure fantasy (cheerful) or a mimetic realism (bitter) but no form that united these two extremes.

Cervantes would achieve the unity of fantasy and realism and it was by doing this –and not as is commonly thought by introducing realism which had already been done in the picaresque—that he put a great distance between himself and his contemporaries and predecessors. The importance of the many elements which passed from his life to his literature (references to people, objects, places, etc.) lies not so much in the fact that he indeed borrowed from “reality”, but in how he transformed these borrowed elements. For example, the *hidalgo* Alonso Quixano, or Quijada, or Quesada (at the beginning of the novel the narrator is not sure of his real name) who will become Don Quijote, is taken from a true life *hidalgo* from the Toledan Mancha—a cousin of Cervantes’s wife—named Quijada. However, the true *hidalgo* of la Mancha was far from being a *model* for Don Quijote, he was instead merely the modeling clay for the figure, for what the artist had at his disposal was to be transformed at will (as is illustrated in Don Quijote by the figure of Maese

²⁶ Castro, *Cervantes y los Casticismos*, p.163

Pedro who is the artist of his own life). As we will see later, this is exactly what Flaubert will do in his transformation of the, to him, dreary figure of the real life Madame Delamare into the figure of Emma Bovary.

Likewise, he ironically transforms what he borrows from previous literature. Don Quijote's "madness", which will be discussed later, stems from the reading of chivalric romances, the particular model, as has been mentioned, is *Amadís de Gaula*. What is ironic is that in *Amadís* itself we have the figure of the reader of romances of chivalry: the character Don Galeor, who was born into a line of chivalric knights, read chivalric romances in his childhood

...de manera que cuasi con ello, como con lo natural con que nasciera, fue movido a gran deseo de ser caballero".
 (...and so, in this way, and partly because of these (readings) combined with the natural disposition he had been born with, he was moved by the great desire to be a chivalric knight.)

When Don Quijote reads *Amadís*, we see both the invocation of and distancing from Don Galeor "...de manera que vino a perder el juicio." (*and so, in this way, he lost his mind.*) Don Galeor's inner fantasy (the effect caused on him by these books) is in harmony with his destiny: he is meant to be a chivalric knight. By contrast, the effect on Don Quijote is madness—his fantasy does not correspond with his reality-- and this is the brilliant point of departure: the hero is ironized, the myth volatilized—present only to feed the novel's irony.

²⁷ Castro, *Hacia Cervantes*, p.392

It is worth noting that the Quijada family was of the *converso* caste. Given this fact, it is not far-fetched to assume that Don Quijote was *ex illis*. This idea is supported by the ironic descriptions of Don Quijote and other characters praying (i.e. more than once Don Quijote is described as reciting no less than a million Hail Marys—the absurdity of this led these descriptions also to be cut by the Inquisition) and the mockery of old Christian ideals which we have already referred to. And Don Quijote, is of course the most literate and cultivated figure in the novel (both stereotypically Jewish characteristics at the time). The fact that his erudition is greater than that of titled and noble Christian characters is emphasized throughout the novel, for example in his scholarly discussions with Don Lorenzo de Miranda, in which the latter is astonished by Don Quijote's impeccable Latin.²⁸

For Cervantes, the alternative of the Erasmian independent spirit (vs. the conventional option of pretending to be an old Christian) provided a solution fitting to his life, and also allowed him to liberate the novelistic figure from literary norms. Freed of literary and religious conventions, what was revealed in the new novel form was the freedom of the individual spirit. Cervantes wasn't after heresy, but was in pursuit of the creation of a literary form of a new kind, made possible by his faith in inner freedom and by his desire to become great, unique, and *first* in a world which, according to him was

²⁸ DQ, II, 18

governed neither by the old Christian God of the Inquisition, nor by the cruel fate ruling the worlds of the picaresque.

The uniqueness of his innovative vision illustrated by the relationship between Don Quijote and Sancho. The two rise above their differences of lineage and end up dialoguing and cohabiting without sacrificing their distinct selves. Sancho serves his master, first motivated by the idea of his own island, but in the end only out of love. The *long conversations* with his master *teach* him, presenting the vision that individuals can be taught and can evolve thanks to dialogue with other individuals. Cervantes thus distanced himself from farce, comedy, and satire –all genres based on a fundamental contempt for humanity. Cervantes replaces this with a belief in the individual soul. Thus in *Don Quijote*, there is compassion for the galley slaves, the love of Dorotea, Sancho's honor, and the nobility of Don Quijote alias Alonso Quixano el Bueno (the good). Cervantes invented lives that were voluntary and self-determining. He secularizes the soul and transforms it artistically, in a true to life way understandable by all.

Even in the prologue to *Don Quijote*, Cervantes's style is different from that of his contemporaries. The tone is ironic and introspective, the style transparent and direct--and is thus very different from Lope de Vega's ornamented style, on the one hand, and Mateo Alemán's bitter satire on the other. [A taste of the latter is the famous quote from his prologue to the *Guzmán* "No es nuevo para mi, aunque lo sea para ti, o enemigo vulgo los

muchos malos amigos que tienes” (*It is not news to me, though it may be to you, oh common people, the many evil friends you have*)]. Cervantes presents his work, as he says, “monda y desnuda” (pared down and naked), which we can now see means, stripped of conventions. Cervantes seeks within himself with a heroism similar to that of Montaigne and Descartes. He does so not to engage in philosophical meditation, but rather to give his views on the literary and social forces. Having failed to obtain refuge in life (i.e. the post in the Indies) he takes his refuge in being totally within the “retablo” (play) of his inventions. He attempts the task of being simultaneously the author, protagonist, and critical spectator of his work. Cervantes retreats into the world of the imagination—if that is a retreat.

Cervantes may have resented Lope de Vega’s success, or the fact that he was an upholder of dogma, but more importantly he was bothered by the fact that he composed without trying to invent forms for prose. Cervantes, on the other hand, was consumed for years in projects of literary engineering--without receiving critical approval. Neither his theater nor any of the novels written before 1600 had even been published! Cervantes was no novice when at the age of fifty-seven he wrote *Don Quijote*. As we will see later in more detail, he himself makes this clear repeatedly throughout the novel. Furthermore, he expressed, clearly, his determination to create a new literary road, through the prose novel. Of course, he achieves this, and it is this very achievement that Friedrich Schlegel will be the first to recognize, and that Flaubert in turn will

recognize and try to emulate. In the prologue to his *Exemplary Novels* (finally published in 1613) Cervantes declares : “I let it be understood that I am the first to have written novels in the Castilian language”.. And in *Don Quijote* his intentions couldn’t be more radical or more clearly proclaimed than when it is declared: *The epic may be written in prose*. Cervantes wanted to create a work in prose that could be esteemed as highly as the best poetry. His aim was to create the most serious kind of literary work.

His distancing himself from all preceding and contemporary literary forms, his transformation of reality into fiction, and his use of prose would not have been possible without his masterful control of the key element in *Don Quijote*: irony. His mastery of irony –which like the most of his talents would have to lie patiently awaiting to be belatedly discovered by Schlegel, Flaubert, and many others—came from a lifetime of practice. The process of literary ironization that will one day culminate in *Don Quijote* is preceded by essential steps along the way. Early in his career as a writer he was already employing “dual language” by writing apparently laudatory verses to nobles, which in fact were ironic mockeries. One example is the sonnet Cervantes writes in 1596 in dedication to the Spanish naval commander, the Duke of Medina Sidonia. The Duke had led an expedition to defend the *gaditanos* of the southwestern coast of Spain from the invasion led by the Count of Essex. The duke’s expedition was an utter failure since his expedition arrived *after* the Count of Essex had

already conquered and was long gone. Under an apparently laudatory tone, Cervantes ironically reduces the Duke's expedition to exactly what it was:

Ido ya el Conde, sin ningún recelo,
Triunfando entró el Duque de Medina
(The Count having come and gone without fear
The Duke of Medina made his triumphant entrance)

In his other "official" poems this irony is also present: his sonnet on the death of Felipe II, while saying that the king's riches await him in heaven, is not a mere reference to the monarch's piety, but to the fact that he robbed Spain blind.

However, the irony of *Don Quijote* is different. Had his use of irony continued in the vein of his sonnets it would have been like more like the picaresque or Quevedo's destructive irony. But as we have seen, Cervantes was not bent on annihilation thus his irony tends not to demolish but to attack indirectly. This type of irony is based on self-restriction, or a self imposed confinement. Cervantes's self-restriction—of his flights of imagination as much as of his satirical impulse—is the watermark of the Cervantine process. When in Book II, 44 of *Don Quijote* he asks for "alabanzas, no por lo que escribe, sino por lo que ha dejado de escribir" (praises not for what he writes, but rather for what he has omitted) it is precisely this process of self-censorship—another key part of the "quixotic" strategy which will be

rehabilitated by Schlegel and Flaubert—that he is referring to. This example is of course an instance of one of the many times Cervantes introduces himself into the text (giving himself the name of a so-and-so *Saavedra*: remember his full name is Miguel de Cervantes *Saavedra*) to smooth out transitions, and to guide, as author, the reader's judgement and critical reactions from a literary point of view. The essential characteristic of the Cervantean work is this combination of ironic expansion and reflective retraction.

Cervantes's novelistic approach in *Don Quijote* carefully involves the reader and engages the reader's responses to literature in an active—though by no means prescriptive--manner. Because of this, it is surprising that so many have written that Cervantes was an unconscious writer, when this work precisely offers—as we will see in the following chapter-- the first case of conscious insertion of a technique and an esthetic aim within the very plot of its creative effort. Not being conscious enough of this phenomenon has clouded a great deal of thought on Cervantes and kept critics from correlating him with his own time and with future developments in the European novel.

THE *QUIJOTE*: A SELECTIVE GENEALOGY

As a writer in his time, Cervantes's prosaic route was a combination of choice and necessity. Why, while poets enjoyed enormous prestige in sixteenth century Spain, did Cervantes choose the more daunting challenge of creating a name for himself as a prose fiction writer?

It is a comparable situation to someone trying, at the beginning of the twentieth century, to achieve artistic recognition as a photographer in a world in which painters were seen as superior to someone who just pushed a button of a new-fangled machine. A photograph, like a work of prose fiction, intrinsically seems to reproduce reality/history in a way that neither poetry nor painting does. Because of this photography was exciting, but it had to earn acceptance as an art form worthy of being in museums side by side with paintings and other works from established and accepted mediums as prose had to earn its status alongside poetry.

Perhaps it was precisely the freedom of the uncharted territory of the disreputable novel appealed to Cervantes—this is certainly the sense we get from the *Quixote* and from the prologue to his *Novelas Ejemplares* in which he proudly declares “...y más que me doy a entender (y es así) que yo soy el primero que ha novelado en lengua castellana...y éstas son mías propias, no imitadas ni hurtadas;mi ingenio las engendró, y las parió mi pluma...” (“..and let it be understood, since it is the case, that I am the first that has written

novels in the Castilian language...and these are my own, they are neither imitations nor stolen goods; my talent engendered them, and my pen gave birth to them...”). Another factor may have been that he simply didn’t feel he was talented enough as a poet to make a career in this more prestigious medium. In an often quoted tercet from *Viaje al Parnaso* he describes how he struggles and must stay up working all night long “...por parecer que tengo de poeta/la gracia que no quiso darme el cielo.” (“...for it to appear that I have of the poet/the grace that heaven refused me.”)¹ Thus, perhaps making virtue of necessity, he set out to convince himself and the rest of the world that the novel could be a type of poetry, could have all the qualities of poetry.

Quixotic is the word that is used in English to highlight what is most characteristic of the *Quijote*. Traditionally, it has been interpreted as being a synonym of idealistic, mad, foolish, or a combination of the three. Yet in looking at Cervantes’s aesthetic principles as exhibited in the work, it is clear that what is most characteristic of the *Quijote* is its irony, its sanity, and its reason (to avoid any possibility of the frequent conflation, it is the work, not the character, that is being referred to). To understand the contribution of the *Quijote*, especially what is often called its “modernity”, it is necessary to look beyond Alonso Quixano, the reader, and his frantic imitation and transformation of literary models.

¹ Cervantes, *Viaje al Parnaso* I, p.54

BACKGROUND TO THE *QUIJOTE*

...para componer historias o libros de cualquier suerte que sean, es menester un gran juicio y un maduro entendimiento—decir gracias y escribir donaires es de grandes ingenios. La más discreta figura del la comedia es del bobo, porque no lo ha de ser el que quiere dar a entender que es simple. La historia es como cosa sagrada, porque ha de ser verdadera, y donde está la verdad está Dios,...pero no obstante esto hay algunos que así componen y arrojan libros de sí, como si fueran buñuelos.

(...to compose stories or books of any kind, one must possess great judgement and mature understanding. It takes great genius to say funny things and to write witticisms. The most discreet character in the theatre is the fool, for the person who wants to be taken for a fool must not be one. A story must be treated as a sacred object, because it must be true and where there is truth there is God, but despite this there are those who compose and produce books as if they were donuts.)²

Every epoch has its specific challenges to the artist and to the very status and purpose of art. We have considered some of the key aspects of Spanish society in Cervantes's time, as well as his marginalized position within that world. However, while this background is fundamental—and all students of Cervantes are indebted to Americo Castro for illuminating its significance—Cervantes's genius does not, of course, emerge from marginalization alone.

One of the fundamental objectives of this study is to sketch a portrait of Cervantes that emphasizes both his self-consciousness and his counter-

² DQ, II, 3. P. 459

approach to literature. As we've seen, neither his view of literature nor his view of the world have the bitterness or destructive anger of, say Mateo Alemán. Yet the fact that his work is not destructive, doesn't mean it is not subversive. Cervantes, one of the first "professional" writers of prose fiction (as opposed to theater and poetry) to emerge from Spain, was also one of the first to have to combined entertainment and a didactic or edifying value in his work. He had to find a balance between a pleasure seeking public and the dogmatic authorities of the inquisition. Literature in Cervantes's time could not break radically with the church. At that time, the Catholic church was the business of the state. The counterreformation demanded a conformist population without leaving any room for dissidence. The effects of this tyranny were that there was, at the beginning of 1600, a very perceptible and characteristic melancholy and disillusionment (*desengaño*) expressed by those who couldn't, or wouldn't conform to socio-political ideals.³ Cervantes is an example of an author deeply affected by social marginalisation, yet who resisted the literary route of the marginalised of his day, i.e. the harsh "so-called" social realism of the picaresque genre.

The pious image of himself projected into his works and prologues should, however, be understood in light of the Inquisition and its power to censor all literature. Throughout his works there is an almost obsessive display of his desire to respect the orthodoxy of the church and to avoid offending. In

³ Bernardez, p. 62

Part II, chapter 3 of the *Quijote*, Part I is characterized in the following way:

“La tal historia es del más gustoso y menos perjudicial entretenimiento que hasta agora se haya visto, porque en ella no se descubre, ni por semejas una palabra deshonestas, ni un pensamiento menos que católico” (Said story is the most pleasurable and least prejudicial entertainment ever seen, because in it there cannot be discovered even the likeness of a dishonest word, *nor of a thought less than Catholic*”). Despite Cervantes’s nods to the church’s authority (i.e. the superfluous amount of official approbations he sought out before publishing the *Novelas Ejemplares*) his apparent loyalty to the church and its doctrines may very well have been a formality. We must keep in mind that he was continually out of favor with the ruling powers in Spain: he was denied all requests to leave Spain (a departure he had good reason to desire), he was ex-communicated at least twice, and imprisoned at least five times.

CERVANTES AND ERASMUS

The challenge of how to express oneself under the yoke of the censorship of Inquisitorial Spain led Cervantes to rely on irony and the technique of masking himself within the text. Reading the *Quijote* can be a disconcerting experience for though it is clear that we are in the hands of a skilled author—one who wants us to be aware of this fact—we can never put our finger on him. We will see a more impersonal variation of this in Flaubert.

The narrator's famous line in the *Quijote*, in which he confesses that he is such a devoted reader that he even reads scraps of paper found on the street, is usually interpreted by Cervantes scholars to represent Cervantes's own reading habits. Cervantes' vast knowledge of literature and ideas was due largely to the fact that he was an enthusiastic, lifelong autodidact. However, Cervantes did have at least one year (1568-1569) of formal schooling in Madrid under the tutelage of the great Erasmian disciple Juan López de Hoyos. It is often thought that one of the main sources for Cervantes's use of irony was the writings and thought of Erasmus.⁴ It is important to keep in mind that by 1569, the teachings of Erasmus had been banned for over thirty years. Thus though there is no mention of Erasmus's name in any of Cervantes's works, it is generally agreed that he must have been familiar with the work of Dutch thinker. If we accept this assumption, how is it relevant to our vision of Cervantes as a self-conscious, prescient author?

The success of Erasmus's work coincided with rule of Carlos V, and under his authority, the Inquisitor General Manrique of Seville (d. 1537) and the Archbishop Fonseca of Toledo (d. 1534). During this first half of the sixteenth century, Spain was, religiously and politically speaking, in a *relatively* tolerant mood. Things were to change dramatically however as the country entered a period of crisis. Religious discord in the north of Europe, the

⁴ The most useful work covering the relationship between Erasmus and Spain is still Marcel Bataillon's fascinating and lengthy *Erasme en Espagne*. His brief chapter on Cervantes is indispensable.

sacking of Rome, and the struggles between dynasties all seemed to portend the end of any kind of tolerance in Spain, whose great empire was vulnerable and threatened. With the first signs of instability, the Church reacted unanimously and violently to any potential sign of heresy. Erasmus's works were viewed as Lutheran and as being more concerned with the "intellectual" goals of reconciling art, reason, and life,⁵ than with disseminating Catholic dogma. *The Colloquies* were banned in 1535, and *In Praise of Folly* was banned in 1538. Despite the ferocious censorship of the inquisition, Erasmus's teachings had taken root within in the minority population of Spanish intellectuals. The three main Erasmian themes--folly, the duality of truth, and the illusion of appearances--certainly seem to be reflected in *Don Quijote* which is Cervantes's own attempt to reconcile "art, reason, and life". For Erasmus, outward manifestations of religious belief were meaningless and all that counted was interior spirituality. This is quite the converse to the Catholic world of Spain where appearances were everything. Converse Jews knew that if they kept, for the sake of appearances only, cauldrons of pork lard simmering away on their porches they would be left alone by the Inquisition in its search for renegade *conversos*.

The figure of Folly in *In Praise of Folly* can be seen as a precursor to the mad/foolish figure of Don Quijote. The character of the mad or foolish person is of course a wonderful mask for the author as the figure is always

⁵ Bernardez, Asun. P. 60

outside of society—a position with many disadvantages for the character emotionally, economically, and physically, but with many advantages for the author in terms of point of view and freedom of expression. The comic aspects of Don Quijote combined with his madness gave him the inoffensive image that allowed the work to avoid inquisitorial suspicion and to be published almost unexpurgated. Madness, as proposed by Erasmus, and as adopted by Cervantes, became a critical mechanism to offset accepted and absolute beliefs.

What Cervantes achieves through his use of the function of madness—especially in *Don Quijote* and the *Novelas Ejemplares*--is to develop a method to create clearly fictitious characters who are disoriented vis-a-vis the “reality” that surrounds them. Through the chaotic clashes with the mad/fictional protagonist this apparently reasonable “reality” is gradually revealed to be intrinsically chaotic itself and what is called “truth” is only what people are willing to believe. Cervantes refused to use religious or sociological doctrines to explain the human condition. Instead, through the figurative use of madness, he explored the precarious boundary between madness/fiction and reality/history and the perception of this boundary from every conceivable angle. He thus cleared the way for the psychological novel of the future.

It has often been said that the *Quijote* was written in a sort of *Straussian* (or, to relate the concept directly back to Spain, *Maimonidean*) “dual language”, in other words that it was meant to delight and entertain the

catholic *vulgo* while concealing an esoteric message available only to initiate *discretos*. This is a sensible suggestion considering the cultural oppression in Cervantes's Spain, and his own highly antagonistic relationship to the powers that were. Whether or not we take seriously the indications of Cervantes's own *converso* ancestry⁶ (both he and his family certainly lived, and were treated, as *conversos*) the *Quijote* is never what it seems⁷ and Cervantes himself even seemed to encourage esoteric readings. In the prologue to the *Novelas Ejemplares* (1613) his last remark before bidding his reader farewell is the following: "Sólo esto quiero que consideres, que pues yo he tenido osadía de dirigir estas novelas al gran Conde de Lemos, algún misterio tienen escondido que las levanta" ("I would like you to bear one thing in mind. Since I have dared to address these novels to the great Count of Lemos, they must have a mystery hidden within that elevates them"). Yet we wonder in reading his work exactly who the *discretos* might have been. By his portrait of the few upper-class people in the *Quijote*-- the Duke and Duchess and Diego de la Miranda—it is clear that wealth and noble lineage don't add up to a refined sensibility.

To summarize the effects of the ideological situation upon Cervantes's writing, he was careful—and this is exemplified by the authorial hide and seek in the *Quijote*: Though his control over his work is palpable (and indeed on

⁶ Evidence for Cervantes Jewish ancestry can be found in the prologue to Castro, Americo. *Don Quijote*. Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1971.

⁷ Esoteric readings are discussed in Robert, *The Old and the New*.

display), the multiple layers of the work make its author a moving target impossible to pin down. His crafty evasiveness, and the fact that the work and the main character were protected by their apparently dominant folly, parody, humour, and good will, combined to project an image of a novel innocent enough to be read by children. The only negative consequence for Cervantes's of *Don Quijote*'s enthusiastic reception by the majority was the suspicion of the officially cultivated minority that this work was too popular to be of intellectual merit. Its popularity—a great surprise to all including Cervantes—combined with the fact that it was in prose, excluded *Don Quijote* from the ranks of prestigious works and Cervantes from the circle of *culto* authors (Lope de Vega, Gracián, etc...).

The Inquisition expurgated certain parts of the *Quijote* (such as the famous passage in which Don Quijote makes himself a ridiculous cloth rosary out of his shirt tails). Yet these expurgations were of no consequence to the general tenor of the work. Cervantes refused to devote his creative efforts to reinforcing ideology, yet he managed to appease the Inquisition and his own sophisticated view of literature by creating a literary form of communication that without being didactic was *exemplary* in the sense that it invited the reader to participate intellectually by mirroring, to a degree, the creative process of the author.

What is also crucial to understanding his work is to characterize Cervantes's vision of the novel by putting it in the context of the prose rivals it

borrowed from or that it emerged in reaction to. We have touched upon the chivalric romances and some of the reasons why they were an aesthetically inadequate genre. However, Cervantes did not reject the romances root and branch. To accept that he did, would be to conclude with Harry Levin that the romance was a transitional form between epic idealism and novelistic realism.⁸ To agree with Levin, we would have to agree that ...“the novel supersedes the romance, historically, and second, the idea that the novel is, strictly speaking, a countergenre to romance—an anti-romance.”⁹

Though it is tempting to read the constant mockery of the romance genre in the *Quijote* from this point of view—and this has been a longstanding popular interpretation of the *Quijote*—it doesn’t work. First of all, it is clear throughout the *Quijote* that some of the romances of chivalry are better than others, and furthermore that as a literary mode, the romance has possibilities if approached by an author aware of the mode’s potential and suspicious of its pitfalls.

Cervantes enjoyed many aspects of the romance mode. Even *Amadís de Gaula*, the cause of Alonso Quijano’s madness, is saved in the “inquisition” of the library by the priest and the barber because of its literary merits. When the Canon and Don Quixote discuss romance, the Canon specifically indicates that

⁸ Allen, John J. “Don Quixote and the Origins of the Novel” in *Cervantes and the Renaissance*. (Easton, Pennsylvania: Juan de La Cuesta.) 1980. P. 127 The paraphrase of Levin is from Levin, *Gates of Horn*, p. 44-48

⁹ Ibid

there is a correct way to write an ideal romance¹⁰. The specifications, as laid out by the Canon, were exactly those Cervantes was following as he wrote the *Persiles*, his ideal romance, which was written *after* *Don Quixote*. Thus though it would seem logical to think of *Don Quixote* as a progression away from romance and towards the realistic novel, even the chronology of Cervantes's career contradicts this and when thinking of the *Quijote* vis-à-vis the maligned romance genre we must see how it coincides as well as how it criticizes and diverges.

We will look at the principles Cervantes extracted from the romances, though he was all the while using counter-techniques to parody their excesses. John J. Allen succinctly sums up these counter techniques: the opposition of pseudo-historicity to the unreliable narrator Cide Hamete Benengeli, the fantastic and supernatural to the commonplace and verisimilar, mythical past time and exotic locations to contemporary La Mancha, single lofty style to multiplicity of stylistic levels, exemplary deeds to failure, and so forth.¹¹

But romance was not the only prosaic model available in sixteenth century Spain. As I've mentioned, writers living on the fringes of society—for example converso Jews—already had a literary genre with which to express their dissent in often bitter satires characterised by harsh realism: the picaresque. Though some characteristics were shared (beginning the tale with the origins

¹⁰ DQ, I, 47

¹¹ Allen, John J. "Don Quixote and the Origins of the Novel" in *Cervantes and the Renaissance*. (Easton, Pennsylvania: Juan de la Cuesta. 1980) p. 130

of the protagonist, his departure in search of his fortune, his travels and encounters, an episodic structure, etc.) the picaresque inverted or changed many romance conventions and can be seen as a counter-genre to the idealized visions of the romances. Instead of heroes, they have anti-heroes; instead of virtues, vice; instead of being about the higher classes, they are about the lower classes, etc. But though the picaresque novels were diametrically opposed to the romances, their authors didn't openly attack the romances or manifest the opposition existing between their works and the romance.

Though the picaresque and the *Quijote* are often both cited as precursors to the modern novel, we must keep in mind that each represents a different world. The picaresque distanced itself from the world of the romance, while Cervantes addressed the romances directly via a, rather affectionate, parody. The comedy comes from situating an idealized, antiquated narrative in a modern frame. Cervantes was the first to create a counter-genre with the old genre embedded within the new. This is key to his legacy, for what he does with the *Quijote* and the pre-modern chivalric romance is a model for what Flaubert will do with *Madame Bovary* and the sentimental romance.

Francisco de Rojas's *La Celestina*, the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the *Guzmán de Alfarache* are perhaps three of the best examples of the alternative to the romances. Cervantes was of course familiar with this satiric avenue, and it is important to acknowledge the *Guzmán*, which appeared in 1599, as its "...perverse portrayal of all that was (and still is) shameful in human

existence was the ‘necessity’ that led to Cervantes’s ‘invention’.”¹² To the *Lazarillo* the *Quijote* owes among other things the disjunctive and distant relationship between author and narrator.

The *Guzmán* on the one hand suffered from the opposite of the romances: instead of being guilty of far-fetched invention, its structureless, often grotesque autobiographical imitation of life lacked art. On the other hand, like the romances—both chivalric and pastoral—the *Guzmán* fell too neatly into a pre-conceived genre and it was precisely the *generic* quality of existing genres that Cervantes wished to overthrow.

Though the picaresque is generally thought of as the genre that made great strides in realism, or in bringing prose narrative closer to history, it is limited, as Claudio Guillén points out by its use of point of view. “...the saturation of the picaresque with the narrator’s individual and wilfully limited point of view is most remote from history.”¹³ Furthermore, Alemán was trying to cause a moral impact. E.C. Riley suggests that the “friend” in the prologue was referring to the *Guzmán* when he says that Cervantes’s novel need not “...predicar a ninguno, mezclando lo humano con lo divino” (preach to anyone, mixing the human and the divine).

Cervantes was not one to waste any literary models and “...the very fact that the *Amadís*, the *Diana*, and the *Guzmán* possess a potential assembly-line

¹² Gilman, Stephen. *The Novel According to Cervantes*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: UCLA press. 1989. p.88

¹³ Quoted by John. J. Allen, p. 129

quality provided Cervantes with a chance to use and improve on his narrative inheritance.”¹⁴ He would take, among other elements, narrative contraptions from all of the above genres, re-combining them with aesthetic principles, and unifying this disparate collection of ingredients with irony. It is Cervantes’s ironic stance that bonds the *Quijote* and keeps it structurally unified and impermeable to categorization, even while balanced at the precarious crossroads of so many contradictory and recognisable genres and conventions.

CERVANTES AND THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

As E.C. Riley points out in *Cervantes’s Theory of the Novel*, it is difficult to know who influenced Cervantes, directly or indirectly, in his aesthetic development. Many of the ideas that crop up in his work had been imported from Italy and had become popular amongst intellectuals in Spain. It is impossible to say whether Cervantes familiarized himself with the aesthetic debates first hand (during his stay in Italy) or whether he read about them second hand in Spain (through one of the Spanish experts such as el Pinciano¹⁵), or a combination of both. What is clear is that Cervantes was on the cutting edge of contemporary, European literary aesthetics—led by Italy-- and was well-versed in the ideas presented in the treatises of his time.

¹⁴ Gilman p. 89

¹⁵ López Pinciano, Alonso. *Philosophia antiqua poetica*. 3 vols. Ed. Madrid, 1953

In understanding the *Quijote* it is indispensable to consider Cervantes's relationship to the Renaissance. Until the beginning of the twentieth century no one would have admitted any connection between Cervantes and the Renaissance. This was largely due to the fact that Cervantes was Spanish and Spain, with its anomalous history, was denied any link to the Renaissance. Giuseppe Toffanin in *La fine dell'Umanesimo* (Torino, 1920) was the first to insert Cervantes's name in "...that circle of first-rank international *literati* deeply affected by Italian sixteenth century Neo-Aristotelianism."¹⁶ Toffanin's work, and especially the impact of his ideas on Américo Castro, must be credited with shifting the view of Cervantes from that of an *ingenio lego* to an integral Renaissance man.

In 1569, Cervantes left Spain for Italy (as a fugitive after seriously wounding Antonio de Sigura in a duel). He was to stay in Italy, on and off, until 1575 when he sailed from Naples on the *Sol* to Spain. (As is well known, he did not reach his destination as the ship was captured by Corsican Argelians and Cervantes and the others aboard the ship were taken to Argelia to be imprisoned as slaves under the Greek renegade Dalí Mamí.) Thus for six years he was exposed to Italian culture, not only as a high ranking soldier in Naples, but also as a valet to Giulio Acquaviva (himself a valet to the Pope and son of the Duke of Atri) in Rome. The Italy Cervantes saw must have been a shock to

¹⁶ Avalu-Arce, J.B. "Cervantes and the Renaissance" in *Cervantes and the Renaissance*. (edited by Michael D. McGaha) Easton, Pennsylvania: Juan de la Cuesta, 1980.

someone coming from a Spain which by comparison can only be described as medieval. At least as it is described by the historian Jacob Burckhardt, Italian society at the time must have seemed like a dream to Cervantes as its social intercourse aspired to change and

...ignored all distinctions of caste, and was based simply on the existence of an educated class...Birth and origin were without influence, unless combined with leisure and inherited wealth...And after the time of Dante, when the new poetry and literature were in the hands of all Italy, when to this was added the revival of ancient culture and the new interest in man as such, when the successful *condottiere* became a prince, and not only good birth, but legitimate birth, ceased to be indispensable for a throne, it might well seem that the age of equality had dawned, and the belief in nobility vanished forever.¹⁷

Ideas of this sort, let alone their practice, did not circulate in Spain even amongst the wealthy. As I have pointed out before, the wrath of the inquisition and its eagerness to equate learnedness and enterprise with judaizing had created a society which was proud of its ignorance and laziness. Only illiterates and peasants were considered above suspicion by the authorities. We have only to imagine a society in which Sancho Panza—who never stops proudly declaring his old christian lineage and the vast amounts of pork lard running through his veins—was the ideal of the church and the ideologues!

To do justice to linking Cervantes and the Renaissance would require many volumes devoted singularly to that task. Nevertheless, a quick overview of some of the fundamental points of contact is worthwhile as it provides what

¹⁷ Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of Renaissance Italy*. London: Penguin. 1990.

I see as a necessary (and often neglected) and illuminating background to the cultural complexity of the *Quijote*'s author.

The social world Cervantes saw in Italy must have made an enormous impression on him. It is possible that three main features of the *Quixote* can be traced back to his exposure to Italian society: 1) the mockery of chivalric and noble (in the sense of *eugenia*-- nobility linked to birth ideals, 2) The obsession with language, and 3) the numerous depictions (especially in the interpolated tales) of educated, refined groups of people, often protagonised by female characters that interact in idealized settings.

The craze for titles and the passion for knighthood had been the butt of ridicule in Italy at least from the end of the fourteenth century. Burckhardt quotes the writer Franco Sacchetti to illustrate this early generation of criticism of the pointlessness of titles in general, and official chivalry in particular:

A few years ago, everybody saw how all the workpeople down to the bakers, how all the wood-carders, users, money-changers and blackguards of all descriptions, became knights. Why should an official need knighthood when he goes to preside over some little provincial town? What has this title to do with any ordinary bread-winning pursuit? How art thou sunken, unhappy dignity! *Of all the long list of knightly duties, what single one do these knights of ours discharge? I wished to speak of these things that the reader might see that knighthood is dead.* And as we have gone so far as to confer the honour upon dead men, why not upon figures of wood and stone, and why not upon an ox?¹⁸ (My italics)

¹⁸ Burckhardt, p. 233-234

Thus in Italy we have evidence that the world of chivalry was anachronistic at least as far back as the fourteenth century--which is to say two hundred years before the *Quijote* was written. The life of the chivalric knight is perceived by Renaissance thinkers as having a false prestige: an elevated status is nominally (by the title of "knight") and undeservedly conferred on men whose activities are not elevated, and who are undeserving of being called *nobilis* (i.e. remarkable). The activities of the knights, are not perceived as heroic, but rather have come to seem barbarous and primitive. In his dialogue *On Nobility*, Bracciolini Poggio lambasts English and French chivalry as ignoble, and especially the doings of the robber-knights of Germany:

A man is all the farther removed from true nobility, the longer his forefathers have plied the trade of brigands. The taste for hawking and hunting savours no more of nobility than the nests and lairs of the hunted creatures of spikenard. The cultivation of the soil, as practised by the ancients, would be much nobler than this senseless wandering through the hills and the woods, by which men make themselves liker to brutes than to reasonable creatures. It may serve well enough as a recreation, but not as the business of a lifetime.¹⁹

Despite the popularity of tournaments in Florence, all the practices of knighthood--wandering, killing, hunting, tournaments--were attacked as ridiculous *follies* by many learned men including Petrarch (who asked, unable to find the link between knighthood and greatness: "In what book do we read that Scipio and Caesar were skilled at the joust?"). Franco Sacchetti's ludicrous portrait of a contemporary "knight" seems to foreshadow the figure of

Don Quijote: Sacchetti tells of a seventy year old notary who rides out on horseback to Peretola –because the tournaments there were cheap—on a jade (an ancestor of Rocinante’s?) hired from a dyer. A thistle is stuck by some wag under the horse’s tail, driving it to run away and carry its helmeted rider, bruised and shaken, back to the city. The story concludes with the notary receiving a severe lecture from his wife who is enraged at the “break-neck follies” of her husband. Since the mocking descriptions, according to Burckhardt, of chivalric customs abounded in Renaissance Italy, it is very possible that Cervantes may have imported this attitude back to his very anachronistic Spain where parody of medievalism was still timely at the end of the sixteenth century.

Evidence to the nature of social intercourse in Italy can be gleaned not only from literature but also from the many treatises or manuals on manners that were widely read. Giovanni della Casa’s *Il Galateo* (1558) stressed tact and delicacy and urged that people drop unbecoming tricks and habits such as practical jokes (*burle*). The vicious and sadistic *burle* of the Duke and Duchess in the *Quijote* come to mind as a behaviour that is portrayed as being most unbecoming to anyone, but expecially unforgiveable in those possessing such high rank and the wealth. Perhaps Cervantes wanted to show how badly in need of Renaissance manners the Spanish nobility—so belatedly primitive—was.

¹⁹ Burckhardt, p. 232

B. Castiglione's *Il Cortigiano* (1528, 1549) which Cervantes was familiar with, emphasized that language should be treated as a living thing. There was a fashion in Italy amongst certain people at the beginning of sixteenth century to use antiquated expressions (i.e. from Dante and other Tuscan writers) simply because they were old. Castiglione forbid the use of such expressions altogether in speech, and was unwilling to permit them even in writing, which he considers a form of speech. Writing, for Castiglione, should have the natural qualities of speech, and speech the elegance of writing. If language is living it must be flexible and changing, and tended to like a garden. If ornate elements are introduced, they must have a definite purpose –if not they are merely superfluous and pedantic. Furthermore, the language of each man –because of its living quality—should conform to his own standards and reflect his individual talents as do his manners, with, clothes, etc.. It is easy to see how this emphasis on the correlation of speech and writing, purposefulness, the living quality of language, etc. would have been extremely appealing to Cervantes who was determined to achieve these very qualities in his own Castilian prose. The language of the *Quijote* stands to this day as a model of (among other things) prose free of archaisms, free of pedantry, and with an uncanny power to characterize through dialogue alone.

In the *Quijote* there are several female characters who are notable for their beautiful manners, eloquence, intelligence, cultivation, independence, and freedom. All of these were qualities that-- in the context of La Mancha

especialmente--gave a woman the air of having landed from another planet. In Book I, chapter 28, Cardenio, the priest, and Sanson Carrasaco meet Dorotea, bathing in a stream. Her physical beauty is so exquisite that Cardenio whispers to the priest that she must not be human, but divine. (“...no es persona humana, sino divina.”). Not only is she physically beautiful, but when she opens her mouth to speak she mesmerizes all three (educated) men with her rhetorical skills. After her introduction to her story, she pauses. “Todo esto dijo sin parar la que tan hermosa mujer parecía, con tan suelta lengua, con voz tan suave, que no menos les admiró su discreción que su hermosura.” (She said all this without stopping, she who looked so beautiful, and with such fluency, with such a soft voice, that they admired her discretion no less than they did her beauty.) After Dorotea finishes telling her incredible story, the men tell her of their plan to trick Don Quijote into being led back to the safety (and what they hope will be the sanity) of his home. Their idea is to dress up the barber as an attractive young maiden in need of assistance, and with this bait, to lure Don Quijote home. Dorotea eagerly suggests that it might be better if she play the part of damsel in distress, which the men had assigned to the barber!:

...Dorotea dijo que ella haría la doncella menesterosa mejor que el barbero, y más, que tenía allí vestidos con que hacerlo al natural, y que la dejasen cargo de saber representar todo aquello que fuese menester para llevar adelante su intento, porque ella había leído muchos libros de caballerías y sabía bien el estilo que tenían las doncellas cuitadas cuando pedían sus dones a los andantes caballeros.
(Dorotea said that she would make a better damsel in distress than the barber, and moreover, that she had dresses with her that fit the part, and that they should leave her in charge of knowing how to represent all that

was needed to make their ploy go well, for she had read many chivalric romances and knew well the manner that afflicted damsels assumed when asking for the services of knights errant.)²⁰

Dorotea is as clever, well-read, game, and enterprising as the men in this scene—if not more so. The model for such behaviour on the part of a woman may have seemed to be a far-fetched fantasy. But couldn't it have come from Italy? In the works of Bocaccio and Firenzuola it is a woman who is at the center and in command of social circles and given the many examples of Italian Renaissance women who were famous and illustrious (Isabella Gonzaga, Giulia Gonzaga Colonna, Ippolita Sforza, Bianca Rangona, Cecilia Gallerana, Camilla Scarampa, Vittoria Colonna etc.²¹) there's no reason to think that reality was so different. Especially as the education given to upper class women was essentially the same as that given to men, thus these women were knowledgeable in particular subjects (philology, literature, etc.) and generally strove to be a unique and complete individual with the same intellectual and emotional development pursued by men.²²

²⁰DQ I, 29, p. 232

²¹ Burckhardt, p. 245

²² For a detailed discussion on the equality between women and men in the upperclasses of society during the Italian Renaissance see Burckhardt "Equality of Men and Women" pp250-253

THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

¿Pensará vuestra merced ahora que es poco trabajo hacer un libro?
(So, now does your grace think that writing a book is a small job?)
Cervantes, Prologue to Part II of *Don Quijote*

Perhaps the most important lesson Cervantes learned from the aesthetic ideas he had been exposed to—at least the most important in terms of this study—was that the artist, or author's main responsibility in the process of creation was to be completely aware of what he was doing at all times. This may seem an obvious artistic principle, however given the sloppiness with which many of the romances had been written, we can appreciate that it was both new in its application to prose fiction and of great consequence to the development of an aesthetic for this genre.

Furthermore it is one of the principles that links the author of the *Quijote* to the author of *Madame Bovary*. By the time of Flaubert's youth, French romanticism had shunned the notion of artistic control in favor of a naïve idea of artistic spontaneity which Flaubert, as we will see later, would struggle to overcome. Let's first look at the principle of control in terms of Cervantes and later see how it re-emerges in Flaubert.

Cervantes's ideas about prose fiction are not only expressed in the overt discussions of literary and bookish matters in his works. The principles he saw as being crucial to prose were often the same ones so important to other artistic genres and mediums. Especially the idea that the artist must be a conscious and

conscientious imitator. Many of the key expressions of this idea are made in relation to painting.

One day, Tomás Rodaja, a character from *El Licienciado Vidriera* (one of Cervantes's *Novelas Ejemplares*) is walking down the street and sees some badly painted (*pintadas de mala mano*) figurines. His reaction to the shoddy craftsmanship of the figurines, "...dijo que los buenos pintores imitaban a naturaleza; pero que los malos la vomitaban." ("...he said that good painters *imitated* nature, whereas bad ones *vomited* it...")¹ sums up two of Cervantes's fundamental principles of literary composition. Art must perfect nature², and in order to do so, art must be *calculated*. How can an artist expect to represent nature without a plan?

There is another illustration of this point in the *Quijote*, again presented in the context of visual arts. This is the anecdote of the painter Orbaneja, and Don Quijote (not to mention Cervantes) must indeed been impressed with its illustrative powers for he uses the anecdote *twice* in Part II.³ Orbaneja, the story goes, painted spontaneously. If someone happened to see him at work, and ask him what he was painting, he would answer "Lo que saliere" ("Whatever comes out"). The result of his nonchalance was that if he painted, for example, what he claimed was a rooster, the final result would be so unlike a rooster that he would have to attach a sign to the painting which

¹ My Italics

² See Don Quijote's discussion with the Canon of Toledo in Part I, 50. In which he says "...el arte, imitando la naturaleza, parece que allí la vence". ("...art, imitating nature, seems to surpass it.")

stated in big capital letters “THIS IS A ROOSTER”. Orbaneja’s need to supplement his inverismilar work with explanatory notices is clearly what Cervantes sees as the fate of art that has been ill conceived, engendered by spontaneous inspiration and talent without rules. Lack of artistic control for Cervantes was a danger because it resulted in a lack of verisimilitude and therefore of any truth in the work of art. The importance of awareness and restraint in creation probably came to Cervantes from neo-Aristotelian contemporary thinkers (i.e. Lopez Pinciano), E.C. Riley points out that it echos the dictum from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* that “in art voluntary error is not so bad as involuntary”⁴ Involuntary absurdity (the *modus operandi* of the character Don Quijote) is foolish, but voluntary calculated absurdity is one of the key tools of the ironist.

Going back to the chivalric romances, the difference becomes clear. One of the most disconcerting features in the romances was their author’s inability to either treat their narratives as pure fiction, or to sustain the illusion that they were fact. In his *Meditaciones del Quijote* Ortega y Gasset⁵ points out that this feature is the greatest weakness of the genre and the key difference between romance and its progenitor, epic which always maintained a suspension of disbelief in what it conveyed.

³ The same anecdote about Orbaneja can be found in DQ Part II, 3; and Part II, 71.

⁴ Riley, p.22

⁵ Riley stresses the importance of this observation . p. 23

The romance's flagrant confusion of history and fiction, the declarations that their stories were literally true (*historias*), the contrived devices used to enhance their pretences, their claims to having edifying effects, are all made ridiculous by the lack of purpose with which they were written. Though the self-criticism and self-mockery in *Amadís de Gaula*, some of its sequels, and the *Sergas de Esplandián* anticipate Cervantine irony, they are still too vague and half-hearted to possess the sharpness of Lucian or Rabelais. Because the romances lack purpose—it is not clear to what extent their use of irony is deliberate, and if it is, we wonder why it is present-- the effect is what Riley calls a “bungled irony”⁶. Cervantes himself had overcome the pitfall of “bungled irony” since writing *La Casa de los Celos* in which both the chivalric and pastoral genres are presented in an unfortunately ambiguous manner—neither parodied nor praised. *Don Quijote* is in this respect not only a great leap forward for Cervantes but for prose fiction, for in it he “...learns to turn uncertainty into irony and irony into a powerful tool for the novelist.”⁷

⁶ Riley, p.23

⁷ Riley, p. 32

THE IRONY OF CERVANTES

La noche al día, y el calor al frío,
la flor al fruto van en seguimiento,
formando de contrarios igual tela.⁸

(Night to day, heat to cold,
flower to fruit continuously turn,
making of contraries one fabric)

It is the irony that governs the *Quijote* –allowing opposites to be synthesized and the author to detach himself from his work -- that we must try to define. The link between Cervantean irony and Romantic irony has been noted frequently.⁹ And in fact Cervantes's use of irony is often defined in terms of Romantic irony. The connection dates back to Friedrich von Schlegel who passionately admired *Don Quijote* and was the champion of Romantic irony. Subsequently, several Cervantes scholars in trying to characterise the irony that is so particular and crucial to the *Quijote*, have turned to Schlegel. Though Cervantes's irony predates the early German romantics, it wasn't identified or defined until Schlegel read the *Quijote*. We are indeed indebted to Schlegel for opening the way for nineteenth and twentieth century readings of Cervantes as a self-conscious writer.¹⁰ E.C. Riley, one of the great hispanists

⁸ Cervantes, *La Galatea*, V,ii, p. 110

⁹ Lukacs, Lacoue Labarthe, E.C. Riley, Stephen Gilman, etc.

¹⁰ The interpretations of *Don Quijote* offered by F. von Schlegel, his brother August Wilhelm von Schlegel, and other great thinkers from early German Romanticism have fueled enormous controversy amongst hispanists. In my opinion, this controversy is unfounded and is due to a lack of understanding that main feature of the *Quijote* identified by the German Romantics was Cervantes's use of *irony*. While it is true that some English and German Romantic readings of the *Quijote* did in fact "romantically" idealize and dramatize the hero's madness and in doing so miss the work's humor, these interpretations are not to be confused with those of the Schlegels who were the first to appreciate Cervantes's irony, self-conscious genius, mastery of prose, and humour. Thus when Anthony Close, in

and the author of the pivotal *Cervantes's Theory of the Novel* turns to Schlegel's definition of "romantic irony" (via Rene Wellek) as the best description of Cervantes's antithetical narrative technique:

Irony is his recognition of the fact that the world in its essence is paradoxical and that an ambivalent attitude alone can grasp its contradictory totality. For Schlegel irony is the struggle between the absolute and the relative, the simultaneous consciousness of the impossibility and the necessity of a complete account of reality. The writer must thus feel ambivalent toward his work: he stands above and apart from it and manipulates it almost playfully.¹¹

Irony was seen by Schlegel as the unifying force of the prose genre—a genre that could, and should, intermingle an infinite variation of otherwise disparate forms and genres including: history, rhetoric, dialogue, etc. The genre of the novel as defined by Schlegel—and on this point at least his view of *Don Quixote* is well-founded—is the ultimate genre of intermingling. The all-embracing character and manifoldness of the novel was to be unified by the all-pervasive presence of the author in his arbitrariness and humour, in his alternation of jest and seriousness. This authorial position had always been understood by Schlegel, through the example of Socrates, as a specific form of irony. Cervantes was the prototype for Schlegel's application of this irony to the prose novel.

his *The Romantic Approach to Don Quixote* claims the Romantics took a brilliant comedy and try to read it as a tragedy because it suited their Romantic project, his attack is misguided. For further reading on the subject see *Cervantes et le romantisme allemand* by J.J. Bertrand and *The Theory of the Novel in Early German Romanticism* by Diane Behler.

This definition of irony as the author's ability to be both in and outside of the work is extremely helpful in understanding Cervantes achievement, and his unprecedentedly unique relationship to his reader, for when an author ironically balances this antithetical position, he invites the reader to be equally alert. It is this strategy that Flaubert would take away from his many readings of the *Quijote*, and that he would emulate for the first, but not the last, time in *Madame Bovary*. It is impossible for the reader of *Don Quijote* to be "taken in" by it the way Alonso Quijano is taken in by *Amadís*. Likewise, it would later be impossible for readers searching to lose themselves in the pleasures of sentimental romance to read *Madame Bovary* without feeling foolish. Perhaps, if Emma had read *Madame Bovary* instead of the sentimental romances, and Alonso Quijano had read *Don Quijote* instead of the chivalric romances, neither character would have gotten into so much trouble! Both works, despite their important differences, are fundamentally alike in their irony which both draws the reader in and keeps him/her out. Both narratives are like a tide that ebbs and flows disconcertingly stimulating and thwarting our desire for literary conventions, and thus heightening our awareness of the reading experience. One of the foundations of irony in both works is the fact that the protagonist is a reader, which immediately puts us on the alert.

¹¹ Wellek, R. *A History of Modern Criticism* (London, 1955), ii, 14.

It's easy to say that Cervantes and Flaubert were both masters of irony, that they were god-like in relation to their works, but how is this godlike position achieved? Beginning with Cervantes, what was the plan and where did it come from? We cannot say that Flaubert simply borrowed the attitude of irony from Cervantes. Flaubert was already moving towards irony, however (and this is exemplified by the pre-*Bovary* *Tentation de Saint Antoine*) before writing *Madame Bovary* he did not know how to use irony to creatively control a work of prose fiction. This he learned from Cervantes and later we will see the very specific techniques and principles that he borrowed.

While it cannot be argued that Cervantes faithfully followed an exact blueprint—nor was there a “theory of the novel” in his time—he was well-versed in Renaissance poetics and was indeed searching for a poetics of prose. It was his ability to exploit and renovate many of these artistic principles that allowed him to ironically unify so many contradictions—real-ideal, tragedy-comedy, imitation-original, past-present—in the *Quijote*. If we sift through the *Quijote* and focus on the discussions of art, literature, and prose, a quite coherent set of ideas about the novel as a genre emerges. It is Cervantes's understanding and display of these principles, combined of course with his unique capacities for entertaining inventiveness, that have made the *Quijote* a model for so many novelists searching to create their own poetics of prose. A manual for prose writers sounds like a meaningless impossibility, but insofar as such a guidebook can exist, the role must be credited to the *Quijote*.

In *Quijote* I, 48, the priest says that the greatest failing of the authors of the chivalric romances was to write “...sin tener advertencia a ningún buen discurso, ni al arte y reglas por donde pudieran guiarse y hacerse famosos en prosa, como lo son en verso los dos príncipes de la poesía griega y latina”¹² (“..without heeding any discourse of reason, nor the art or rules by which they could have guided themselves in order to become famous prose writers, as the princes of Greek poetry are in verse.”) In his comment, the priest reflects two important points: First, that in Cervantes’s time, art was identified with rules. However, it is the second point that is crucial: the authors of the chivalric romances didn’t heed any rules specific to their writing in prose because there weren’t many rules that applied to prose in particular. We are reminded of the “friend’s” comment in the prologue about the romances of chivalry “...de quien nunca se acordó Aristóteles, ni dijo nada San Basilio, ni alcanzó Cicerón.” (which Aristotle never mentioned, Saint Basil never spoke of, and Cicero never reached.”) The novel—vs. poetry and theater—was the newest genre and therefore the least hampered by rules, but in order to make it a bonafide art form, it needed rules.

Cervantes was wary of pedantry and certainly didn’t think that rules alone made art (see the prologue to the *Quijote*, Part I for attacks on pedants), but he was also well-read enough to be aware of the importance of neo-aristotelian principles such as verisimilitude, unity, and the nature of truth in

¹² Homer and Virgil. DQ, I, 48, p. 389

fiction—and of the fact that these qualities were to be *achieved* by the author. He knew—and this was perhaps one of the most important lessons Flaubert would learn from his study of the *Quijote*-- that great art doesn't just happen spontaneously, that inventiveness (*ingenio*) is indispensable, but not sufficient. The chivalric romances were full of *ingenio*, but completely lacking in aesthetic principles.

Hand in hand with self-awareness and control goes the technique of self-censorship. Cervantes repeatedly draws attention to this principle in the *Quijote*, at one point clearly stating that the author should not be praised so much for what he has included as for what he has left out. An example of this is from Book II, chapter 18. Don Quijote arrives at the house of Don Diego de Miranda (a.k.a El Caballero del Verde Gabán). While the first lines of the chapter describe Don Diego's house in detail, albeit briefly¹³, just a few lines later our narrator explains why it would be a waste of time to go into further description of Don Diego's house! The narrator says that at this point in the (original Arabic) manuscript of don Quijote's adventures, the author had included at great length all the circumstances and details of Don Diego's house offering a detailed portrait of the abode of a rich gentleman farmer. However, this portrait has not been included in the translation available to us, because

¹³ “Halló don Quijote la casa de don Diego de Miranda ancha como la aldea. Las armas, empero, aunque de piedra tosca, encima de la puerta de la calle, la bodega en el patio, la cueva en el portal, y muchas tinajas a la redonda...” (“Don Quijote saw that Don Diego de La Mirarada's house was as wide as the village. The coat of arms, EMPERO, although made of tuff, was above the door to the

“...al traductor desta historia le pareció pasar estas y otras semejantes menudencias en silencio, porque no venian bien con el proposito principal de la historia, la cual más tiene su fuerza en la verdad que en las frías digresiones.” (“...the translator of this story thought it better to skip these trifles, as they weren’t in keeping with the main purpose of the story, which finds its strength in its truth more than in cold digressions.”)

This passage reveals a great deal about Cervantes’s aesthetic principles: his concern with unity, truth, purposefulness. Conversely, it enumerates the flaws of the romances which abounded in purposeless digression and had no concern for unity or truth. The irony is that Cervantes *does digress* and often includes descriptions lavished with wonderfully inventive –and pointless—detail. But Cervantes wanted to make it very clear that if there are digressions in the *Quijote*, which there are, it is not because the author miscalculated, but because he put them there. This ironic defense mechanism—saying one thing and doing another—is an age old rhetorical trick and allows him to introduce into his story “...something about which he evidently has artistic scruples and, by implicitly criticizing its admission, glossed over a possible impropriety.”¹⁴ Or as Aristotle would say in the *Rhetoric*, “The corrective for every excess is the notorious one—to censure

street, the storeroom was in the courtyard, the wine-cellar in the vestibule, and there were many round clay vats...”). DQ II, 18. P. 542.

¹⁴ Riley, p. 28

onself at the same time: the thing seems to be true, since at all events the speaker knows what he is doing".¹⁵

The great difference between Cervantes and the authors of the romances was not that he had eradicated the problem of authorial uncertainties, but that he managed to show himself in the work as conscious of these uncertainties. He realized that the artist must always be able to step back from his work, observe it dispassionately as a spectator and even be able to watch himself at work. To mention an oft-cited comparison, Cervantes at work as the author of *Don Quijote* bears a great resemblance to Velazquez's relationship to *Las Meninas* in which the painter, the act of painting, and the painting's audience are all inseparable from the painting itself. As we will see, it is this strategy of artistic detachment which Flaubert transforms into his famous *impersonalité*.

The principle then is the following: know what you are doing at all times and you can do anything. For Cervantes self-awareness and self-restraint, and the purposefulness that goes hand in hand with these principles are liberating and the principles upon which the power of the artist is based. There are many cautionary examples given in the *Quijote*—aside from the constant jabs at the romances—that stress how important it is for the artist/author to simultaneously be the foremost critic of his own work. Literature was printed, and the advent of the printing press brought along a series of paradoxes that Cervantes was well-aware of. Who was the implied reader? While Cervantes

¹⁵ Ibid. From Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. Jebb (ed. Cambridge, 1909), III.vii.8-9

may have had an ideal and *discreto* reader in mind, he knew that once printed, his book was free to fall into anyone's hands. In Part I of the *Quijote*, the reader is addressed as "idle reader" ("*desocupado lector*"), but by the prologue of Part II we have a, perhaps more wary address of "illustrious or maybe plebeian reader" ("*lector ilustre, o quier plebeyo*").

The reader who has time to read also has time to be a critic and judge fairly or not. As the student Sansón says "...*las obras impresas se miran despacio, fácilmente se ven sus faltas, y tanto más se escudriñan cuanto es mayor la fama del que las compuso. Los hombres famosos por sus ingenios, los grandes poetas, los ilustres historiadores, siempre, o las más veces son envidiados de aquellos que tienen por gusto y por particular entretenimiento juzgar los escritos ajenos, sin haber dado algunos propios a la luz del mundo*" ("*...printed works are read slowly, and if their author is famous, they are scrutinized even more closely. Men who are famous for their talent, the great poets, illustrious historians, are always, or more often than not, envied by those who find pleasure and entertainment in judging the works of others, when they themselves have composed no works of their own.*")¹⁶

Cervantes has a character, Sansón in this case, plead the case for the writer of the printed work. He is pointing to the vulnerability of the author composing in the era when books reach a mass audience, and when the consumption of literature has ceased almost entirely (with the exception of a

rural situation such as the reading aloud of the chivalric romances at the *venta*) to be an oral, communal event and has instead become a solitary, private experience. Cervantes's awareness of the way in which literature was consumed since the advent of the printing press, and his textualization of this awareness is one of the key ingredients of his prescience. "Bookishness"¹⁷-- for lack of a better term--and the bookish way in which people interact in the *Quijote*, is the tell-tale sign of its modernity. And in Cervantes's work--and we will see this feature in Flaubert later--it is not just the protagonist (Alonso Quijano or Emma Bovary) who is affected by the phenomenon of bookishness. In fact the dialogue of several of the characters in both novels is mediated by the books they have read. But no one before Cervantes had gone so far as to make a character aware that he had a literary existence, as Cervantes does with Don Quijote.

Thus one of the main reasons that it is indispensable to be so aware as an author --to take time and compose carefully with attention to every detail-- writing in the modern world of the printing press is that the reader is "idle" and solitary and can take the time to carefully scrutinize every detail. This is not to

¹⁶ DQ, II, 3 p. 458. My italics.

¹⁷ In *An Exemplary History of the Novel: The Quixotic vs. the Picaresque* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), Walter Reed uses the term "bookishness" to describe what he sees as an unprecedented equality in the *Quijote*. As he, I think rightfully, points out, the dramatizing of the different literary genres, conventions, and language had been thematized in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and in Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* but in both cases with the emphasis on the oral--rather than written-printed--condition of literature. Of the contrast between Cervantes and Rabelais (whom Cervantes was probably unfamiliar with for there was no awareness of Rabelais in Spain at the time, and had there been he would probably have been banned by the counter-reformation index) Reed says that "In spite of their awareness of themselves as printed texts, Rabelais's *livres* are a recreation of the

say that Cervantes naively imagined that his readers were cultivated critics. On the contrary he knew that the dreaded *vulgo* (the detested *bourgeoisie* for Flaubert)—made up the majority of the reading public. Thus , the *Quijote* seems to have an objective of a pedagogical nature: to educate the *individual* reader. All the discussions of reading, genres, and writing --while of particular interest and boundless richness to one initiated in aesthetic matters—can perhaps be useful even to all but the most stubborn and ignorant of the *vulgo*. In the *Quijote* transformation is possible—albeit not the fantastical transformation desired by Alonso Quijano. Sancho is the proof of this. Cervantes wanted to transform the relationship between the writer and the reader—to make the reader aware of the author’s powers to delight and manipulate his work, to use satire to ruin the taste for the ridiculous, and most importantly to reveal the author’s own enormous respect for and awareness of the construction of the whole bizarre contraption (*aparato*) that was a book—in the hopes of eliciting a new kind of awareness from the reader. The novel, unlike the public *comedias*, was a genre to be consumed in private. In the theater, Lope had to contend with pleasing a big group who could all see one another. Cervantes perceived the edge that was afforded to him by the fact that his work would, for the most part, be enjoyed by the solitary individual in private, in silence.

oral symposium, where truth is ingested and expressed through the mouth. In *Don Quijote*, the terms are those of the printed book, it establishes a fundamental bookishness...”p. 75

Don Quijote is not the only reader who imitates what he reads, all readers do, albeit to lesser degrees. Cervantes knew this and wanted to offer the contemporary Spanish reader something better to imitate than the fantastic anachronistic nonsense of the romances or the uncritically portrayed contemporary mores displayed and reinforced by the *comedias* so popular at the time. Reading is as mimetic experience as writing—taken to the extreme by the figure of Don Quijote-- “You are what you read”, and to maintain the delicate balance of relationships between reader and writer, both must be fully aware of the dialogue in which they are engaged. This realization of the interdependence between author and reader is important for differentiating *Don Quijote* from the romances. The authors of the romances, with their casual attitude of “I didn’t write this, I don’t know who did, I just found this manuscript in some trash heap and had someone translate it but it’s probably completely unreliable and in any event I’m not responsible for it but it’s all true!” is as far as possible from Cervantes’s desire to constantly remind the reader of the following two main points. First, that to compose skillfully takes an enormous amount of work and the reader should be aware of the author’s painstaking travails. Second, that despite the fact that his *historia* is completely made up, there is truth in it. History is not superior to fiction in the world of the *Quijote*. In fact, we are left wondering if historical truth exists at all, and if we should not look instead for poetic truth.

Cervantes knew that the reader was a potential ally and this was of paramount importance because since the printing press took over and books were sold in shops only if in demand by the reading public (royal patrons were being supplanted), it was this market that had to be pleased. Because of this Cervantes's highest aim was to ...“impose minority standards on majority tastes”¹⁸ and to do so he saw that he had to control the complex of delicate relationships that exist between author, work and reader. These relationships, when left to run amok, produce reactions as dangerous to the world as to literature itself—such as the niece and housekeeper's ridiculous vilification of all literature, or Don Quijote's stubborn belief that fiction can be willfully imposed on reality. Books had to have another fate somewhere in between being sent to the funeral pyre or serving as the source for foolish behaviour. For this they needed an audience that could discriminate intelligently, and *a priori* an author that took the responsibility of developing this discrimination in the reader.

IMITATION

Cervantes's insistence upon the rules and principles of art, and his emphasis on the idea that talent alone is never enough is repeated throughout the *Quijote*. This conception of prose fiction as requiring a supremacy of nurture over nature is tied into his attempt to elevate the novel to and beyond

¹⁸ Riley, p. 20

the ranks of poetry. In order to imitate rules, one must be familiar with them and thus, while pedantry is always parodied by Cervantes, erudition is presented as indispensable to literary creation. Of course, in the upside down world of the novel, it is the pedants who impress other characters, while those sincerely trying to become erudite are seen as wastrels. Flaubert's character Monsieur Homais from *Madame Bovary* would have been—with his empty sophistry—just as successful in the *Quijote*.

Learning and humanistic studies are seen as a waste of time even by wealthy, educated *hidalgos*. When Don Diego first meets Don Quijote (Part II, 16) and complains that he has a son who he thinks is wasting his life away at the university of Salamanca : “Todo el día se le pasa en averiguar si dijo bieno o mal Homero en tal verso de la *Iliada*, si Marcial anduvo deshonesto o no en tal epigrama, si se han de entender de una manera o otra tales y tales versos de Virgilio.” (“He spends all day trying to figure out if Homer was right or wrong in this or that line from the *Iliad*, if Martial was dishonest in this or that epigram, if these or those lines of Virgil should be understood this or that way.”)

Diego's son is a student of classics, and as a well-off and well-adjusted hidalgo he represents the typical outlook on literary matters of the middle to upper middle class Spaniard. The fact that Don Diego sees the university as a waste of time shows the vulnerable status of the study of literature. If the wealthy and educated don't support such pursuits, who will? Don Diego, as a

type, represents Alonso Quijano's class and lifestyle, and the way Alonso Quijano would live if he were slightly richer and hadn't lost his mind. But he has lost his mind and is running around as Don Quijote, and in this encounter with Don Diego, his arguments are eloquent and lucid. Don Quijote's response to Don Diego's complaints about his son's study of the classics is a defense of literature and turns into a defense of nurture over nature in aesthetic matters.

...según es opinión verdadera, el poeta nace. Quieren decir que del vientre de su madre el poeta natural sale poeta. Y con aquella inclinación que le da el cielo, sin más estudio ni artificio, compone cosas que hace verdadero al que dijo: *Est deus in nobis*,¹⁹ etc. También digo que el natural poeta que se ayudare del arte será mucho mejor ... La razón es porque el arte no se aventaja a la naturaleza, sino perficiónala. Así que, mezcladas la naturaleza y el arte, y el arte con la naturaleza, sacarán un perfetísimo poeta... Sea, pues la conclusión de mi platica...deje caminar a su hijo por donde su estrella le llama..."²⁰

(...opinion holds it to be true that poets are born. Meaning that from the mother's womb the natural poet emerges a poet. And that with his heaven given inclination, and without studies or artifice, he composes things that give meaning to the words *Est deus in nobis*, etc. I also say that the natural poet that helps himself with art will be a much better poet... This is because art does not surpass nature, but rather perfects it. Thus, when nature mingles with art, and art with nature, they yield a most perfect poet.... To conclude my talk, let your son follow his star...)

This speech of Don Quijote's, which shows his erudition (he even uses the Latin stem **perfic-** instead of the Spanish **perfeccionar**) and eloquence leaves Don Diego astonished and full of admiration. The most important point is that natural talent cannot be relied on, poetic (or prosaic) skills must be *learned* and

clearly one of the best ways to learn them is through reading the classics. How else is art to be learned if not through imitation?

The imitation of models is central to Cervantes's poetics. Imitation is of course also central to Don Quijote's disastrous adventures, and the character's mimetic ideals are in a sort of ironic counterpoint to the author's throughout the novel. Though they are his favorites, it isn't only the chivalric romances that inspire Don Quijote. Like a great artist, also wants to imitate the classics.

Twice (in his discussion with Don Diego and in the scene with Doña Rodriguez at the ducal palace in p.II,52) he paraphrases a passage from the *Aeneid* to describe his life mission: "...el principal asumpto de mi profesión es perdonar a los humildes y castigar a los soberbios ." (...“the main task of my profession is to spare the humble and punish the proud.”) Don Quijote's epic ambitions are again illustrated when he proclaims “Aquí fue Troya” (“Here was Troy”) at the site of his defeat after he leaves Barcelona. On their way home from Barcelona they stop at an inn which is decorated with paintings of scenes from the *Aeneid* and Don Quijote again expresses his identification with Aeneas. Of course all comparisons between the two “heroes” are highly ironic, but this last one is especially poignant. The image of Aeneas is of him abandoning Dido on the African coast and sailing off to meet his destiny, Don Quijote is merely going home to his nameless village. He is a few pages away

¹⁹ *Est deus in nobis*Ç *agitante calescimus in illo* “There is God in us: he stirs and we get warm” from Ovid's *Fasti*, vi, 5.

²⁰ PII, 16. P. 533

from giving up not only his dreams of heroism, but also his will to live, for unlike Aeneas “ He has no epic course to run, no scroll of fate to guide his steps, no goal to motivate the plot of his existence.” ²¹ These words, referring to the literary character Don Quijote, could be said equally of Cervantes the author, whose struggle with the *lack* of the above mentioned certitudes propelled his creation of a new type of literature. Don Quijote’s fate—or lack of fate-- illustrates the pitfalls of blind, indiscriminate imitation of models. In fact his misguided adventures in their entirety can be seen as the misapplication of the aesthetic principle of imitation.

Imitation is one of the key terms of the *Quijote* . It is first mentioned in the prologue and significantly, from this very first reference it is made clear that imitation does not mean repetition of what others do or have done. In the second paragraph of the prologue it is very clearly stated: “...no quiero irme con la corriente del uso...” (“I don’t want to take the common road...”). In the context of the prologue this means, as Cervantes explains, omitting the sonnets, epigrams, eulogies and other embellishments that writers usually put in their prologues. The author prefers to present his work *monda y desnuda*—naked and without embellishment. One of the reasons for this is that all the embellishments normally used in prologues are the words of others. Filling one’s prologue with the words of classical authors was supposed to give the new work credibility of some kind. The author is paralyzed and unable to

²¹ Macphail, Eric. P. 299

write a conventional prologue because on the one hand he knows that a prologue needs these embellishments, but on the other hand he says he is too lazy to go looking for the words of other authors when he himself can say what he wants to say in his own words. (“...y porque naturalmente soy poltrón y perezoso de andarme buscando autores que digan lo que yo me sé decir sin ellos.”)

The prologue is thus a declaration of independence: independence from conventional literary practices, and from the reliance on the fame and wise words of others. It is at the same time, a mockery of all prologues made up of these empty embellishments. He points out that other books, even if they are fantastical or profane (the romances of chivalry come to mind) have prologues so full of the ABCs of pedantic references to classical thinkers—beginning with Aristotle and ending with Zoilo—that the reader immediately thinks the author is erudite and eloquent even if he is ignorant. Aside from the usual target of the chivalric romances, the prologues (i.e. the bombastic prologue to *Jerusalén Conquistada*) of Cervantes’s arch-enemy Lope de Vega are clearly targets.

We readers of the *Quijote* are thus alerted from the very beginning that we will not be subjected to any of this typical hocus pocus now, or later in the novel. This book needs to hide behind nothing, and it is different than all others. Cervantes wanted to alert his readers to the fact that erudition, as we see

throughout the *Quijote* was enormously important to him , but that in the world at large pedantry was often mistaken for erudition.

If Cervantes so emphatically stresses the independence, the difference of his work from other works, then how can we understand his approach to imitation? He seems to be against it, but in fact he is not, at least he is entirely in favor of a certain type of imitation. Whereas Don Quijote's imitation is a conflation of appearances and reality, Cervantes's technique is to heighten awareness of the difference between appearance and reality by imitating both. Only by imitating both can literary imitation be verisimilar. This is as close as literature can come to imitating truth.

Nothing was more typical of the old world of Spain than the failure to take into account the difference between what ought to be and what could be, and *Don Quijote* is, in a fundamental way, about this difference.²² Cervantes's concept of verisimilitude has two golden rules. First, that invention should not conflict with an intelligent reader's conception of the possible, *what could be* . Needless to say in this respect the chivalric romances are the key anti-exemplary literary works as they are full of preposterous nonsense. Even a devoted fan like Alonso Quijano has trouble suspending his disbelief and is made "uneasy" by the fact that in the first two parts alone (out of four) of the *Historia de Don Belianis de Grecia* the hero, don Belianis, is physically

²² Riley, p. 198

unscathed even though he has received one hundred and one serious wounds! Clearly, this does not fall into the realm of the verisimilar or the possible.

The second rule applies to the ideal: invention should also represent an ideal world, *what ought to be*. The important responsibility of the artists is to simultaneously represent these two aspects without ever confusing them or abusing of the accidental or impossible.

In the *Quijote* the presence of both is best seen by the combination of the main story (the adventures of Don Quijote and Sancho) with the interpolated tales which are purely marvellous and ideal. These tales have often been regarded with suspicion, or simply ignored by critics of the *Quijote*. One of the reasons for this is that many seem to have believed the lines in Part II, in which Don Quijote himself accuses the tales of being mere digressions and serving no purpose. However, we must take into account that to Don Quijote any part of the book not entirely focussed on him—which the interpolated tales are not-- is a digression. Having just been informed (Book II, 3) by Sansón Carrasco that his adventures have been published, and that the author has digressed from the hero's starring role by including tales about other characters, Don Quijote is furious. Clearly this is not a criticism meant to be taken seriously as it is based on narcissism on the one hand, and on the other on the misguided desire to be represented as an epic hero which would not be verisimilar. Yet the tales, all of them such perfect examples of what "ought to be" are the counterpart of the main story's emphasis on what could be. And

together, the two seemingly opposing veins of verisimilitude combine to fulfill the classic aesthetic principle of *variatio* while at the same time taking the best features of the romance and picaresque mode while leaving behind their shortcomings.

Verisimilitude cannot exist at all without a special relationship with the reader. This relationship, which we have seen illustrated in the pact between Don Quijote and Sancho Panza, must be self-conscious on the part of both author and reader. This is why the author must know what he is doing at all times—and it is in this sense (not in any ideological or dogmatic didactic sense) responsible, that is to say responsible to his work and his reader. Likewise, the reader of a self-conscious work like Don Quijote is precluded from reading the work literally. This is the key difference from the romance which seemed to demand an un-ironic, almost childish ingenuousness as much from the author as from the reader.

EXEMPLARITY AND THE READER

The common modern novel, in which there is no imagination, but a miserable struggle to excite and gratify mere curiosity ought, in my judgement, to be wholly forbidden to children. Novel reading of this sort is especially injurious to the growth of the imagination, the judgement, and the morals, especially to the latter, because it excites mere feelings without at the same time ministering an impulse to action.¹

When literary characters in novels try to emulate their own fictional heroes or heroines, the results are often disastrous. The characters, seduced by the enticing lives and adventures they read about, often forsake the codes of behaviour that govern their “real” world and set out to live by the codes of literature. One of the earliest examples of this mimetic behaviour can be found in Dante’s *Inferno*, in which the innocent readers Paolo Malatesta and Francesca de Rimini are corrupted by the sensual descriptions in *Lancelot*.² Paolo and Francesca don’t hesitate in suiting the action to the word, and thus land themselves in hell for all eternity. Cervantes’s *Don Quijote* and Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* take the errant reader to new heights by making Alonso

¹ Coleridge, “The Education of Children” in *The Portable Coleridge*, ed.I.A. Richards. New York: Viking Press, 1950, p.402.

² The significance of Dante as a precursor to Cervantes is a topic worthy of a more extensive consideration than the present study allows. That said, it seems worth pointing out that Dante made numerous direct and indirect allusions to the reader in *The Divine Comedy*. He showed a visionary sensitivity to the relationship between author and reader, as Eric Auerbach points out: “Dante created his audience, but he did not create it for himself alone; he also did it for those who came later. He shaped as possible readers of his poem a group of men that became a part of a world that barely existed yet at the time Dante wrote, but that would be configured little by little through the poem and the poets that would follow him” Auerbach, Eric. *Lenguaje literario y público en la baja latindad y en la Edad Media*. Barcelona:Seix Barral, 1969. (My translation)

Quijano and Emma Bovary's respective conflation of fact and fiction the center of their novels. Alonso Quijano—reader of chivalric romances-- and Emma Bovary—reader of sentimental romances-- both fail in their attempts to imitate the lives so seductively described in popular fictions. Both characters are clearly mistaken in their attempts to impose literature on life. Yet, despite their unhappy endings, can either of these novels be seen as cautionary tales? In the *Quijote* the relationship between reader and text, and the impact of the increased circulation of texts on society and literature, are explicitly addressed. Don't Cervantes and Flaubert do more to revitalise the complicated literature vs. life debate than to put it to rest?

The complexities of the experience of reading as expressed by Cervantes are circumscribed by his historical context, but at the same time transcend it. The border between fiction and fact has always been murky, but in sixteenth century Spain it had particular characteristics. It is undeniable that the issues raised in the *Quijote*—especially of the individual's interpretation and response to representation-- are still being debated today vis-à-vis our contemporary world of mass-media.

Not so long before Cervantes wrote *Don Quijote*, many works of literature had fulfilled an important purpose in society. *Il Corteggiano*, and Tomas de Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* are just two well-known examples of works that provided role models of ideals, values, and behavior. Even Don Quijote's favourite chivalric romance, *Amadís de Gaula*, had been a veritable

pedagogical manual for aspiring knights in the making. Examples of the link between imitation and the romances make the head spin. As I have noted, Don Galeor, a young knight-to-be in *Amadís*, wants to become a knight mainly because he has been inspired by some chivalric romances he has read. Alonso Quijano will echo Don Galeor with a key difference: he is *not* a young knight-to-be, but instead a middle aged *hidalgo*. Nevertheless, the more closely we examine the romances, the more sympathetic we become to Alonso Quijano's confusion.

The fact that in sixteenth century Spain literary models were recognised, and most importantly accepted, as codified paragons of manners and conduct makes Don Quijote's madness truly ironic.³ The imitation of models was an activity that was seen as a necessary practice for becoming an upstanding citizen. In reality, his strange behaviour, while anachronistic for his time, simply isn't as unprecedented as we could be led to imagine. If the imitation of literary models-- by *hidalgos* not unlike Alonso Quijano-- had been accepted as exemplary in the past, what is it exactly that makes his attempt to emulate literary models so utterly ridiculous?

Emma Bovary and Alonso Quijano are both presented as readers, but it is not the fact that they read that defines them, it is of course how they read and how they try to shape their lives according to what they read. While foolish is

³ For a discussion of exemplarity in literature within Spanish sixteenth century society see Torrente Ballester. *El Quijote como juego y otros ensayos críticos*.

an adjective that leaps to mind to describe both characters, clearly neither novel is a *roman à thèse* warning the reader of the dangers of taking literature literally. Paradoxically it is their hopeless, aborted attempts that make them interesting as characters albeit as “mock” heroine and hero. Then, what is the function of having Alonso Quixano or Emma Bovary be foolish (as in indiscriminate and wilfully gullible) readers? To consider this question it is useful to examine the nature of the works they read, and the role of literature in the lives of the other characters in *Don Quixote* and *Madame Bovary*, respectively. While the two are inseparable, shifting the focus away from the role of the reader of literature to the role of literature itself helps to consider both novels from a different angle. If we consider the reader’s foolishness it seems that both novels are ostensibly—at least partially—about the danger of literature to society. However, I propose that a close examination of the role of books within each novel reveals quite the opposite: it is society that is dangerous to literature.

Literary censorship was intensely powerful both in Cervantes’s Spain, and in the France of Flaubert’s time. Like Spain under the Inquisition, the Second Empire in France exerted a fierce control over all art—even that which was apparently non-ideological. Victor Hugo was exiled to England, Baudelaire and the Goncourt brothers were tried, and of course *Madame Bovary* landed Flaubert in court. In these otherwise disparate cultural contexts,

sixteenth century Spain, and nineteenth century France, , writers were persecuted and usually kept in line by taxes, fines, and regulations.⁴

While Flaubert was completing *Madame Bovary*, the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences was calling for an inquiry into the demoralising influence of the *roman feuilleton* for “...crimes of passion seemed to be breaking out more and more shockingly; while the suicide rate more than tripled during the years between 1830-1880 in France.” How much, people asked, had literature done to spread the moral contagion?⁵

A major theme in *Don Quijote* is perhaps the power of literature to exist despite society’s official desire to use literature, if at all, only as a tool to regiment morals. Implicit in the *Quijote* are the following age-old question questions: Do lasciviousness (which had a broader definition then than now), madness, and immorality come from the work of literature or art? But are these questions serious or parodies of the debate? Or is it the reader who brings these attitudes to the work?

The portrait of the relationship between reader (Alonso Quijano) and text (chivalric romances) in *Don Quijote* is one of crisis. The work of literature is no longer exemplar on the one hand, and no longer “mere” entertainment on the other. If no longer *dulcis* nor *utilis*, what is the role of literature, and how could it regain its status in a different way? This seems to be one of the

⁴ Levin, Harry. *The Gates of Horn*

⁵ Ibid, p.247

profound issues at the core of *Don Quijote*, and a question that dominated Flaubert's vision of his own "vocation" as a writer and that became part of the very fabric of his own works.

CHIVALRIC ROMANCES AND THEIR READERS

Llenósele la fantasía de todo aquello que leía en los libros..y asentósele de tal modo en la imaginación que era verdad toda aquella maquina de aquellas sonadas soñadas invenciones que leía, que para él no había otra historia más cierta en el mundo.⁶

(His fantasies were filled with everything he read in the books...It became so firmly planted in his mind that the whole contraption of resounding dreamt up inventions he read was real, that to him no history in the world was truer.)

The idea that the *Quijote* was written as a purposeful attack on the books of chivalry is clearly stated both in the prologue and at the very end of the work. Thus the work is framed by its said purpose. In the prologue, the author is at a loss for words and doesn't know what to write about his work until his friend comes and reminds him of his purpose:

...este vuestro libro...todo él es una invectiva contra los libros de caballerías, de quien nunca se acordó Aristóteles, ni dijo nada San Basilio, ni alcanzó Cicerón...llevad la mira puesta a derribar la máquina mal fundada destos caballerescos libros, aborrecidos de tantos y alabados de muchos más que si esto alcanzásedes, no habríades alcanzado poco.

...this book of yours...is through and through an attack on the books of chivalry—books forgotten by Aristotle and never mentioned by Saint Basil nor Cicero...Stay intent on destroying the ill founded apparatus of these chivalric books, hated by many and praised by more, for to achieve this goal would be no small feat.

⁶ DQ, V.I, 1p.23

Why the chivalric romances? Why not the Moorish novel, the pastoral, or the picaresque? These genres are also parodically embedded in the *Quijote* but none is a declared enemy like the chivalric romances. This question must be considered in light of the nature of these works and their reception in Spain. To grasp the nature and extent of Cervantes's use of parody of conventions (literary and social) in the *Quijote*, we must begin with a fundamental knowledge of the characteristics of the chivalric romances—and of their readers in sixteenth century Spain. The chivalric romance has the distinction of being the first form of literary entertainment specifically written and conceived for a mass reading public. The effects of this new situation brought on two major developments: the emergence of the professional writer, and the view of literature as an issue of social concern.⁷

As the effects of the theatre had become a matter of concern in both Spain and England, the effects of the novel would also require the attention of responsible citizens. As E.C. Riley points out, from Cervantes's point of view the novelist himself had the greatest responsibility on his shoulders, and that responsibility was to his reader. Clearly Cervantes saw that what was considered a problem in his own time, would only increase in the future. The proliferation of popular literature would plague future audiences.

⁷ Riley, p. 115

As the priest points out in Part II, 48, the standards of the Spanish theatre (the truly popular genre in Cervantes's time as it didn't require a literate public—this is an obvious point but relevant to the upcoming discussion of the romances) were in decline. He accuses playwrights who are in fact talented and familiar with classical poetics, of willfully sacrificing all respect for verisimilitude and the unities. They are much more interested in lowering their standards or “selling out” to write plays that will draw the biggest crowds. Though this is clearly a not very hidden attack on Cervantes's nemesis, Lope de Vega, it is very important vis-à-vis the future of printed literature:

...las comedias se han hecho mercadería vendible, dicen, y dicen verdad, que los representantes no se las comprarían si no fueran de aquel jaez. Y así, el poeta procura acomodarse con lo que el representante que le ha de pagar su obra le pide
(plays have become sellable commodities. It is said, and it is true, that the actors won't buy them unless this fashion is followed, and so the poet tries to adapt himself to the requirements of the actor who is to pay him for his work.)

What had happened to the theatre and playwrights was also happening with fiction. With books, the difference was that there were no actors as middlemen. The author's livelihood depended directly on his success vis-à-vis his reading public. This, combined with the fact that the reader of books enjoyed his/her entertainment alone, are two important features of the author-reader relationship that concerned Cervantes. How could the novelist make a living (i.e. please everyone) without sacrificing artistic principles? How could it be

possible to “...communicate with as wide a public as possible without sacrificing his standards to the lowest taste of its members.”⁸

Cervantes gives the readers of the *Quijote* a chance to become sophisticated readers. The formal qualities of the work are exposed for all readers to see and are part of the reading experience. It is difficult to think of other examples that approach the complexity of the *Quijote*, but one can imagine a comparison with a film such as Wim Wender’s *The State of Things*, which is both a movie and simultaneously a behind the scenes “making of” the movie. I draw the parallel merely to illustrate with a visual example how the reader (or spectator) is invited, and even obliged, to reflect on the artifice behind the creative process. The *Quijote* celebrates artifice and the creator of that artifice. Cervantes didn’t want the reader to be in the dark, but instead to bring the reader into the processes of creation, as he knew that the formal qualities of a work were inseparable from the effects it had on people.

In this respect, as we will see, Cervantes distances himself from the authors of the chivalric romances for whom it was a *point d’honneur* to try and con their readers into believing that their works were literally true.

Who read the romances? Don Quijote himself says that the romances “Con gusto general son leídos y celebrados de los grandes y de los chicos, de los pobres y de los ricos, de los letrados e ignorantes, de los plebeyos y caballeros, finalmente, de todo género de personas de cualquier estado y

⁸ Ibid

condicion que sean.” (“Are read and celebrated by the old and the young, the poor and the rich, the cultivated and the ignorant, the plebeian and the gentlemen, in short, by all types no matter what their status or circumstances.”)⁹ If we took Don Quijote’s statement as sociological evidence, it seems that everyone in Spain—from the peasant and the bootblack to the nobility and the royalty—was reading the romances.

However, knowing how unreliable our protagonist is (and that he is biased in favor of the romances) we should consider other available sources. There are quite good records that can help us form an idea of reading habits in sixteenth century Spain. These include inventories of private libraries, stock lists from bookshops, records from printing presses, etc., as well as the official records of the inquisition that sent its delegates to arriving ships to whom disembarking passengers had to “declare” the fictional works in their possession. Thanks to this we know of the success of *Amadís* and its sequels, of *La Celestina*, and later of *Don Quijote* itself.

The popularity of the chivalric romances, and their effects on their readers, is also evident in their use in public festivities. In 1527 there were tournaments prepared to celebrate the birth of Prince Felipe which were based on scenes from *Amadís*. When Alonso Quijano decides to imitate customs from the romances, Cervantes is not just playing with the idea of life imitating

⁹ Eisenberg, Daniel. *Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age*, p.89

literature, but of life imitating life. He is making fun of the way the romances had infected sixteenth century Spanish courtly life.¹⁰

While it is difficult to draw conclusions about the reading in sixteenth century Spain (who read? who could afford to buy books? how and why were books read?) a few points seem more or less certain. Historians agree that approximately eighty percent of the population in Spain was illiterate.¹¹ Thus the reality (despite the widespread practice suggested by the *Quijote* itself) seems to be that it was the upper classes—including King Carlos V and his court-- and especially the younger generations in the nobility that enjoyed the romances. Publisher's records reveal that there was a small but consistent demand for the romances, indicating that the group of devoted readers was limited. The price of the books, along with the low rate of literacy, accounts for this minority readership.¹² Thus we must be wary of how we interpret the effects of the "revolution" of the printing press and the "mass" circulation of books. The low literacy rates must be kept in mind, along with the high price of books, and the fact that the oral traditions of the culture did not change overnight. Therefore we must take the idea of the romances being a threat to one and all lightly, especially because though still popular, they had already seen the decline of their heyday in 1588—nearly two decades before the publication of *Don Quijote*. If the romances of chivalry were not in fact a

¹⁰ From Bernárdez, Asun. *Don Quijote, el lector por excelencia*. Madrid: Huerga y Fierro. 2000

¹¹ Bernárdez, p. 48

¹² Eisenberg, p. 104

menace to society, despite the reiterated claims in the *Quijote*, we must find a different angle from which to understand Cervantes's insistence on this fact.¹³

What becomes significant if we look at the history of the readership of the romances—from which we can only conclude that they were primarily enjoyed by the wealthy and educated—is that in the *Quijote* these books are portrayed as entertainment for the *vulgo*. In other words, when his contempt is directed at the indiscriminate readers of the romances who are the *vulgo*, we can't interpret the *vulgo* as the (illiterate) lower classes. Therefore it is the wealthy and educated nobles who are indiscriminate and “popular” in their tastes. It is important to note that Cervantes did not equate class or wealth with the ability to appreciate art. In *Time Regained*, Proust discusses “popular art” in a manner that succinctly echoes Cervantes views:

The idea of popular art, like that of a patriotic art, if not actually dangerous seemed to me ridiculous. If the intention was to make art accessible to the people by sacrificing refinements of form, on the ground that they are “all right for the idle rich” but not for anybody else, I had seen enough of fashionable society to know that it is there that one finds real illiteracy and not, let us say, among electricians.¹⁴

What characterized the chivalric romance? In the *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (which was published in 1611 between the publication dates of Part I and Part II of the *Quijote*) gives the following definition of

¹³ Eisenberg proffers an interesting explanation for the decline in popularity of the chivalric romances. “That the final rise and decline were situated around the year 1588 cannot be a coincidence, for whatever the effect of the Armada's defeat on Spain's naval power, there can be no doubt that the expedition aroused interest in chivalric matters, and that in its defeat was lost a considerable sector of the cream of the nobility.”

chivalric romances: “Libros de caballerias: Los que tratan de hazañas de caballeros andantes, ficciones gustosas y artificiosas de mucho entretenimiento y poco provecho, como los de Amadís, de don Galeor, del Caballero de Febo, y de los demás.” (“Books of Chivalry: Those about the feats of knights errant, pleasurable and artificial fictions that are highly entertaining yet unrewarding, such as the one about Amadís, about Don Galeor, about the Caballero de Febo, and others.”)¹⁵

The fact that the word “fiction” is part of the definition is very important as there was no term in Spanish (unlike the French *roman*) to designate a genre for fictional prose works in Spanish. Thus authors of medieval, sixteenth, and seventeenth century Spain used the terms *historia* or *crónica* in their titles, and used them impertinently¹⁶ knowing that they suggested to the reader that the fantastical and farfetched adventures described in their works were true. The equivocal effect of calling these chivalric tales *historia* or *crónica* becomes evident if we compare some titles of chivalric romances (i.e. *Historia del invencible caballero don Olivante de Laura*, *Crónica del Leopelmo*) to those of history books from the same era (*Historia del Emperador Carlos V*, *Crónica del Gran Capitán Gonzalo Hernández de Córdoba*).

The “knight errant” had indeed existed and roamed around Europe up until a century before Cervantes wrote the *Quijote*. The literature surrounding

¹⁴ Remembrance of Things Past. Volume III. Mayor, Andreas, translator. New York: Vintage, 1981.

¹⁵ Riquer, Martín de. “Cervantes y la caballerescas” in *Suma Cervantina*

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 275

their lives and adventures can be divided, as Martin de Riquer points out, into two categories: biography and chivalric novel. In the first, which recorded real events, we find examples such as *Libro del passo honroso*, and in the second, which presented invented lives but with a high degree of verisimilitude, the Catalan *Tirant lo blanch*. In opposition to the realistic chivalric novels (novelas caballerescas), de Riquer designates the preposterous “*libros de caballerías*” (books of chivalry) such as *Amadís de Gaula*, the book that sent Don Quijote over the edge. Cervantes clearly had comprehended this distinction himself--albeit without our more contemporary terminology—for as *Amadís* is attacked repeatedly on aesthetic grounds throughout the *Quijote*, *Tirant lo blanch* is praised. Even the priest cannot be brought to burn *Tirant lo blanch* during the inquisition of Don Quijote’s library. He saves it based on the criterion of verisimilitude, saying that “...por su estilo es el mejor libro del mundo; aquí comen los caballeros, y duermen y mueren en sus camas, y hacen testamento antes de su muerte, con otras cosas de que todos los demás libros deste género carecen” (...in terms of style it’s the best book in the world; here knights eat, sleep, and die in their beds, and make their testaments before dying, and other things that the rest of the books of this genre lack.)

Because of the lack in terminology, the two genres of history and fiction were nominally indistinguishable. Don Quijote’s “madness”, and indeed the behaviour of several other characters, is of course an extension of this confusion. The authors of the romances deliberately played up this

confusion—pretending their works were *crónicas* or *historias* translated from found manuscripts in exotic languages. The idea was that it would impart to their works what Daniel Eisenberg calls an air of “pseudo-historicity”¹⁷ that would make them more appealing. In this respect, the romances had a great deal in common with our “reality” television shows of today (i.e. “Survivor”) which portray “real people” who are in fact employees of the show, in “real situations” which are in fact staged. Again, as with the romances, what titillates the audiences—as much as or more than the actual drama of the show—is the idea that what they are watching is *real*.

These conventions from the romances are of course imitated by Cervantes throughout the *Quijote*. They include the many levels of narration, the intrusion of the narrator on his narrative, the insistence on the fact that Don Quijote’s adventures actually happened, the found manuscript and its translator. These and many other devices—which seem so surprising and unique to the modern reader—would have been familiar to Cervantes’s contemporaries as they were commonplace in the romances. Of course Cervantes inserts these devices in a new framework, thus they are unique as presented in the *Quijote*, but his use of them is nevertheless more interesting in view of their antecedents.

¹⁷ Eisenberg, Daniel. *Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age*. Newark, Delaware: Juan de La Cuesta. 1982. This is the definitive study on the subject.

For example, the explanation of the found manuscript in the *Quijote* seems quite tame compared to the tactics of Melchor Ortega, the author of the romance *Felixmarte de Hircania*. In this romance, Ortega claims that his work “...was written by a certain Philosio Atheniense, translated from Greek into Latin by Plutarch (!), then from Latin into Tuscan by Petrarch (!!), from which language Ortega translated it into Castilian.”¹⁸

In *Amadís*, Montalvo constantly resorts to the formulas of historic writers such as “so the story says” (*dize la historia*) and claims to be merely the translator of the manuscript, not the author. Following Montalvo’s example, every single chivalric romance written in Spanish with the exception of *Palmerín de Olivia*, claims to be, like the *Quijote*, a “translation” or a “revision”.¹⁹ Many of the later authors went beyond this device and framed their narratives with two separate prologues—one by the author, and one by the “second author” or “translator”. In the prologue an elaborate and fantastical explanation of how the manuscript had been discovered was often produced.

These contrived formulaic devices, which seem preposterous to the modern reader, were intended to add an air of reality to the romances—to make them seem as if the adventures they recounted and the heroes they described had really occurred and existed. Likewise, the exotic locations and languages aided in the suspension of disbelief. It was easier for an author to situate

¹⁸ Eisenberg, p. 124

¹⁹ Eisenberg, p. 122

beautiful princesses and sumptuous palaces in a far away land of which the reader knew nothing. As we see in the *Quijote*, it takes exceptional genius to create magic, beauty, or heroism on the infertile soil of La Mancha.

The fact that the author posed as a mere translator of a manuscript written by a “chronicler” or “historian” was meant to both relieve the author of any responsibility for the quality (moral or aesthetic) of the work. Again, this was meant to impart, a sense of reality and the excitement of reading someone’s eye-witness or first-hand account of events.

All of these features are present in the *Quijote*. For example, at the end of Part I, chapter XVIII, after Don Quijote attacks a Basque squire, the narrator interrupts to tell us that unfortunately, his information about the protagonist has run out: “...en éste punto y término deja pendiente el autor desta historia esta batalla, disculpándose que no halló más escrito destas hazañas de don Quijote, de las que deja referidas.” (...at this point, and in this condition, the author of the story leaves this battle, apologising for not having found any more written about the adventures of don Quijote than what has been related already.”)

Then in Part I, chapter IX, the narrator finds the second part of the manuscript of the hero’s adventures in a marketplace in Toledo:

Estando yo un día en el Alcaná de Toledo, llegó un muchacho a vender unos cartapacios y papeles viejos a un sedero, y como yo soy aficionado a leer, aunque sean los papeles rotos de las calles, llevado desta mi natural inclinación, tomé un cartapacio de los que el muchacho vendía, y vile con caracteres que conocí ser arábigos.

(One day when I was in the Alcaná of Toledo, a boy arrived to sell some notebooks and old papers to a silk-merchant. As I am a devoted reader—even of scraps of paper on the street—my natural curiosity led me to pick up one of the notebooks the boy was selling, and in it I saw letters which I recognized as Arabic.)

The narrator doesn't read Arabic, but luckily there is a note in the margin of one of the notebooks in Spanish about Dulcinea so he knows that in the manuscript he has discovered the rest of the adventures of *Don Quijote*. He finds someone to translate the notebooks as we the readers well know because the translated manuscript is what we are reading! The song and dance about the finding of the manuscript that narrates a “true” story, and its subsequent translation into Castilian is Cervantes's mockery of the Romance's heavy-handed narrative techniques, their fantastical poses as history, their convoluted contrived justifications of their very existence. Yet this song and dance is also one of the most characteristic, amusing, features within the multilayered narrative of the *Quijote*.

The pseudo-historicity of the romances worked in the sense that, in a culture in which the distinction between story and history was none too clear to begin with, people often mistook them for history. In the discussion of the romances between Don Quijote and the wise Canon of Toledo (I, 49)-- a key scene we will focus on later—this equivocation is embodied by Don Quijote. The Canon has just been lamenting the fact that Don Quijote favours romances over more edifying works—i.e. the bible—that he could have enjoyed without

sacrificing his sanity. According to the Canon, the romances are fraudulently deceitful and as dangerous as new religious sects. Don Quijote listens to the criticisms of his beloved romances, digests the Canon's arguments, and delivers his rebuttal in which he says that all past heroes are equally real and true --historical or fictional. The Canon, astounded at the “..mezcla que Don Quijote hacía de verdades y mentiras” (“...mixture that Don Quijote made between facts and lies...”) can finally only reply with restrained exasperation: “Todo puede ser...” (“Anything is possible...”). The Canon is disturbed by the fact that Don Quijote is unable to discriminate between the two types of *historia* : story and history. Thus the problem of the chivalric romances is an issue of genre.²⁰ It is not just the limitation of the linguistic signifier available in Castilian at the time, *historia*, it is the signifieds that are entangled beyond confusion except in the minds of the few discreet and cultivated citizens such as the character of the Canon of Toledo. Despite Don Quijote's obvious madness in his argument with the Canon, it is apparent that the fault lies in the form. Both types of *historias*, true or false, have been presented to him as narratives. “The true scandal of Don Quijote's argument is his implicit recognition of the unity of narrative. Romances, chronicles, and histories are all histories for him and thus equally true.”²¹

²⁰ Macphail, Eric. “*Don Quijote* and the Plot of History”. *Comparative Literature* Volume 47, Number 4. Fall 1995. Pp. 289-306.

²¹ Macphail, p. 289

What role did, or could, literature have in Spain in the sixteenth century? Could the “idle reader” (*desocupado lector*) whom Cervantes addresses in the prologue have been looked on favourably by the church? If not, what kind of reader would have been approved of, and what materials would have been allowed? Where, if anywhere, did entertaining literature belong? Was the idle reader considered harmless, or was he or she perceived as a subversive figure? Across the board, it seems that reading was supposed to be useful and exemplary. From both the dominant perspective of the Catholic Church, and from the much smaller humanist faction, reading was an activity to be pursued with the goal of improving oneself. For the reformers, individual salvation through personal study of the bible in the vernacular took precedence over all else. The third and last important use literature could have in the Renaissance was to provide a breadth of knowledge to the courtly reader or political advisor²².

It is quite clear that the chivalric romances fulfilled none of these purposes and that the people who read them were neither religiously, morally, nor politically motivated. It also seems likely that given the title *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, Cervantes knew he would attract the type of reader—amongst his contemporaries at least—who enjoyed the romances, i.e. the “idle reader”. The fact that the *Quijote* was written for an audience

²² Reed, Walter. *An Exemplary History of the Novel*. Chicago / London: University of Chicago Press, 1981. P. 144

accustomed to and familiar with all the conventions of the romances of chivalry is important and makes it indispensable to review certain characteristics from the genre. If not, it is impossible to appreciate the often grotesque disfigurement of these conventions.

To complicate matters, in *Don Quijote*, Cervantes not only addresses, through parody, the literary conventions used (and often abused) in the chivalric romances, but he also addresses the very conventions of censoring these “pernicious” works. From 1524 until the end of the century, the romances were attacked by church authorities and eminent writers. Other genres were also attacked—the pastoral novel, the sentimental novel, poetry (including the work of Garcilaso and Boscán)—however the chivalric romance tended to be the most maligned²³.

The fact that Don Quijote goes mad from reading these romances, and the acceptance of this diagnosis by other characters in the book (the priest and the barber, the housekeeper and the niece) echos the general disapproval directed at books of chivalry in Spain throughout the sixteenth century. “Serious” authors especially had been attacking the vain nature of tales of chivalry—including the romances of Lancelot and Tristan-- at least since the fourteenth century.²⁴ In the sixteenth century, at least thirty five works by philosophers, moralists, historians, and religious writers from different

²³ De Riquer, “Cervantes y la caballerescas” p. 281

²⁴ Both works are cited, amongst others by Antoni Canals in his prologue to the Catalan version of the epistle *De modo bene vivendi*. See de Riquer, p. 279 for full details.

denominations denounced the chivalric romances. The last six attacks, made between 1590 and 1599, coincide with the period in which Cervantes conceived, and began to write, the *Quijote*.²⁵ It is not just the romances themselves that are attacked but also their readers. The authors are accused of being ignorant and bad writers. In an evaluation of the romances that the Canon in the *Quijote* seems to agree with, Fray Agustín Salucio declares, in 1573 that

...ningún español que haya tenido ingenio lo ha tenido en tan poco que lo haya empleado en semejantes frasquerías; y así los que se han aplicado a esas composturas de cosas fabulosas, en prosa o verso, han sido parleros y vanos idiotas sin ninguna noticia ni lección de buenos autores ni de buenas letras: todo es mentir de ventaja, sin orden ni tiento, ni lenguaje, y sin estilo, sin saber guardar el decoro ni aún al bajo argumento que tratan...

(no Spaniard with any talent has had so little as to devote himself to such drivel; those who have applied themselves to the composition of fabulous things—be they in prose or in verse—have been charlatans and vain idiots who possess neither the awareness nor the lessons of good authors or good letters: all they do is lie as is convenient, without order or steadiness, or language, or style, and without the preservation of decorum, not even within the lowly plot they write”.

The romances were attacked on aesthetic grounds (ridiculousness, incoherence, lack of structure, etc.) but also on moral ones. Not only were they infamous for presenting the most preposterous adventures as true, they were also accused of inciting sensual desires in the readers. Though the reasons varied (from

²⁵ De Riquer, pp.280-281

Renaissance theorists to the Catholic church), what is clear is that the chivalric romances provoked concern throughout Spain: a concern for the *reader*.

The romances were not just attacked in treatises by individual authors, they were attacked officially by government authorities in Spain as well as in the new world from the beginning of the sixteenth century. This date marked the beginning of the all out war on all genres of fiction (*fantasia*). We know that royal decree of 1531 specifically banned the export, printing, and possession any work of fiction in the Spanish new world. Another type of criticisms of the romances—on aesthetic grounds-- made by more cultivated thinkers reflect upon questions that deeply concerned Cervantes himself and that are present throughout the *Quijote*.²⁶

READERS OF ROMANCES IN THE *QUIJOTE*

The character most obviously affected by reading the chivalric romances in the *Quijote* is, of course, the protagonist Alonso Quijano. His habits, and the effects of the romances on his behaviour, propel the “main story” (the narrative of Don Quijote and Sancho, as opposed to the interpolated tales) of the *Quijote*.

Before he becomes Don Quijote, the life of Alonso Quixano (as he is in fact called) in La Mancha is characterized by its monotony. He has a lot of

time on his hands, little money and not much to do. His days are only punctuated by meager and repetitive meals. The only pastime that affords this simple country squire any pleasure is the outmoded hobby of reading and rereading chivalric romances. He is addicted and in his effort to provide himself with a constant supply of new books, he sells off land, landing himself in an extremely perilous financial situation. His passion for books becomes ever more consuming ultimately eclipsing his everyday life. In this aspect Don Quijote's madness is different from that of other literary characters—for example Orlando Furioso's, or Hamlet's --which are created by *real* external factors. The essence of Don Quijote's madness is that it is caused by books and specifically by the genre of chivalric romances.

Initially, Alonso Quijano is presented as a reader with some degree of discrimination. Though he is smitten with the romances, he questions the plausibility of the high flown adventures and their language. In Don Belianis de Grecia by Jeronimo Fernandez, for example, the character Belianis receives 101 serious wounds just in the first two volumes. Our protagonist finds this to be lacking in verisimilitude. In the romances of Feliciano da Silva, Don Quijote is even more troubled by the outpourings of adulations and courtly challenges, such as:

La razón de la sinrazón que a mi razón se hace, de tal manera mi razón enflaquece, que con razón me quejo de la vuestra fermosura... Los altos cielos que de vuestra divinidad divinamente con las estrellas os

²⁶ de Riquer, p.284

fortifican, y os hacen merecedora del merecimiento que merece vuestra grandeza.

(The reason of the unreason with which my reason is afflicted so weakens my reason that with reason I complain of your beauty” or “the high heavens, that of your divinity divinely fortify you with the stars, render you deserving of the desert your greatness deserves.”)

Alonso Quijano suspects that passages such as these don’t make sense. The narrator of Don Quijote agrees, and comments that looking for meaning in chivalric romances is a fruitless exercise, and that not even Aristotle -- if raised from the dead for the sole purpose of deciphering these passages -- would be able to unravel such absurdities. The mention of Aristotle is significant for the principles of Aristotle’s poetics had recently been imported to Spain in work entitled *Filosofía antigua poética* by Lopez Pinciano. The relationship between classical poetic principles and prose fiction is a topic that is central to the *Quijote*. The romances were generally written carelessly and paid no heed to poetic principles of any kind. Even Alonso Quijano sees this. With their characteristic lack of sustained illusion, sharp irony, verisimilitude, or purpose, the chivalric romances are little more than degenerative nonsense. Don Quijote’s disappointment comes not only from disbelief in fabulous likely stories, but from a deeper demand that literature be the vehicle of some higher truth. Thus his misunderstanding that literary works are factually true is based on a deeper understanding of the possibility of literary truth.

These examples, while indicative of Don Quijote’s skepticism, also point to an important issue which will permeate the work: the crisis stemming from the erosion of belief in the outmoded literary genre of the chivalric romance. Don Quijote is frustrated that these works have become anachronistic, that their truths seem somehow worn out. Although he still finds the chivalric romances infinitely entertaining and for the most part well

wrought, he is aware of their flaws. They are incomplete and it is Don Quijote's madness to want to literally replace them, to reinvigorate their truths, that makes his madness the central metaphor for the modern artist-writer. Sadly for Don Quijote, his madness is made public in his attempts to make the mythic world of chivalry real.

Writing chivalric romances would have been the obvious, practical way to imitate them. Many of the romances, such as the *Amadís* series, had cliff-hanger endings and Don Quijote often "le vino deseo de tomar la pluma y dalle fin al pie de la letra, como allí se promete; y sin duda alguna lo hiciera, y aun saliera con ello, si otros mayores y continuos pensamientos no se lo estorbaran." ("felt the urge to take up his pen and finish it. He would no doubt have done so, and succeeded in it too, had he not been occupied by greater and more absorbing thoughts.") The main "greater and more absorbing thought" is the following:

...vino a dar en el mas extraño pensamiento que jamás dio loco en el mundo, y fue que le pareció conveniente y necesario, así para el aumento de su honra como para el servicio de su república, hacerse caballero andante, y irse por todo el mundo con sus armas y caballo, a buscar aventuras...y así, llevado del extraño gusto que en ellos sentía, se dio prisa a poner en efecto lo que deseaba.

(he hit upon the strangest notion that ever a madman in this world hit upon. He fancied that it was right and requisite, no less for his own greater renown than in the service of his country, that he should make a knight-errant of himself, roaming the world over in full armor and on horseback in quest of adventures...And so, carried away by the intense enjoyment he found in these pleasant fantasies, he began at once to put these schemes into execution.)

In his madness, Don Quijote thus arrives at the two following conclusions: 1) That everything he has read in the chivalric romances is absolutely true 2) That

the events described and their accompanying medieval ideals of justice can be resuscitated in his own time. As Don Quijote, he is doggedly set on imposing his literary imagination on vulgar reality, hearing “the neighing of the steeds, the braying of the trumpets, the roll of the drums” when there is nothing to be heard, according to Sancho but “the bleating of ewes and sheep.” Ironically, a feature of his “madness” is its intermittent nature for it alternates with moments of lucidity in which he displays his superior ability to reason, and a vast erudition.

When Don Quijote sets out to do penance, in Book I ch. 25, it is not in mad fury but in calm, calculated fashion as he explains to Sancho: “Have I not told you, that I mean to imitate Amadís here, playing the victim of despair, the madman, the maniac?” His view of the world is therefore not altogether detached from reality -- the proof of this is that he adapts to different situations and is usually prepared with a defensive justification for the moments of collision between his imagination and external reality that are designed to paper over the cracks between what is and what he believes should be.

However, by Part II of the *Quijote*, perhaps worn out by the demands of Part I, our protagonist seems to have run out of imaginative steam—almost. The best example of this is in Part II, X. Sancho sees three plain village girls approaching and reports to Don Quijote that they are in fact Dulcinea and her two maids. He describes the approaching vision (in language he has of course learned from his master): “all one glow of gold, bunches of pearls, all diamonds, all rubies...their hair is loose on their shoulders like so many sunbeams playing in the wind...” Don Quijote is thrilled by this description, and awaits their approach with anticipation. However, when the trio of the “vision” arrives he does not see what Sancho described. Disappointed, he confesses: “I see nothing but three country girls on three jackasses.”

Don Quijote is especially perplexed by Sancho's claim that one of the girls is the beautiful Dulcinea because "he could see nothing in her except a village lass, and a not very good looking one, for she was dish-faced and snub-nosed." The contrast between this scene and his typical madness suggests the following question: to what extent is Don Quijote's madness intentional and therefore like artistic madness? He quickly rationalizes the discrepancy between the plain girl he sees, and the vision Sancho described, by blaming the evil "enchanter" whom he says put a spell on the ladies making them appear ugly only to him, Don Quijote. Yet even when he blames enchanters, he is fully aware that the enchanters do not actually transform shapes but merely *appear* to do so.

Don Quijote is also quite capable of reflecting on artistic principles. He often shows himself to be aware of the precepts of art and (ironically) the effects of art on an audience. There are also intervals in which Don Quijote lucidly gives commentaries on the subject that he cares most about: artistic creation. For example in Bk II, ch.3, he explains that the most important lesson an artist can learn is to always be completely aware of what he is creating, of his power to manipulate and control his creation. He also gives eloquent disquisitions on formal unity and verisimilitude.

Another example of Don Quijote's lucidity is when he delivers his discourse on the arms and letters in Part I, XXXVIII. As he is speaking "Don Quijote delivered his discourse in such a manner and in correct language, that for the time being, he made it impossible for any of his hearers to consider him a madman."²⁷ And after his speech is delivered "it aroused fresh pity in those who had heard him to see a man of apparently sound sense, and with rational

²⁷ DQ (English, Norton edition) p.300

views on every subject he discussed, so hopelessly lacking in it when the wretched unlucky chivalry was in question.”²⁸

Don Quijote's madness is, in fact, profoundly literary. He adheres strictly to literary conventions as he envisions his adventures. He spontaneously composes verse and consciously imitates the language of the mock-heroic, pastoral and chivalric romances. Not only does he outfit himself to be a knight with all the accouterments including a squire, Sancho, and a lady, Dulcinea, but he feels the need to create reality by carefully naming everything as a writer would do. In the case of Dulcinea “searching for a name not too remote from her own, yet which would aim at and bring to mind that of a princess and great lady, he decided upon calling her Dulcinea del Toboso...To his way of thinking, the name was musical, uncommon and significant, like all those he had bestowed upon himself and his belongings.”²⁹ And he names his nag Rocinante (antes+ Rocin) or the beforenag: the nag that comes before all others.

Furthermore, the importance of naming for Don Quijote is that he hopes that his adventures, like those of the chivalric hero (and the epic hero before him with whom he also identifies) will be written about. Thus he prepares for each of his “heroic” actions with tremendous care because he is anticipating how they will be represented by the “sage” who will write the history of his exploits. He says to himself “Happy the age, happy the time, in which shall be made known my deeds of fame, worthy to be molded in brass, carved in marble, limned in pictures, for a memorial for ever.” For Don Quijote, it seems that the only way to be “real” is to be in literature. Don Quijote functions as an author within the novel because he is writing the story of his own adventures

²⁸ Ibid, p. 303

²⁹ Ibid.

for Part II. But he has no desire to be a “counter-author”—all he would like would be to obey the conventions of the romance genre to the letter. This, his greatest desire, is indeed impossible.

Significantly, and hilariously, Don Quijote’s adventures in Book I are published in his own lifetime and are brought to his attention during the action of Part II. Thus he becomes the living hero of the book of his own lifetime and he is given a chance to read about himself. There is of course a further irony that his representation in literature doesn’t live up to his expectations. The Sage’s representation of him is far too prosaic for his taste. In Don Quijote’s view it lacks unity of action with all those tiresome interpolated tales, and above all doesn’t idealize the hero (himself) enough. Don Quijote feels he has been misunderstood, and therefore misrepresented.

It is not only the language of the fantastical and anachronistic features of the romances that Cervantes parodies with Don Quijote’s madness. It is worth emphasizing that Cervantes was well versed in the treatises on humors of his time and the ideas and language from these works is also targeted. His work El Licenciado Vidiera, for example, has striking similarities to the contemporary case history published by a Dr. Ponce describing a patient who believed he was transformed into a glass vase. The parallel between Dr., Juan Huarte of San Juan’s 1575 Examen de Ingenios with its contempt of superior intelligence (*ingenio*) touched with madness and Don Quijote, also known as “el ingenioso hidalgo” is suggestive. Carlos Otero draws attention to the relation between Cervantes and Huarte, locating them in the “rationalist out-group” of 16th Century Spanish intelligentsia and suggesting the hypothesis that with the repressive, conformist atmosphere of 16th century Spain, a person had to be a bit mad merely in order to exist.

Huarte delineates a profile which fits, with few exceptions, the

description Cervantes gives us of Don Quijote. Some of the characteristics of madness he describes are sharpness of imagination, courageousness, arrogance, generosity, shamelessness, wit and most importantly: *flesh that is lean and tough with extremely broad veins*. When Don Quijote shows his hand to Maritornes and the innkeeper's daughter in Bk I, ch.43, he calls attention to "*the contexture of the sinews, the network of the muscles, the breadth and spaciousness of the veins*." Another similarity is that Huarte attributes the cause of this madness to an extreme *dryness of the brain*, and as we know, Don Quijote loses his wits because reading *causes his brain to dry out*.

Another important work of Cervantes's time is the treatise of Jeronimo de Mondragon, "In whose part is demonstrated that those who are considered by the world to be sane are mad, and therefore deserve no praise. In the second part is demonstrated how those commonly held to be mad are worthy of great praise." This also directly recalls Erasmus's "In Praise of Folly" and the importance of the concept of the "wise fool." Mondragon was very influential and also discusses madness as demonstrating a superior mental faculty which enables the patient to generate new ideas and concepts. For both Mondragon and Huarte, intelligence (*ingenio*) is a generative faculty, and he derives the Spanish *ingenio* from Latin *ingenerare*, to engender. The important corollary of this is his association of the superior *ingenio* with madness, thus inverting the usual relationship between intelligence and madness.

Cervantes's familiarity with these treatises must be taken, as I believe the allusions are intended, ironically. While Don Quijote goes mad not just from reading but because his "brain dries out" and, he then like a textbook case, regains his sanity when the dampness of melancholy settles in to rehydrate his brain (!) somehow, it doesn't seem likely that Cervantes would have taken these medical treatises literally. On the other hand, he saw their

great possibilities for fiction. By using these “medical explanations” for Don Quijote’s madness, Cervantes is making an ironic stab at the weak attempts at verisimilitude that were to be found in the romances.

The irony of Don Quijote’s itinerary lies in the discrepancy between his exalted sense of epic destiny and his experience of aimless wandering. Sadly, Don Quijote’s fate is to lead an episodic contingent modern prosaic life rather than a poetic, providential, classical, dramatic life. Aeneas, with whom the knight identifies, sails from Carthage in pursuit of his destiny: Don Quijote, fails to reach Zaragoza, and in the end merely returns home. His madness doesn’t lie in his desire to overcome the limitations of his existence, but in trying to be an ideal type, in wanting his life to possess an epic significance. In Part II, when his friends show him Part I of *The Adventures of Don Quijote*, he is disappointed because he finds that his experience has been reduced from poetry to history. His foiled claim for an epic poetic unity and coherence in his life merely shows that history has no plot, but only disparate episodes.³⁰

THE OTHER READERS

Don Quijote is not the only character affected by the romances. The effects of the romances on characters from all walks of life can be seen throughout the *Quijote*. One of the most telling episodes is the discussion that takes place at the inn.³¹ The innkeeper Palomeque, his family, and Maritornes (the chambermaid) are all illiterate yet great enthusiasts of the chivalric romances of which they have “two or three”. During the harvest, Palomeque

³⁰ Macphail.

³¹ DQ, P.II, chapter XXXII p.256

tells the priest, the inn becomes a social center and there is usually someone who knows how to read. Thus thirty or more people will gather round and enjoy listening to the stories. Each character, except the innkeeper's wife who has no time for pleasurable nonsense, derives a different type of pleasure from the romances. Maritornes exemplifies the sensual identification with the romantic and physical aspects of the tales:

Yo tambien gusto mucho de oír aquellas cosas, que son muy lindas, y más cuando cuentan que se está la otra señora debajo de unos naranjos abrazada con su caballero, y que les está una dueña haciéndoles la guarda, muerta de envidia y con mucho sobresalto. Digo que todo esto es cosa de mieles.

(I also enjoy hearing about those things, they are indeed lovely, and more so when they tell that there is a lady under the orange trees in an embrace with her knight, and a lady in waiting is standing guard keeping watch for them, green with envy and all jumpy. I say that this is the sweetest stuff.)

The innkeeper's daughter also enjoys listening to the romances being read aloud, although *she can't understand them* ("aunque no lo entiendo, que recibo gusto en oílo). Her response is also inspired by the sentimental and affective aspects of the tales that she enjoys best: the lamentations of the knights who are away from their ladies, which stir such pity in her that she often cries upon hearing them. Maritornes and the daughter's responses to fiction foreshadow the future female audience of sentimental romantic fiction such as *Emma Bovary*. The parallel is (perhaps not coincidentally) striking if we compare

their responses to the chivalric romances to Emma's response to the sentimental romances:

Ce n'étaient qu'amours, amants, amantes, dames persécutées
s'évanouissant dans des pavillons solitaires...forets sombres, troubles
du coeur, serments, sanglots, larmes et baisers, nacelles au clair de
lune...

They were all about love, lovers, sweethearts, persecuted ladies fainting
in lonely pavilions...sombre forests, heart-aches, vows, sobs, tears and
kisses, little boatrides by moonlight...³²

However, these are tame responses compared to what is by far the most interesting reaction to the romances : that of the innkeeper himself. Palomeque echoes Don Quijote in his perception of, and response to the romances. First of all, as a man he also identifies with the knights, and he is very nearly propelled to imitate them himself when he hears about their deeds: "...de mí sé decir que cuando oyo decir aquellos furibundos y terribles golpes que los caballeros pegan, que me toma gana de hacer otro tanto, y que querría estar oyéndolos noches y días" (...for myself, I can say that when they talk about those furious and terrible blows that those knights strike, I myself want to get in there, and I could listen for days and nights on end.) Not only do these action packed moments stir a mimetic desire in Palomeque, he also truly believes (not least because they bear the stamp of official government approval), that the romances are histories, not invented stories.

³² *Madame Bovary* p. 96., Translation from *Madame Bovary* translated by Paul de Man (new York: W.W. Norton, 1965) p. 29

Palomeque is furious with the priest for saying that Don Quijote's "madness" is to be blamed on the romances, for saying that the books are full of lies and nonsense, and for wanting to burn the few books that he keeps at the Inn. In Palomeque's defense of the romance's veracity, he first brings into play the Royal Council saying that the "gentlemen" of the Royal Council are not the type of people to give license to lies and nonsense, and battles and spells that would make someone go mad. Palomeque, in this, shows a respect for "officialdom" and authority that has clearly gone awry. From his point of view, what is official is real and true. On the other hand this is a jab at the Spanish authorities who must have authorised (without authority nothing, of course, could be printed in inquisitorial Spain) the printing of the fabulous romances while all the time condemning them as immoral. In Part I, 50, in his debate with the Canon Don Quijote uses a similar defence of the romances on the grounds of their official sanction and, in his view, verisimilitude:

...los libros que están impresos con licencia de los reyes, y con aquellos a quien se remitieron, y que con gusto general son leídos y celebrados de los grandes y de los chicos, de los pobres y de los ricos, de los letrados e ignorantes, de los plebeyos y caballeros, finalmente de todo género de personas, de cualquier estado y condición que sean ¿habían de ser mentira, y más llevando tanta apariencia de verdad, pues nos cuentan el padre, la madre, la patria, los parientes, la edad, el lugar y las hazañas, punto por punto y día por día, que el tal caballero hizo, o caballeros hicieron?

(...the books that are printed with the kings' license, and with that of the men to whom they were submitted, and that with general pleasure are read and celebrated by adults and children, rich and poor, cultivated and

ignorant, plebeians and knights, and finally by every type of person, no matter from what status or situation: Could they be full of lies? Especially as their appearance is so true, telling us all about the father, the mother, the country of origin, the relatives, the age, the place, the feats, and blow by blow,, day by day what such a knight, or such knights, did?)

The priest, who after his experience with Don Quijote is horrified that Palomeque could take such nonsense as truth (Palomeque even believes –as historical fact-- the tale of Felixmarte de Hircania cutting five giants in half in one blow!) tells him that he hopes he won't follow in the footsteps of Don Quijote. Palomeque's reply, an attempt to defend his mental clarity on the issue, only reiterates his confusion. "Eso no...que no seré yo tan loco que me haga caballero andante, que bien veo que ahora no se usa lo que se usaba en aquel tiempo, cuando se dice que andaban por el mundo esos famosos caballeros." (Not that...I'm not so crazy as to become a chivalric knight since I can see perfectly that fashions have changed since the time those famous knights roamed the world.)

Palomeque thinks he sees things as they are, for he realises that the adventures of the knights errant are anachronistic, but there's no convincing him of the fictionality of the romance-- that they *never* happened. He fails to see that these were not true histories from another time (i.e.the middle ages) but instead invented stories that never took place. The innkeeper's outlook on fiction shows how easily fact and fiction were intermingled in people's imaginations in sixteenth century Spain. Of course, he is uneducated, however,

for Cervantes the lower class (“el vulgo”) in a sentiment expressed repeatedly throughout his work, was not defined by its economic status but by its ignorance. As Don Quijote says to the Caballero del Verde Gabán: “Todo aquel que no sabe, aunque sea señor y principe, puede y debe entrar en número de vulgo.” (“He who lacks knowledge, even if he is a gentleman prince, can and should be considered a member of the *vulgo*”)³³ Does the converse also stand true in the world of the *Quijote*—that he who is educated can be *discreto* no matter what his lineage?

Out of all the readers and or listeners of the romances we are presented with in the novel (Palomeque, his daughter, Maritornes, the priest, the barber, the canon, Dorotea, the characters at the ducal palace, Don Quijote), only the Canon and Don Quijote (sometimes) can be excluded from ranks of the *vulgo*. The canon is perfectly aware of the difference between books of history and chivalric romances. Don Quijote, though temporarily mad is also cultivated enough to make this and many other distinctions. However, if the readers of the romances are presented as foolish, they are all more reasonable than the characters that haven’t read any at all. Don Quijote’s niece and housekeeper, while well-intentioned, would be happy to burn all of Alonso Quijano’s books indiscriminately and are fanatically superstitious. They indeed represent a type of mentality as dangerous to literature as any official Inquisition. Their

³³ DQ, II, 16.

zealousness in building the fire to destroy the “evil” library brings to mind the adage that good intentions pave the road to hell.

If the romances are presented as indiscriminately conceived fiction, short of burning them there is only one solution: to produce discriminate readers. Cervantes recognised the need for a new type of prose literature as much as he did for a new type of reader for prose fiction. There was no group of elite *discretos* awaiting to appreciate the subtleties of his contribution. There was only the possibility of the individual reader who might reflect upon the discussions and aesthetics that formed the *Quijote*. This education of the reader through a work of fiction --which he achieves by having his protagonist embody an indiscriminate reader--is one of the great contributions of Cervantes in the *Quijote*. It is the basis of his poetics of prose for what he does, as we will shortly see, is to effectively convert prose --the language of history and of impertinent fictions i.e. the romances--into a medium that is unmistakably appropriate for fiction. In the process, he overhauls the role and status of the popular chivalric romances and of their readers.

THE DIALOGUE WITH THE CANON

The Canon is not only the best reader (and we will shortly see what “best” means) in the *Quijote*, he is also Cervantes’s spokesman for a poetics of the novel. Up until now, we have seen the very complex web of literary ideas that may have formed Cervantes’ aesthetic principles, now we will look at how these are explicitly presented in the dialogue between Don Quijote and the Canon of Toledo which begins in Book I, 47. From all his work, this dialogue is Cervantes’s most complete and profound statement of a theory of literature.¹

The practical focus of this dialogue is the romances of chivalry. Initially, the dialogue seems to support and reiterate the declared attack on the romances from the prologue to Part I. The Canon, in a reasoned attempt to talk some sense into Don Quijote, is presenting an attack on the romances. However, this attack is not a demand for the elimination of the genre, but for a purification of it. The Canon envisions *a new kind of prose fiction* which could eliminate the flaws which moralists and classicists attacked in the romances, and adhering to the dominant Aristotelian aesthetic criteria, would continue to produce the pleasure of variety upon which its chivalric ancestor was based.

¹ Two of the best and most complete discussions of the dialogue are to be found in the following works. Alban Forcione’s *Cervantes, Aristotle, and the Persiles* and E.C. Reilly’s *Cervantes’ Theory of the Novel*

The Canon begins with the traditional moralistic censure: “Y según a mi me parece, este género de escritura y composición cae debajo de aquel de las fábulas que llaman milesias, que son cuentos disparatados que atienden solamente a deleitar y no a enseñar...”² (“As it seems to me, this genre of writing and composition falls under that of the fables they call *milesian* which are nonsensical stories that aim only to please, and not to teach...”)

As we have already seen, the idea that literature should be subordinate to the aims of the state and the church was popular, and effective, in this period. However the Canon seems most concerned with the aesthetic shortcomings of the romances. Throughout his critique, the his even temper, sense of humour, and erudite—yet never pedantic—views, make the Canon the most intelligent person in the *Quijote*. Though he admits that it is in the very nature of the genre to rely more on *delectare* than on *prodesse*, to him this does not excuse the romances, for even *delectare* can only be aroused by a work of literature if it observes certain rules, rules which the romances constantly violate. The Canon attacks the failure of the romances to satisfy the two main Aristotelian poetic principles of unity and verisimilitude. Structurally, he points out, the romances are a mess:

No he visto ningún libro de caballerías que haga un cuerpo de fábula entero con todos sus miembros, de manera que el medio corresponda al principio y el fin al principio y al medio , sino que los componen con tantos miembros, que más parece que llevan intención a formar una quimera o un monstruo que a hacer una figura proporcionada.

² I, 47. P. 386. My analysis of the debate with the Canon follows, in parts, closely along the lines of Forcione's. However, while he is more concerned with elucidating a poetics in the *Quijote* insofar as it informs how the *Persiles* is composed, I consider the debate's relevance to the *Quijote* itself.

(I have never seen the plot of a chivalric romance built like a body, with all its limbs, with the middle corresponding to the beginning, and the end to the beginning, and beginning to the middle. Rather, they are composed of so many limbs, that they look more as if they are trying to represent a chimera or some monster, than to be a well-proportioned figure.)

The Canon cannot find pleasure in books that are ruled by disproportion and have no respect for harmony (*concordancia*). Furthermore, to move on to the second principle, their complete disregard of verisimilitude is an insult to his intelligence as a reader. He says that he has been unable to ever read a romance from start to finish (though he has read the beginnings of many) because the pleasure they offer is *false*. Thus they appeal only to the basest imagination. Let's see the kind of falseness which is opposed to verisimilitude.

¿qué hermosura puede haber, o qué proporción de partes con el todo y del todo con las partes en un libro o fábula donde un mozo de diez y seis años da una cuchillada a un gigante como una torre, y le divide en dos mitades?

(What beauty can there be, what proportion of parts to the whole and of the whole to the parts, in a book or story in which a sixteen year old youth cuts a giant as big as a tower with his knife, and splits him in two?)

There are many more examples given—all more ridiculous and comic than the last. But the point can be illustrated by the example cited above: these tales are full of fantastical nonsense that indeed challenge the reader's ability to suspend his disbelief. It musn't be forgotten that even Don Quijote, the most ready, willing, and able reader the romances have known, used to lie awake all night trying to disentangle the chaotic nonsense he read in his books, and that he was never

convinced by the knight Belianis's ability to receive 101 mortal blows and remain unscathed!³

The Canon is prepared to defend his views and he anticipates the obvious rebuttal to his critique of the romances' lack of verisimilitude:

Y si a esto se me respondiese que los que tales libros que componen los escriben como cosas de mentira, y que así no están obligados a mirar en delicadezas ni verdades, responderles-ía yo que tanto la mentira es mejor cuanto más parece verdadera, y tanto más agrada cuando tiene más de lo dudoso y posible. *Hanse de casar las fábulas mentirosas con el entendimiento de los que las leyeren*, escribiéndose de suerte que, facilitando los imposibles, allanando las grandeas, suspendiendo los ánimos, admiren, suspendan, alborocen y entretengan, de modo que anden a un mismo paso la admiración y la alegría juntas, y todas estas cosas no podrá hacer que el huyere de la verisimilitud y de la imitación, en quien consiste la perfección de lo que se escribe.

(If to this someone replied that these books are composed as fiction, and that they are thus exempt from the obligation of paying attention to fine points and truths, I would reply that fiction is better if it appears to be true, and that it is more pleasing when it is more truthful and possible. *Fictional plots must espouse the understanding of those who read them*, they must be written in such a way that makes possible the impossible, that deflates excesses, that keeps the mind in suspense, that astonishes, stimulates, delights, and entertains in such a way that admiration and pleasure walk hand in hand. And all these things cannot be achieved by an author who flees verisimilitude and imitation, the two ingredients of perfection in writing)

This passage is tremendously important. First because it demands that prose fiction—to save itself, to elevate itself to an art form-- adhere to the poetic principles of imitation and verisimilitude. And secondly, the Canon makes clear that fiction operates as a relationship between author and reader, and that if this

³ DQ, I, 1 p.22

delicate relationship(i.e. suspension of disbelief) is not respected, the work will never achieve its potential. And here we come to the Canon's most important ideas. Despite all the flaws he finds in the romances, he believes that the genre of prose fiction has potential: *more potential than any other genre to date*.

Never before, in his opinion, has there been a genre capable of offering a writer such freedom —“...daban largo y espacioso campo por donde sin empacho alguno pudiese correr la pluma” (they offered the writer a wide and open field along which his his pen could flow unhindered) , of accomodating such variety (of theme, place, events, etc.). In a prose novel there are no bounds to the erudition an author can incorporate—he can talk about any subject or body of knowledge under the sun from astrology to affairs of state. Furthermore, he can incorporate all the virtues of antecedent works(he can show Ulysses's cunning, Aeneas's piousness, etc.)As the Canon puts it, the new genre seems even better than classical poetry. Classical poetry could not do the converse and have the modern novel embedded within it!In the Canon's vision of the new genre, its very newness ceases to be a disadvantage and may actually have benfits. Perhaps, he seems to concede, this new genre of the romance purged of its flaws, would not be such a bad thing.

In conclusion, the Canon's analysis of the romances, their shortcomings, their potential, is not only quite favorable in the end, it is quite radical. This is the final vision of the genre:

Y siendo esto hecho con apacibilidad de estilo y con ingeniosa invención, que tire lo más que fuere posible a la verdad, sin duda compondrá una tela de varios y hermosos lazos tejida, que después de acabada, tal perfección y hermosura muestre, que consiga el fin mejor que se pretende en los escritos, que es enseñar y deleitar juntamente, como ya tengo dicho. Porque la escritura desatada destes libros da lugar a que el autor pueda mostrarse épico, lírico, trágico, cómico, con todas aquellas partes que encierra en sí las dulcísimas y agradables ciencias de la poesía y de la oratoria, *que la épica también puede escrebirse en prosa como en verso.*⁴

(Created with a gentleness of style and ingenious invention, it should aim as much as possible towards the truth, thus without a doubt it will compose a cloth woven of varied and beautiful threads, which when finished will show such perfection and beauty, that it will accomplish the highest goal of written works which is to teach and please jointly, as I have already pointed out. The freedom of the writing of these books gives the author room to show all his sides: epic, lyric, tragic, comic, along with all the facets of the sweet and pleasant sciences of poetry and oratory. *For epic may be written in prose as well as in verse.*)

The Canon's ideas are (true to Cervantes's constantly dialogical mind) a mixture of freedom and restraint. Restriction is the key word in literary composition, only through careful restrained writing can verisimilitude and imitation be successful. On the other hand, not subjected to metre like poets, nor constrained by subject, theme or any other generic convention, the author is free to exhibit the universality of his knowledge and—as long as it is done with restriction—the breadth of his imagination. The last statement, "*For epic may be written in prose as well as in verse*" may have been said before by Renaissance critical thinkers, but it has a particular significance in the context in which it appears. Taken with his penultimate statement (which mentions epic, lyric, tragic, etc.) we see a recapitulation of his entire discourse. He is defining a genre that would come from

⁴ My italics

the purification—according to the dictates of the Aristotelian-Horatian aesthetic criteria for the ideal epic--of the romance.

Times change, and art should change to accommodate the times for art, like language, is living. The Canon's ideas evoke the literary principles that the "moderns" had always used against the rigid classicism of the "ancients", and that Cervantes echoes again in *El Rufián dichoso* in reference to the *preceptos graves* :

Los tiempos mudan las cosas
Y perfeccionan las artes,
He dejado parte de ellos(the *preceptos graves*)
Y he también guardado parte
Porque lo quiere así el uso
Que no se sujeta al arte⁵

(Times change things
and perfect art
I've left some of them out (the *preceptos graves*)
And I've also kept some,
Because practice demands it thus
Since it is not ruled by art

Despite the Canon's astute arguments, Don Quijote's rebuttal also contains important insights and points to the virtues of the romances. First, he insists that they are enjoyed by one and all, including the learned reader. Secondly, he illustrates this by offering a narration, about the Knight of the Lake, in the romance style which aims to please both the *cultos* (the canon and the curate) and the *vulgos* (Sancho and the barber) in his audience. In his narration, Don Quijote indulges in a profusion of sensuous description, deliberately not respecting the

⁵ *El Rufián Dichoso* in *Obras Completas*, ed. A Valbuena Prat. Madrid. 1956. P. 343

Canon's precepts of unity and verisimilitude. Don Quijote thus reveals the weakness of an aesthetic theory that makes pleasure contingent on the reader's acceptance of the subject matter of a work of art as *literally* true.

This dialogue between Don Quijote and the Canon is full of allusions to topics of sixteenth century literary debate concerning the value of the romances. One of the arguments that Don Quijote uses in defence of poetry can be traced back to Homer and Virgil and had had a big comeback in the Renaissance: the analogy between the poem and the cosmos.⁶ The analogy envisions the poem as a mirror of the plenitude of the universe, and the position of the poet in relation to his work as analogous to that of the divine creator—or his agent, nature—before his creation. Don Quijote's Knight of the Lake is depicted in an underworld paradise defined by disordered order (*desatino con propiedad*, to use Cervantes's expression.) The artifice of the creation is emphasised in the descriptions: objects are described not in their simple presence but in their reality as products of their creator's hand. A series of past participles (the use of which was one of the features most admired in the *Quijote* by August Wilhelm Schlegel) attached to the objects described in his narration almost invariably points towards the existence of a creative agent, playfully conveying pleasurable images while defying the strict verisimilitude defended by the Canon.

⁶ Forcione, p. 118

Don Quijote describes what the Knight of the Lake sees in his adventure.

Over there: “una *artificiosa* fuente de jaspe variado y de liso mármol *compuesta*”⁷

(“an *artificial* fountain *made* of varied jasper and smooth marble”). Here he sees:

“otra, a lo brutesco adornada, adonde las menudas conchas de las almejas, con las torcidas casas, blancas y amarillas del caracol, puestas con orden desordenada, mezclados entre ella pedazos de cristal luciente y de contrahechas esmeraldas, hacen una variada labor de manera que el arte, imitando a la naturaleza, parece que la vence.”

(“another one, grotesquely adorned, upon which minute clam shells, along with twisted yellow and white snail houses, arranged in a disorderly fashion, mixed with bits of luminous glass and imitation emeralds, make up a varied piece of work so that art, imitating nature, seems to conquer it.”)

In celebrating artifice, Don Quijote is indirectly proposing the liberation of art from the mimetic theories (with an emphasis on verisimilitude). He further increases our awareness of a creative agent, and destroys the illusion he has set up (a common practice among the narrator-authors of the chivalric romances) by entering as a narrator (i.e. “If I could tell you now”, “as the stories tell it...”).

This narration recalls the traditional cosmic analogy of the poet’s creation, the emphasis on artifice in his fantastic descriptions showing that the poet in his created world is a corollary to the divine artificer before the macrocosm. The hand of the artist, imitating that of God’s creative agent, nature, can create a new reality superior to her products.

⁷ My italics

To appreciate the significance of Don Quijote's fountain-- and his introduction of the ancient topic of art vs. nature that appears frequently in Cervantes's works-- we must observe that the present historical moment was the eve of a full scale revolution in literature against the empirically and historically oriented notion of verisimilitude which the sixteenth century had developed. Don Quijote's proposed liberation of fantasy marked the path which much of the Spanish art of the next decades would follow under the name of *el barroco*. However "...if the literature which present-day historiography designates as baroque adopted the solution proposed by Don Quijote and various other surrogates of the creating artist in Cervantes's works, Cervantes himself does not in his writing adopt that solution".⁸ In the many interludes concerning literature, he is constantly writing about the theoretical problem, and the flights of fantasy with which his characters taunt their classical opponents are always subordinate to the problem. Cervantes's positive revolution against the strictures of classical literary theory was not toward an art based on the imaginary (i.e. Góngora) but towards an art based on historical everyday reality i.e. the *modern novel*.

Don Quijote's multifaceted rejoinder to the Canon (his narration with its fantastical and sensuous subject matter, amplification of detail, allusions to traditional doctrines, interruptions by the narrator, analogies between poet and God) points to the liberation of the artist from the aesthetic rules proposed by the Canon. These are all, of course, artistic freedoms that the authors of the chivalric

⁸ Forcione, p. 121

romances enjoyed, and my most accounts, abused. In general, classicists regarded this narrative freedom unfavourably, preferring the more limited intervention of the ancient models for narrative methods, Virgil and Homer, and reaffirming Aristotle's recommendation that the poet speak as little as possible in his own voice in his narration.

To recapitulate the main points of the debate, the Canon takes issue with the chivalric romances and their aesthetic shortcomings: their lack of unity, lack of verisimilitude, their failure to appeal to the higher faculties (those cultivated by the *culto* audience). He notes only briefly the perilous influence they can have on society. However, he recognises their capacity to produce pleasure and offer a varied subject matter, and thus proposes the creation of a new type of romance (an epic in prose) that would eliminate the flaws of the original, conform to Aristotelian aesthetic criteria, and at the same time preserve the appeal of variety and the marvelous so important in the success of the older romances. Like the Canon of Toledo, the neo-Aristotelians are "short-sighted, preferring to confine that artist's vision to the surfaces, on which all lines and details appear in sharp relief."⁹

Don Quijote's celebration of the creative powers of the artist or artificer and his ironic intervention as narrator between his story and his audience, suggest that for Cervantes the artist stands beyond all the norms and restrictions by which

⁹ Forcione, p. 125

criticism would control his creative powers. The artist stands as God above both his creation, and his audience.

The normative side of Cervantes's aesthetic theories has been stressed by scholars, and this emphasis has overlooked the fact that the polarity marking his attitudes toward nearly every province of human experience is also present in his attitudes towards art. The assertion that he is writing the *Quijote* with the intention of ridiculing the romances of chivalry, his repeated remarks about the absurdities of that genre, his attacks on the Spanish National Theatre, his disparaging words on the capacities of the *vulgo* (who liked the romances and Lope de Vega's theatre) his repeated homage to Aristotelian-Horatian concepts of literary theory, his sympathetic treatment of the Canon, and his general submission to the Canon's mode of thinking (especially in his *Persiles*) have led to a one sided view of his aesthetics. This view has been at the expense of a recognition of Cervantes's conscious and articulate suspicion of the mode of thinking and theoretical principles that underlie the Aristotelian critical movement and his sympathy for the artistic freedom which the romances represented.

In the final analysis, the chivalric romances are parodied, yet they offer many salvageable qualities. Moreover, they are the basis for the *Quijote*. Flaubert's treatment of the novels of Sir Walter Scott, which were heavily influenced by the chivalric romances, in *Madame Bovary* is clearly an echo of this technique of the *Quijote*. Yet years later, Flaubert wrote to a friend admitting—in a confessional tone—that he still couldn't help enjoying Walter Scott, that the

novels were just too pleasurable. Somewhere along these lines must have been Cervantes's attitude towards the romances.

The multi-dimensionality of Cervantes's irony is in full force in Don Quijote's response to the Canon, where a serious rejoinder to conventional attacks on the romances of chivalry is contained within what is obviously a parody of that very genre. Cervantes reiterates throughout his works that absurdities and extravagances are only pleasing when they have a purpose. Don Quijote's over the top narrative about the Knight of the Lake has a purpose, but it is nonetheless absurd. We have been trained to discriminate, like the Canon. The standard of objectivity by which to measure the excessiveness of Don Quijote's envisioned romance is never absent.

After the Knight of the Lake sees all the fountains, he comes upon a beautiful castle full of beautiful ladies where there is a most sumptuous feast laid out. The resultant, deflating travesty is that after the feast he pushes back his chair to relax and clean his teeth with toothpicks! This makes us wonder whether the demented Don Quijote (and above him Cervantes) is playing with his audience, or ironically enjoying the detail of a reality in the world of fantasy. In this, Don Quijote momentarily leaves the conventional polemic over the romances behind, and verges on the awareness of the paradoxical appeal of the fantastic precisely in its painful juxtaposition to the real which two centuries later the Romantic movement was to discover and celebrate in Cervantes, its creator.

Cervantes's parody is protean. It ridicules a literary genre and yet bears within itself a reasonable defence of that genre directed to its most eloquent critics. The *Quijote* preserves and reshapes the world of romance by paradoxically sharpening its fantastic contours against the cold background of reality. The world Cervantes builds in prose contains a dizzying multiplicity of perspectives, all united by the inconclusiveness of his humour, the dissolving and all inclusive character described by Friedrich Schlegel as *Witz*—the fundamental character of his envisioned Romantic *universalpoesie*. Schlegel recognized that “This artfully ordered confusion, this delightful symmetry of contradictions, this wonderful alternation of enthusiasm and irony, which is alive even in the smallest parts of the whole, seems to me to be indeed an indirect mythology.”¹⁰

Friedrich Schlegel also saw his singular position within sixteenth century Spain: “Cervantes wrote unique prose; Lope de Vega's was raw and common, and Quevedo's bitter and harsh.”¹¹

¹⁰ Schlegel quoted by Forcione, p. 130

¹¹ Schlegel, Friedrich Von. From *Kritische Schriften*. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1971, pp. 256-258. Translation from Drake, Dana B. and Finello, Dominick L. *Criticism on Don Quixote (1790-1893)*. Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta, 1987.

I. Flaubert's Beginnings : The Lyric Romanticism of Adolescence

On a dit de Flaubert qu'il était un réaliste, un naturaliste; on a voulu voir en lui une sorte de chirurgien de lettres disséquant les passions e faisant l'autopsie du coeur humain; il était le premier a en sourire : c'était un lyrique.¹

(It was said of Flaubert that he was a realist, a naturalist ; people wanted to see him as a sort of literary surgeon, dissecting passions and performing an autopsy on the human heart. He was the first to smile at this, for he was an enthusiast of poetry.)

- Maxime Du Camp, *Souvenirs Littéraires*

Before considering how closely Flaubert's literary trajectory brings him –both in spirit and technique—to *Don Quijote*, the work that was a lifelong inspiration and eventually a model for his most famous work, *Madame Bovary*, it is interesting to see how and why he eventually came to write *Madame Bovary*. As is well known, this work would be, in many ways, revolutionary for the history of the novel. We must also consider that it was as radical in the context of Flaubert's own development. *Madame Bovary* is indeed a definite shift from the Romanticism of Flaubert's earlier works. The question that has been grappled with over the years is: A shift to what? Realism? This answer is difficult to support based on his work. Moreover, Flaubert himself denied vehemently that he was a realist.

My hypothesis is that *Madame Bovary* is a novel that Flaubert had been evolving towards for a number of years. It is the culmination of his developing techniques and ideas on the novel, and of his gradual mastery of an often

unwieldy medium: prose. More than a divergance, it represents a progression which he had sought since early on in his career. It is this evolution that I would like to focus on in this chapter.

Flaubert's habit of turning to great works to guide his own writing lasted throughout his lifetime. He notoriously imitated every work and style that he admired. His preferred authors would be limited to a mere few: Homer, Shakespeare, Rabelais, Goethe, and of course, Cervantes. As he held his contemporaries ("Il n'y a plus *rien* qu'une tourbe canaille et imbecile"²) --with the exception of his friend Louis Bouilhet --in absolute contempt, it was perfectly natural for him to withdraw into an idealized brotherhood of writers from other eras and places. Flaubert was a true comparatist when it came to literature: for him literature was either worthwhile (a tiny proportion) or worthless. Brilliance, in his eyes, transcended difference and unified those who posessed it. Therefore it was a much more pertinent quality to share than epoch or nationality. While plagued by often paralyzing moods and insecurities, Flaubert was not one to suffer from excessive modesty. When it came to whom to model himself after, he naturally chose the author whom he felt could best help him create a universal work of prose fiction.

His admiration of Cervantes led *Don Quijote* to become— and this is evident in his work beginning with *Madame Bovary*-- the definitive model of his career. Flaubert's connection to this work is profound and can be attributed

¹ Du Camp, *Souvenirs Littéraires*

to a number of motives ranging, as we will see, from a deep-seated personal affection for Cervantes's novel to a mature intellectual and aesthetic affinity. By briefly tracing the literary masters and models that shaped Flaubert's youth-- and considering why and how he outgrew them to search for his own route-- we will see how experience pre-disposed him to Cervantes's lessons. Turning his attentions to the novelistic technique of *Don Quijote* when he did was a logical and practical step in his search for an aesthetic route that would allow him to create a singular work of his own.

It was Flaubert's experience of trial and error with the novel form that eventually enabled him to recognize that the answers to his greatest literary quandaries were at his disposal in the very work he loved as a child: *Don Quijote*. Ironical though it may seem, *Madame Bovary* is simultaneously his most original work so far, and his best imitation of a pre-existing work. In writing *Madame Bovary* Flaubert found his own way and joined the ranks of *quixotic* disciples (such as Goethe) he has so admired. In finding his way, moreover, he chose a singularly *quixotic* route: imitation. What is important about Flaubert's relationship to *Don Quijote* is that it is the first work he imitates profoundly-- in the sense that he doesn't imitate *a part* of it (i.e. style, tone, etc.). As we will see, he in fact penetrates to the novel's unifying technique and rehabilitates this for his own use.

² *Corr.* V.II. Letter to Louise Colet, September 22, 1853, p.436.

An author's first attempts at literary creation are not always of the foremost importance—especially in a study such as the present one in which the focus is a great novel from a more mature point in his career. However, Flaubert's early period, the time when he wrote his *oeuvres de jeunesse*, bears consideration as it reveals a great deal about his evolution as a writer. His early works may seem to be of slim interest in and of themselves from a literary point of view (aside from *Novembre*) since they are generally rather undiluted imitations of popular styles of the time. Nevertheless, many of his ideas about literature were conceived—if not refined—when he was merely an adolescent. Furthermore, Flaubert practically withdrew from life at the young age of twenty-two after suffering a series of nervous crises which impeded him (to his great delight) from continuing his law studies in Paris. From that point on, with some exceptions (he would still take his famous trip to the *orient* and have a long relationship—albeit largely by correspondence-- with Louise Colet after this “retirement”) his existence was largely cut off from earthly passions. From 1842 onwards he had few, if any, worldly concerns to distract him from writing--as he himself happily proclaims in 1845: “ni la richesse, ni l'amour, ni la chair”³. This freedom allowed him to devote his passion and energy exclusively to the study and creation of literature.

³ Flaubert, Gustave, *Correspondence*. V. I, Edition établie, présentée, et anotée par Jean Bruneau.(Paris: Gallimard, 1973). Letter to Albert Poittevin, 13 Mai.

It is significant that Flaubert—anticipating Proust-- decided at a certain point that his isolation and withdrawal from life were necessary to the process of literary creation. It would seem that in his mind, it is impossible for the artist to simultaneously represent life *and* live. Flaubert, seizing, as it were, the opportunity presented by his nervous condition, *converts* to non-living as much as St. Augustine converted to Christianity (or as much as Don Quijote converts to knight-errantry). Of course Flaubert's conversion is not religious, but of an aesthetic nature. The pre-and post "conversion" Flaubert can be clearly delineated by his works--we need go no further than to compare, for example, the fervently romantic first-person narrator of the early spontaneously written *Mémoires d'un fou* (1838) to the determined impersonality of the narration in the carefully composed *Madame Bovary* (1856).

His renunciation of "living life" (as he had until then, like most people, with illusions about love, action, passion, etc.) in favor of representing it, marks a great division both in Flaubert the writer and Flaubert the man. Nevertheless, the significance of the impact of the young Flaubert's life on the mature Flaubert's work cannot be underestimated. Who is the inspiration for the later works—and specifically for *Emma Bovary*-- if not the young romantic Flaubert?

In 1846, after “retiring” he wrote to Louise “... celui qui vit maintenant et qui est moi, ne fait que contempler l’autre qui est mort.”⁴ This statement may very well be true of his life, but not of his art: for it was precisely “l’autre” who inspired his great literary masterpieces. As René Dusmenil describes it, Flaubert never changed from his youthful self—he merely spent the rest of his life refining himself: “...un homme nouveau naît en lui; mais cet homme là ne vivra, désormais, que de tous les chers souvenirs amassés par l’autre.”⁵ How could he change if no further experiences would affect him?

I argue that in order to understand *Madame Bovary* (and indeed his subsequent works) it is necessary to become familiar with the young Romantic Flaubert and to understand his strong residual presence in later novels. His early works, readings, and thoughts on literature foreshadow the nature of his later works.

This close study of Flaubert’s affinity with, and separation from the Romanticism bandied about in the France of his youth illuminates what he saw as the debased nature of this romanticism. After he retires from life, his work is no longer Romantic --in the sense of Romanticism current in France during his youth-- because his approach to writing is no longer Romantic in that sense. However, as we will see, his subject matter --because it is culled from his youthful life—is taken from his youth: even in *Madame Bovary*. The Romantic

⁴ Corr. V.I. Letter to Louise Colet, August 27, 1846.

⁵ Desmenil, Rene. *Flaubert, L’Homme et l’oeuvre*. (Paris: Descleede Brouwer, 1932).

attitudes and literary conventions Flaubert embraced wholeheartedly as an adolescent are the ones he parodied in *Madame Bovary*: glorified subjectivity, emotional outpourings, unrestrained idealism and fantasy.

EARLY READINGS

I would like to establish how important the repercussions of Flaubert's readings are on his work. Each different phase in his reading tastes has a characteristic effect on what, and how, he chooses to write. As we will see, this pattern remains true throughout his life, making it all the more significant that he starts his life with *Don Quijote* and again immerses himself in Cervantes's great work before and during the composition of *Madame Bovary*.

Flaubert's love of literature was initially inspired by a children's edition of *Don Quijote*⁶ which was read aloud to him so often that he knew the tale by heart, and which he kept for the rest of his life. This edition for children was obviously abridged and amongst the missing sections were most of the interpolated tales including one of the best know, "El Curioso Impertinente". This fact indicates that Flaubert must have also been familiar with *another* edition of Cervantes's novel because by the time he was ten years old because

⁶ Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *Le Don Quichotte en estampes ou les Aventures du heros de la Manche et de son ecuyer Sancho Pansa (sic) representees par 34 jolies gravures, avec un texte abrege de Florian*. (Paris: Eymety, Frugere, et Cie. 1828.)

on February 4th 1831 he mentions these interpolated tales in a letter to his friend Ernest Chevalier. The context in which he mentions these tales is significant. More than a mere childish scribbling, we see the projection of the future Flaubert. The following excerpt announces his vocation (writer), the genre he will devote himself to (the novel), and his greatest influence (Cervantes).

Je t'avais dit que je ferais des pieces mais non je ferai des Romans que j'ai dans la tete. Qui sont la Belle Andalouse le bal masque. Cardenio.Dorothée.la mauresque le curieux impertinent le mari prudent. (sic)⁷

I had told you that I would write plays, but no, I will write Novels that I have in mind. They are the Beautiful Andalucian woman and the masked ball. Cardenio. Dorothée. The arab and the tale of ill-advised curiosity and the prudent husband.

The “novels” that Flaubert “has in mind” are tales he knows from the *Quijote*.

In addition—though his young mind may not have consciously seen the ramifications of the story—the *Curieux Impertinent* (“El Curioso Impertinente”) is a story about what would become one of Flaubert’s favorite literary subjects: adultery.

Don Quijote can thus be established as the first literary model. At the age of ten Flaubert was already impressed by, and trying to follow in the footsteps of Cervantes. The significance of this influence will be addressed at length in the central discussion of *Madame Bovary*—as it is not until this work that its

⁷ Corr. V.I. Letter to Chevalier, February 4, 1831

influence becomes fully manifest. For now, let it suffice to say that it is known that Flaubert re-read *Don Quijote* in an un-abridged, new, French translation in 1847⁸, and that he never forgot that his literary life began with the reading of *Don Quijote*. This work—which as we will see is mentioned frequently in his *Correspondence*—is referred to only once in Flaubert’s fiction. In the second *L’éducation Sentimental* (1869) his childhood love of the book is commemorated by Frédéric saying “Et le Don Quichotte, dont nous colorions ensemble les gravures?”

By the time Flaubert received his *Baccalaureat es lettres* in 1840, his readings had been remarkably abundant and varied. He had been exposed to to works both ancient and modern, French and foreign, fiction, history, and philosophy. The curve of his readings is very clearly drawn up to this point: after *Don Quijote* come his readings of theatre, especially romantic drama—Hugo and Dumas were particularly admired by the adolescent Flaubert. He was also interested in history—especially of the Middle Ages—and lastly (chronologically) he had read a good deal of French literature (Rabelais, Montaigne, Rousseau, de Sade, Nodier, Balzac, George Sand, Alfred de Musset). He had read Goethe’s *Faust*, and has started to read Greek and Latin classical literature. Flaubert, a Romantic at heart, had laid the

⁸ Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *L’admirable Don Quichotte de la Manche*. Traduit par Damas-Hinard.(Paris, Charpentier, 1847.) Deux volumes in-12;catalogued at Canteleau-Croisset.

foundations of his classical culture and from 1840 on, he continued to study Greek and Latin on his own.⁹

Flaubert was not just reading in these years but also writing his first extremely Romantic works. Characteristic of his pronounced Romantic tendencies was his love of epigraphs. The evolution of his tastes in literature are illustrated by his choice of epigraphs which reflect his penchant for flamboyant Romanticism (Lamartine, Dumas, Hugo), which gives way to a mix of Classical and Romantic (Rabelais, La Bruyère, Shakespeare), which in turn gives way to Classical authors of antiquity and of the French sixteenth century (Ovid and Montaigne –epigraphs from these two used respectively for *Smarh*, and *Novembre*). All of these elements will crystallize in his later *grands romans*.

Jean Bruneau, in his study on Flaubert's beginnings ¹⁰claims that the influence of the lesser and greater French Romantic authors on Second Empire writers such as Flaubert and Baudelaire was enormous. Though Flaubert and his peers would receive a classical education not unlike the one received by the preceding generation, their impression of literature was different. They had grown up with the great and unprecedented successes—the “bestsellers” of Romantic literature.

⁹ See letters to his Classics professor Gourgaud-Dugazon, i.e. letter of January 22, 1942 in *Corr.V.I.*

¹⁰ Bruneau, Jean. *Les Debuts Litteraires de Gustave Flaubert 1831-1845*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1962.

Romantic literature was the popular literature of Flaubert's youth and he was not impervious to its sway. In his own first works, he passed through every great Romantic "mode" successively. While it does not serve this study to consider each of Flaubert's early works in detail¹¹, a general overview of his tendencies vis-à-vis French Romanticism is illuminating and is useful to keep in mind as we consider his evolution. For this brief look at his early development, I am using Jean Bruneau's chronological division of three overlapping cycles: historical; philosophical and fantastical; and autobiographical¹². Inspired by his history studies with one of his favorite instructors from the College de Rouen, Cheruel, Flaubert tried his hand at the historical tale from roughly 1834 to 1838, concluding this mode with the historical drama *Louis XI*. Simultaneously, he embarked on his "philosophical" and "fantastic" and "mystical" phase which embraced such works as *La fiancée et la tombe, conte fantastique* (1836); *Rage et impuissance, conte malsain pour les nerfs sensibles et les âmes dévotes* (1836)(a more Romantic title is difficult to imagine); *Passion et vertu, conte philosophique* (1837); *Smarh, vieux mystere* (1839) etc. The autobiographical cycle includes *Agonies, pensées sceptiques* (1838) ; *Mémoires d'un Fou* (1838) ; *Souvenirs, Notes et Pensées intimes* (1840-41) ; and *Novembre* (1842). Thus far, it is safe to say that Flaubert's evolution is quite typical of his generation and that his cycles

¹¹ For studies of this scope see Bruneau, above, and Dumesnil, below.

mirror those in the literary scene around him. Two popular literary journals of the era—*Musée des Familles* (Paris) and *Colibri* (Rouen) show a similar evolution in the types of stories published during these years : from historic, to fantastic, to autobiographical and "contemporary ".¹³

Mémoires d'un fou and Novembre

After having expressed his ideas on society and life aided by a real (historical) or invented (fantastical) storyline, Flaubert discovered a new "genre" : autobiography. He experimented with this form of expressing his views within the frame of his own experience, and modelled his attempts on the works of a few important authors : From the epigraph taken for *Novembre* « Pour niaiser et fantastiquer » we may gather that Montaigne's *Essais* were influential. In his *Correspondence* we can find the names of Rousseau (whom he discovers in 1838), Goethe's *Werther* (from which he borrows liberally in terms of technique and detail), Byron's *Childe Harold*, and Alfred de Musset's *Les Confessions d'un enfant de siècle*.¹⁴

¹² René Dumesnil uses a different, non-chronological system of classification for this period. He also takes into account three cycles: sentimental (predominantly autobiographical); philosophical; satiric and moral. See Dumesnil. *Flaubert, l'Homme et l'Oeuvre* p. 341-2

¹³ For an informative and detailed breakdown of the popularity of the different Romantic genres in France per these popular literary magazines, see Bruneau, Jean. *Les Débuts Littéraires de Gustave Flaubert 1831-1845*. pp. 73-76.

¹⁴ As we will see, Flaubert outgrows Musset absolutely. His later (1852) disparagement of Musset is indicative of the deep shift in his conception of literature's aims and techniques.

Flaubert had some very definite literary ideas at this point—ideas which are almost the converse to the approach he will bring to *Madame Bovary*. The first is that during this entire time Flaubert believes that the key to literary creation is to work without a plan of any sort. Calculated effects, outlines, etc.—any such logical strategies are perceived as being decidedly un-romantic. *Mémoires d'un Fou*, the author is proud to say, has been written spontaneously :

Je ne sais pas plus que vous ce que vous allez lire, car ce n'est point un roman ni un drame avec un plan fixe ou une seule idée préméditée... Seulement je vais mettre sur le papier tout ce qui me viendra à la tête, mes idées, mes souvenirs, mes impressions, mes rêves, mes caprices...¹⁵

I know no more than you what you are about to read, since this is not a novel nor a play with a fixed plan, nor does it have a single pre-meditated idea in it. I will simply put down on paper whatever comes into my head: my ideas, my memories, my impressions, my dreams, my whims...

The other predominant romantic characteristic of his autobiographical writings is the conflation of author and character. Flaubert cultivated, in this transitional phase, this confusion in his attempt to “bare his soul”. Thus the perpetual direct address to the reader, begging sympathy and understanding for the mad sufferings of the narrator’s soul -- a soul, steeped in suffering. Literature was just a more dramatic way to express his profound belief : « Je crois que l’humanité n’a qu’un but : c’est de souffrir. » Flaubert embraced the Romantic

¹⁵ Flaubert, *Oeuvres de Jeunesse*. (Paris: Louis Conard) 1910. t.I, p.484

connection between emotion and genius and seems to have enthusiastically adopted Musset's aesthetic (which he will regret later) of " Ah ! frappe-toi le coeur, c'est là qu'est le génie ".

If reason and planning were rejected at this stage, madness, on the other hand was highly valued as is illustrated by *Mémoires d'un Fou*.¹⁶ Classical " reason " was foresaken in favor of romantic " folie ".¹⁷ At the beginning of the work the narrator is aggressive towards the reader, almost as if he wants to scare off any bourgeois readers who may have accidentally picked up the book. Suggesting the banality of reason, and claiming that he is mad, he addresses the sane (read bourgeois) reader : " Un fou ! Et vous, lecteur, vous venez peut-être de vous marier ou de payer vos dettes?"¹⁸ Perhaps thinking that any reader unsympathetic to the ravings of a madman won't stick around to read on, the narrator's attitude quickly changes into one of intimacy and trust towards the "inner circle" of readers brave enough to read on. The dialogue the narrator tries to set up in *Mémoires d'un fou* makes it clear that literature for Flaubert is at this point primarily a revelation of the self. This specifically Romantic attitude entails the author's confiding in the readers, in the "happy few" to whom the work is directed. The hatred of society and the bourgeois drove Flaubert further towards literature seeking dialogue with the "soulmates" that

¹⁶ The praise of madness in this work is evocative of Goethe's *Werther* and Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly*.

¹⁷ This youthful "either/or" opposition of classical and romantic, reason and folly, will be synthesized in later works.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.485

he hoped would be his readers. In the following declarations, made just before beginning *Mémoires*, Flaubert states his belief that reason is “anti-poetic”, and we may be sure that at the time he meant this most earnestly:

O que j’aime bien mieux la poésie pure les cris de l’âme, les élans soudains et puis les profonds soupirs, les voix de l’âme, les pensées du coeur. Il y a des jours où je donnerais toute la science des bavards passés, présents, futurs, toute la sottise erudition des éplucheurs, équarisseurs, philosophes, romanciers, chimistes, épiciers, académiciens, pour deux vers de Lamartine ou de Victor Hugo, Me voilà devenu bien anti-prose, anti-raison, anti-vérité car qu’est-ce que le beau sinon l’impossible, la poésie si ce n’est la barbarie...¹⁹

*Oh, how much better I love pure poetry, the soul’s cries, its sudden swells giving way to deep sighs, the voices of the soul, the thoughts of the heart. There are days when I would give all the knowledge of charlatans past, present, and future; all the foolish erudition of the...philosophers, novelists, chemists, grocers, academics, for two lines by Lamartine or Victor Hugo. Clearly I’ve become decidedly anti-prose, anti-reason, anti-truth—for what is the Beautiful, if not the impossible, what is poetry, if not barbarity...?*²⁰

Yet despite the flamboyant romanticism in *Mémoires* – the earnest revelatory tone, the perpetual direct address to the reader, the complete lack of constraint in the composition—we can already see a glimmer of the author of *Madame Bovary*, the Flaubert that carried *Don Quijote* deep in his subconscious. It comes as no surprise that *Mémoires*, true to the spirit of *quixotic* works, should defy facile categories or reactions. Just as the sensitive reader is never fully convinced of Don Quijote’s madness—despite its *apparent* authenticity--*Mémoires* elicits a similarly ambiguous reaction which precludes us from

¹⁹ Corr. V.I. Letter to Ernest Chevalier of June 24, 1837. Pp. 24-25

dismissing it—even today-- as *mere* “romantic” madness. Shoshana Felman describes the work’s misleading and ambiguous nature:

The text is “romantic” to the hilt, but nevertheless sets out to attack the values and illusions of Romanticism: at once naïve and sophisticated, talky and declamatory, buzzing with awkwardness and intelligence, it disconcerts and ensnares readers, provoking them into becoming, in imitation or in reaction, either too ironic or too naïve. How can such a text be read? How is one to account for *both* its simplification and its sophisitication, both its irony and its faith?²¹

Couldn’t many of these same questions be asked about *Don Quijote* in its relationship to the chivalric *romances*?

Let’s not forget that if *Don Quijote* has many features of the chivalric romances—inconsistencies, errors, descriptions blatantly lacking in verisimilitude—it is because Cervantes put them there on purpose. Because part of the purpose of *Don Quijote* is to satirize the chivalric romances, Cervantes imitated the careless style of the romances in a *very carefully* planned way. The Flaubert of the *Mémoires* is clearly still standing with one foot deeply entrenched in the throes of French Romanticism, but he is already headed towards the impersonal irony that will become the emblem of his later work. This duality—the simultaneous veneration and ridicule of the impossible, of the *ideal*, of the *romantic* (in *Mémoires* of the madman’s desire to express his “soul”, in *Don Quijote* of the main character’s desire to be a

²⁰ All translations from the French are my own, unless otherwise noted. Some quotes are taken from Flaubert’s notebooks, and are left “as is” in the French original, i.e. with spelling irregularities and incomplete sentences.

chivalric knight) is the defining tension of the *quixotic* technique. Flaubert in *Mémoires* is already carving a place for disillusion alongside illusion.

Mémoires presents madness in much the same way that Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* does. This is a madness that designates as its opposite not sanity, but stupidity, that is played as a role to expose the idiocy of others (the non-mad). Madness is the character's uniqueness, his glorious "incivility" that separates him alone from the rest of the world. It is also the talent for invention, the madman —let's not forget that he is our narrator—is the figure for the artist.

After completing *Mémoires* Flaubert wrote, in 1839, an article entitled *Rabelais*, which further reveals his initial shift away from an all-embracing Romanticism and his search for new directions for himself and his style.

Rabelais...jette sur le passé un coup d'oeil plein de scepticisme et de moquerie—dans son satire il n'épargne ni la noblesse ni l'église, ni la royauté ni les hommes, ni Dieu. *Cervantes plus grave et plus pur refit l'oeuvre de l'Arioste et posant face à face la réalité et la raison à côté de la chevalerie folle amaigrie battu en toutes les rencontres il détruit piece à piece toutes les illusions de bravoure de générosité chevalresque* il n'est pas (sic) jusqu'à Shakespeare qu cependant tient au Moyen Age par tant des côtés ne nous montre dans Falstaff <peut-etre a son in su > le [defaut] ridicule des gens d'armes (sic) (my italics)²²

²¹ Felman, Shoshana. *Writing and Madness*. Translated by Martha Noel Evans, Brian Massumi and the author. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

²² Bruneau, p.262

Rabelais....looks upon the past skeptically and mockingly—in his satire he spares neither the nobility nor the church, neither royalty nor man, nor God. Cervantes, more serious and purer, remakes Ariosto's work by pitting reality and reason against a beaten, dilapidated and mad chivalry. Bit by bit he destroys the illusions of bravery and chivalric generosity. It is not until Shakespeare, who nevertheless holds up the Middle Ages in so many ways, that we are shown through Falstaff (perhaps unwittingly) the ridiculous failure of armed men...

What this passage indicates is that Flaubert already deeply admired the duality Cervantes has forged in his novel—how he has fused and juxtaposed reality/reason and illusion/folly. Flaubert knows that Cervantes mocks and he appreciates his humour, however he also sees the seriousness of *quixotic* mockery. The fact that he was analyzing *Don Quijote* in this way—at this point in his career— supports Felman's reading of *Mémoires*. Flaubert was headed —with determination—towards envisioning his own *quixotic* novel.

From 1838 to 1842 we have little intimate knowledge of Flaubert's thoughts. Between *Mémoires* and *Novembre* (1842) there are no more autobiographical novels, and his correspondence for this period is slim. However, he did keep a diary²³ which reveals the two objects of his adolescent fantasies: one the one hand he wants to experience a great love, on the other he wants to be a genius and to create great and original literature. As we already know, he is already very close to irrevocably sacrificing the former in favor of the latter. His incipient concern during 1840— which is crucial to his aesthetic

²³ Flaubert, Gustave. *Souvenirs, notes et pensées intimes*. Unpublished. 65 pp

future—is style. He seemed to suddenly realize that this was an all important element, and he noticed its absence from his former efforts:

*Ce qui me manque avant tout, c'est le gout: je veux dire tout; je saisis et je sens en bloc, en synthèse, sans m'apercevoir du détail...Le tissu, la contexture m'échappent, j'ai les mains rudes et je ne sens pas bien le moelleux de l'étoffe, mais je suis frappé de son brillant. Les demi-teintes ne me vont pas;... je manque de... de precision, point d'unité, du mouvement, mis point de l'invention, mais pas le moindre sentiment du rythme, c'est là ce qui me manque le plus, et surtout un style long pétri de prétention.*²⁴ (sic) (my italics)

(What I lack, above all, is taste. I mean this in every sense. I seize and feel the totality, synthetically, without perceiving details. The fabric and the contexture elude me, my hands are coarse and I can't feel the softness the fabric, though I am struck by its brilliance. Half-tints are not for me...What I lack is precision, the unifying point, movement, the order of invention, I haven't the least sense of rhythm, this is what I truly lack, and especially a style : one devoid of pretention.)

Though he “feels” it coming, he had not yet achieved anything close to a mastery of his style. The importance of this period is his alertness to the fact that style is key to prose, and that it does not come to the work spontaneously: it must be carefully cultivated by design. *Novembre*, the last work from this period, is a crucial transitional work as it marks a profound shift in his technique. The manuscripts from Flaubert's early works show that—in typical Romantic fashion-- he barely made any corrections or alterations in what he spontaneously wrote. Lack of premeditation, considered a virtue by the young Flaubert, would give way in later years to meticulous outlines and planning.

²⁴ Ibid.

Mémoires was typical of the former Flaubert (written effusively in an outpouring of creative energy), but *Novembre*-- written slowly and with great care-- marked a key point in his evolution towards maturity. Flaubert took two years to complete the work.

The story, based on Flaubert's love affair with Eulalie Foucaud de Langlade in Marseille in 1840, remained typically Romantic in that it is autobiographical and confessional. It was also inspired by Chateaubriand's *René*—a work which may have reinforced Flaubert's unrestrained romanticism, yet simultaneously had a positive influence on his prose style. Furthermore, thanks to the “courtisane au grand coeur” theme, the work inscribes itself in a long series of works dealing with similar subjects.²⁵ Thus, while still a derivative reflection of the times, the sources were much richer than in his previous works, and the strategic coherence of the inner structure (three distinct parts: 1) before Marie; 2) Marie; 3) after Marie) puts it in a category both entirely different from, and superior to, his other novels. This three part structure will reemerge as the symmetrical construction of *Madame Bovary*. And while *Novembre* is still far from the objectivity of his later novels, the author is much less visible than in previous works. He only addresses the reader directly ten times.

²⁵ As Bruneau points out p.321, virtuous courtesans are common in romantic literature (i.e. Hugo's *Marion Delorme*, Marion in Musset's *Rolla*, George Sand's *Isidora*, and *La Dame aux Camélias* by Alexandre Dumas, just to name a few.)

Like *Don Quijote*, *Novembre* is a novel that poses as a “found” “real” manuscript. Significantly, Goethe—who was also enormously influenced by *Don Quijote*-- was the first to use this device for an autobiographical work (*Werther*). In addition to the “found” manuscript device, we find another parallel to Cervantes’s work in the narration made by another character inserted in the middle of the novel. The beginning of Flaubert’s reflections on the art of the novel coincides with his initial appropriation of techniques used in the *Quijote*. Flaubert was learning to choose characteristic details, to combine the physical and the moral, to experiment with the technique of a scene. Two key scenes from *Novembre* --developed and enriched—will reappear in *Madame Bovary*: the scene at the opera, and the scene at the church.

To reiterate, Flaubert was slowly turning away from the Romanticism of his day—and trying to find his own style and voice-- in the following ways: he had abandoned “effusiveness” as a mode of creation and was planning his work more carefully; he was experimenting with narrative techniques; and he was thinking hard about the art of the novel—turning to two of his favorite lifelong masters: Cervantes and Rabelais. It is also important to note that he was moving away from straight autobiographical works. In a way, this shift is announced through the narrator at the end of *Novembre* in what is something like a farewell to the mode:

“...l’auteur allait entrer dans le monde, il aurait eu mille choses a nous apprendre, mais il s’est, au contraire, livré de plus en plus a une solitude austere, d’ou rien ne sortait...Ni dans sa conversation, ni dans ses lettres, ni dans les papiers que j’ai fouillés apres sa morte, et ou ceci se trouvait, je n’ai saisi rien qui dévoilait l’état de son ame à *partir de l’époque ou il cessa d’écrire ses confessions* ».(my italics)²⁶
...the author was going to enter the world, and he would have had a thousand things to teach us, but in the end he did quite the opposite and delivered himself increasingly to an austere solitude which yielded nothing...Nor in his conversations, nor in his letters, nor in his papers which I rummaged through after his death—and where this was found—did I find anything which could reveal the state of his soul after he stopped writing his confessions.

In a letter to Louise, Flaubert himself looked back at this time and designated *Novembre* as his “clôture de jeunesse”.²⁷

The Great Leap: *L’éducation sentimentale*

“Il faut s’habituer à ne rien voir dans les gens qui nous entourent que des livres”

- Letter to Ernest Chevalier, February 23, 1842

Chronologically, and artistically, we are rapidly approaching the conception of *Madame Bovary*. In 1843 Flaubert, in his first year of law school, began the first *L’éducation sentimentale*²⁸. This work is of central significance to our discussion for, as we shall soon see, it is in this work that he reveals the seeds

²⁶ Flaubert, Gustave. *Novembre*

²⁷ Corr. V.I. Letter to Louise Colet, December 2, 1846

²⁸ This youthful work is not to be confused with his great 1869 novel of the same title.

of his ideas on the art of the novel—ideas that are crucial in understanding his works, especially *Madame Bovary*.

In 1844 Flaubert experienced one of the decisive events of his life: his nervous/epileptic (different accounts conflict on the source of his fits) crises. It is really not clear whether his “crises” were a cause or an effect of his lifestyle. In a letter to Mademoiselle de Chantepie from 1857 he presented them as the latter: “...à vingt et un ans, j’ai manqué mourir d’une maladie nerveuse, amenée par une série d’irritations et du chagrins, a force de veilles et de colères.” In any event, they can only be retrospectively welcomed by literary history.²⁹ He abandoned Paris and his studies and was more or less “exiled” to Normandy for the rest of his life. This is the point at which his devotion to literature became all encompassing and largely supplanted human company. Love (his relationship with Louise Colet was based more on letters than on human contact) was something of the past. Love described in his works from this point on was mined from memory: in other words, from his Romantic youth.

He had ample time to read after his retirement from “the world” and a pronounced shift in his tastes can be noted. Contemporary French literature

²⁹ This is unfortunately not the view taken by Maxim Du Camp. In his *Souvenirs Litteraires* he contends that “Gustave Flaubert a été un écrivain d’un talent rare; sans le mal nerveux don’t il fut saisi, il eut été un homme de génie”. This unfortunate remark—which we can possibly attribute to jealousy since it is unanimously agreed that Flaubert’s great masterpieces come after his *crises*—must be acknowledged since Du Camp wrote one of the only first person accounts of Flaubert’s literary life. Nevertheless, this study does not agree particular declaration of Du Camp’s.

appealed less and less to him. His youthful enthusiasm for, amongst others, George Sand, Hugo, Dumas, Saint-Beuve was waning as the style and themes of French Romanticism seem dated and stale to him. This is illustrated by Henry, the protagonist in the first *L'éducation sentimentale*, who is a parody of belated and superficial Romanticism. As he would do for the rest of his career, Flaubert was beginning his struggle to separate himself, his essentially *romantic* self, from the worn out conventions of the *Romanticism* that he had embraced so unreservedly in his youth. This is an extremely important point as it is the theme of *Madame Bovary*.

At this point, Flaubert became truly obsessed with the style and “art” of writing. He became strictly discriminating and classicist in his tastes, and read voraciously always looking for heroic authors—such as Homer and Shakespeare-- from whom he could learn. Yet the first work to emerge from this period, the first *L'éducation sentimentale*, is, as he would later acknowledge, uneven. Flaubert hadn't yet conquered his impatience and the novel seems quickly written, and of changing inspiration and form (it begins with many tiny chapters—Chapter 4 is a mere fifteen lines—then shifts to disproportionately lengthy ones, etc.). He would look back on this novel as a messy affair sadly lacking in structure and coherence.³⁰

However, as mentioned above, this novel had a strong redeeming quality: it reveals a great deal about Flaubert's increasingly profound thoughts

on literature and his relationship to Romanticism. Both of these areas can be said to have taken a decidedly German turn at this point in his development. In one scene, M. Gosselin reads the author's names off the spines of the books on Henry's desk: "...Schiller, Hoerder (sic), Heller, Haller, Schlegel, Wogel, Hegel...". This detail is autobiographical for Flaubert, at this time, was also reading Goethe and Hegel, Schiller, and Hoffman.³¹ Furthermore, it is likely that the title *L'éducation sentimentale*, was taken from the German *lehrjahre* of Wilhelm Meister's years of apprenticeship. Flaubert's debt to Goethe did not go unnoticed, as we can see from the following anecdote offered by Maxim Du Camp:

Souvent il (Flaubert)...nous relisait des passages de *L'éducation sentimentale* ...Un jour je l'interrompis pour lui dire: "Prends garde, ce que tu viens de lire se trouve presque textuellement dans le *Wilhelm Meister* de Goethe." Il releva sa tête et riposta "Cela prouve que le Beau n'a qu'une forme."³²

(Often Flaubert read us passages from *L'éducation sentimentale*...One day I interrupted him to say "Watch out, because what you've just read can be found almost word for word in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*." He looked up at me and answered "That just proves that the Beautiful has only one form")

Despite Flaubert's proud and lofty denial, the similarities between the two works indeed exist. One need only look to the recit of the loves of Jules and Lucinde, and their similarity to those of Wilhelm and Mariane, to see Goethe's influence. Furthermore, Flaubert had also read Goethe's *Mémoires*

³⁰ *Corr. V.I.* Letter to Louise, January 16, 1852.

³¹ He may very well have—like Henry— also read Schlegel, Herder, etc. He probably did. However there is no record of this. Obviously Flaubert did not record every work he read so we simply cannot confirm that he read any other German thinkers aside from the ones indicated above.

(*Warheit und Dichtung*) and he clearly borrowed the named of his heroines—Emilie and Lucinde—from this work.

We can only speculate—since there is no explicit reference to this point—whether his admiration and understanding of *Don Quijote* was influenced *explicitly* by Goethe, Schiller, or the Schlegels—the very thinkers that put *Don Quijote*, not to mention the novel form--on the map as an important model of prose literature.³³ Nevertheless, the parallels between the visions of the novel of the Athaneum group—in particular Friedrich Schlegel, and Flaubert's conception of prose fiction are uncannily and profoundly similar. As we know, and it is not surprising given the major coincidences in their concepts, that both Friedrich Schlegel and Flaubert used *Don Quijote* as the model for their ideas on the novel. We already know that *Don Quijote* had an important place in Flaubert's development as a writer before he had even heard of any German thinkers. Nevertheless, we can be certain that Flaubert's exposure to the thought and work of the Athenaeum group (*Wilhelm Meister* was inspired by *Don Quijote* and written at the height of Goethe's obsession with this work) only enhanced his mature reading and use of Cervantes's masterpiece.

Aside from its explicit mention of these German thinkers, *L'éducation sentimentale* has a particularly interesting chapter—the last one-- in which

³² Du Camp, Maxim. *Souvenirs littéraires*. Paris: Hachette: 1906. T.I., p.221

³³ See chapter on QQ and early German Romanticism

Flaubert offers one of his clearest views on literature through the character Jules. His ideas are considerably sophisticated and are most likely influenced by the German ideas regarding prose and art in general which he was reading at the time. First, Jules revamps his tastes in reading *in order to improve his writing*. This is the Flaubertian guiding standard: to write well, one must first widely read well. If mediocre works are contagious, so are works of genius, thus one merely must discriminate. The taste for mediocrity is a weakness not to be indulged. Jules's technique for becoming a great writer is the same technique Flaubert follows himself—most explicitly as we will see-- in the direction he takes from Cervantes.

Petit à petit il se défit de ces prédilections niaises que nous avons malgré nous pour des oeuvres médiocres, goûts depravés qui nous viennent de bonne heure et dont l'esthétique n'a pas encore découverte la cause....Donc pour se guérir de cette manie, il s'adonna à l'étude des ouvrages offrant des caractères différents du sien, une manière de sentir écartée de la sienne, et des façons de style qui n'étaient pas du genre de son style...Ce qu'il aimait à trouver, c'était le développement d'une personnalité féconde, l'expansion d'un sentiment puissant...et il rechercha aussitôt la variété des tons, la multiplicité des lignes et des formes, leur différence de détail, leur harmonie d'ensemble.³⁴

(Little by little he rid himself of the foolish tastes that, despite ourselves, we have for mediocre works—depraved tastes that come upon us suddenly without any aesthetic reason. To cure himself of this folly, he turned to the study of works that differed in type from his own, that offered a way of feeling removed from his own, and that had a manner of style unlike the genre of his own style. What he delighted in finding in other works was the development of a fertile personality, the expansion of powerful emotion...and he also sought out tonal variety,

³⁴ Flaubert, Gustave *Oeuvres Complètes*. P.354

multiplicity of line and form, difference expressed in detail, and the achievement of overall harmony.)

That this method of searching out great literature exclusively as an education in writing was Flaubert's (and not just Jules's) chosen technique is supported not just by his own frequent imitation, but also by his advice to Louise. Flaubert guided and advised Louise, who was by no stretch as gifted nor as determined a writer as Flaubert, with great patience. His earnest and well-intended advice, which she undoubtedly did not follow, is what he himself practiced: "Sais-tu ce que tu devrais faire, ma vieille? C'est de prendre l'habitude religieuse, *tous* les jours, de lire un *classique* pendant au moins une bonne heure".³⁵

Jules turns to the great works in the hopes of bettering his style. He wants to penetrate the *principe* each of them in order to better his writing. First he wants to eradicate his early Romantic superfluities from his *prose* and achieving a pure and sonorous *style*.³⁶ Style—in a new, Hegelian³⁷ incarnation as being indivisible from substance-- from now on was central to Flaubert's conception of writing. Seeing "le Beau" and "le Vrai" as being merely different aspects of the same reality, he decided that each sentence of his prose would be as important in terms of form as it is in terms of content. This attention to style—in its beginning phases still at this time—would become an

³⁵ Corr., V.II. January 6, 1853

³⁶ OC, p.355

³⁷ Jean Bruneau points out the general influence of German philosophy on French Romanticism. Flaubert had become interested in Hegel thanks to Victor Cousin and Alfred le

obsession for Flaubert and will be perfected in *Madame Bovary*. On this point, his letters compliment the ideas he has his character Jules express.

Flaubert has also realized that the Romantic leaning to the fantastic and the overflow of imagination “....qui lui semblait autrefois un si vaste royaume du continent poétique...” suddenly “ne lui en apparût que comme une province.” The answer, as he saw it, was to mix the fantastic with—to ground it in-- the *real*. This notion was absolutely central to the novel according to Cervantes, who showed the weakness of works of prose built on fantasy alone (i.e. many of the Spanish chivalric romances).

Looking back on *L'éducation sentimentale* while at work on *Madame Bovary* he deplored its lack of style (“Comme c’est inexperimenté de style, bon Dieu!”³⁸) and explained what he was trying to do: fuse two sides of himself--the human and the lyric or, we might say the ideal and the real, or the fantastic and the prosaic. He also acknowledged that, in this case, he failed:

Pas si rêveur encore que l’on pense, je sais voir et voir comme voient les myopes, jusque dans les pores des choses, parce qu’ils se fourrent le nez dessus. Il y a en moi, littérairement parlant, deux bonshommes distincts: un qui est épris les sonorités de la phrase et des sommets de l’idée; un autre qui fouille et creuse le vrai tant qu’il peut, qui aime à accuser le petit fait aussi puissamment que le grand, qui voudrais vous faire sentir presque matériellement les choses qu’il reproduit; celui-là aime à rire et se plaît dans les animalités de l’homme. *L’éducation sentimentale* a été, à mon insu, un effort de fusion entre ces deux tendances de mon esprit...J’ai échoué...Je n’ai dit que *L’éducation* avait été un essai. ³⁹

Poittevin, was familiar with Hegel’s theory of the supremacy of art over nature and history, and had read the *Cours d’esthétique*. Bruneau, p.416.

³⁸ Corr. V.II, January 12, 1852

³⁹ Corr., V.II. January 16, 1853

(I am not as much of a dreamer as I am thought to be. I know how to look at things as the near-sighted do, seeing right into the pores of things with their noses buried right in. There exist within me, in literary terms, two distinct chaps: one who is taken by the sonority of the phrase and the summit of the idea; and another who searches for and digs out the true as much as possible, who takes as much pleasure in acknowledging the small fact as the great one, and who would like to make you feel almost materially the things that he reproduces. The latter loves to laugh and takes pleasure in man's animal nature. *L'éducation sentimentale* was, unbeknownst to me, an effort to fuse these two sides of my mind... I failed. I told you that *L'éducation sentimentale* was an attempt.)

At the time of *L'éducation sentimentale* it was in Shakespeare and Homer that he admired "...la réunion de la passion et la combinaison..."⁴⁰ This fusion is precisely what he is about to re-discover Cervantes's work: "Ce qu'il y a de prodigieux dans *Don Quichotte* c'est... cette perpétuelle fusion de l'illusion et de la réalité qui en fait un livre si comique et si poétique. Quels nains que sont tous les autres à côté!"⁴¹ This is what he would again pursue—and achieve finally, in *Madame Bovary*. This idea was taken up again later in letters by Flaubert—as he wrote *Madame Bovary* and tried desperately to practice—against his heart—what reason demanded, and what he had partially understood already in this youthful work.

Madame Bovary's success is often attributed to Louis Bouilhet's idea of forcing Flaubert to ground himself in the finite real—in the dreary materiality of provincial France. As we will see, Bouilhet indeed had a crucial role in

⁴⁰ Corr, V.II

⁴¹ Corr. V.II. November 22, 1852

disciplining and directing Flaubert, but he didn't *reveal* this idea to Flaubert in 1849. Flaubert was already writing about it 1845. He knew the source of his leanings toward the fantastic, the idealized; he knew they were dangerous to the work of art; and he was close to figuring out how to control them:

Notre nature nous gene, on y étouffe, on veut en sortir, et notre âme, qui l'a comblée...comme une foule mal à l'aise ...on met un masque sur son visage, on court, on crie, on hurle, on entre dans la folie et dans la sauvagerie; on rit de sa laideur...*Rédevenu calme l'homme ne se comprend plus lui-même*, son propre esprit lui fait peur et il se épouvante de ses rêves, il se demande...dans quelle heure d'angoisse il a rêvé l'enfer. Compris comme développement de l'essence intime de notre âme, comme surabondance de l'élément moral, *le fantastique a sa place dans l'Art...*(mais) *l'imagination en effet ne vit pas de chimères, elle a son positif comme vous avez le vôtre, elle... et n'est heureuse qu'après lui avoir donné une existence réelle palpable, durable ponderable, indestructible.*

(Our natural state bothers and stifles us, we want to escape. Our souls crowd us, like an uneasy teeming mass of people...we cover our faces with a mask and run, scream, and yell, abandoning ourselves to madness while laughing at its ugliness...Once returned to a calm state, man no longer understands himself, he is afraid of his own mind and terrified by his dreams. He asks himself in what hour of anguish can he have dreamed of hell. Understood as a development of the intimate essence of our soul, as the overabundance of the moral element, the fantastic has its place in Art...but the imagination does not exist merely as a chimera, it also has a positive element, as you have yours. The imagination is not happy until it has given the positive a real and palpable existence, lasting, ponderable, and indestructible.)

Furthermore, this section of the *L'éducation* emphasizes the importance of irony, satire, in prose; the individuality of each literary work, and the importance of impartiality in criticism (reminiscent of the Schlegel's "immanent criticism"). In short, all the precepts which would become central

to Flaubert's technique and conception of the novel are already here in skeleton form. Unfortunately, instead of applying his new novelistic theories and techniques, he only talked about them—expressing them, as we have seen, directly in the novel.

Thematically, the first *L'éducation sentimentale* provides an important link to Flaubert's later works. If *Madame Bovary* is the crowning example of “la dialectique fatale du desir”, to use Bruneau's phrase, *L'éducation sentimentale* of 1845 is the blueprint. Already “retired” to Croisset when he finished the work, Flaubert thought that the “active life” had nothing to offer the young writer, at least nothing but disillusionment. By the age of twenty-three he had already had his crises of romantic and “divine” love and has been disappointed in both areas. Man, as conceived by Flaubert, will always be disappointed by love and will inevitably fail in his pursuit of it.

Les héros de Flaubert flottent entre le passé et l'avenir. Entre la destinée qui les attend et l'avenir qui represent les autres. Leur meditation fait naître en eux, au moment ou le jour se leve, l'aspiration vers une vie totalement differente de leur vie passé et qui realiserait leur idéal. Idéal qu'ils n'oublieront jamais, malgré leurs succès et leurs échecs, et qui est le fondement de leur “bovarysme”.⁴²

(Flaubert's heroes float between the past and the future; between the fate that awaits them and the future as represented by others. Their meditation stimulates in them, at the moment when the day breaks, the aspiration towards a completely different life than that which they knew in the past, towards a life which will allow them to achieve their ideal. They never forget the ideal, despite their successes and failures, and it is this ideal upon which their “bovarysme” is based.)

⁴² Bruneau, p.498

By 1845 Flaubert's own sentimental education was complete. His protagonists Emma and Frederic (of the second *L'éducation sentimentale*) would fall into the trap of being seduced into desire by the manners and refinements of "love" (seduction, romance, and so forth) but their author had become immune to the syndrome of *Bovarysme*. In a swaggering display of his newfound maturity, Flaubert writes about going to see Mme Foucaud (his erstwhile lover and the inspiration for *Novembre*) for the first time in years: "A Marseille j'irai voir Mme Foucaud...Le bourgeois dirait: Vous aurez là une grande desillusion. Mais j'ai rarement éprouvé des desillusions, ayant eu peu d'illusions." (I will go to Marseille to see Mme Foucaud. The bourgeois would say: 'You'll be disillusioned'. But I have rarely been disillusioned, having had few illusions to begin with.) The cycle of illusions and disillusion is part of life in the "real" world—a world now barely inhabited by the author. When he wrote, in a letter to his friend Alfred le Poittevin, that he (exactly like Jules from *L'éducation sentimentale*) has bid "...a la vie pratique un irrevocable adieu..."⁴³ it must be understood in the following way. A farewell to "la vie pratique" is literally a farewell to the practical elements of life—money, relationships, etc. —but more importantly it is a farewell to the cycle of desire and disillusionment that these elements involve.

If Flaubert left the bourgeois "vie pratique" behind when he retired to Croisset, he also left behind France's "Second" Romantic generation—a group

⁴³ Corr. V.I. Letter to le Poittevin. May 13 1845

to which he had so enthusiastically belonged. For his Romantic contemporaries the literary experience had another slant:

Ils l'aiment et lui consacrent toutes leurs facultés d'artistes mais elle n'est pour eux qu'un moyen. La grande affaire, ce n'est plus elle, c'est le drame qu'ils portent en eux⁴⁴
 (They loved (literature) and devoted all their artistic faculties to it, yet in their eyes, it was a means to an end. The main event was no longer literature, but their own interior dramas.)

Flaubert's relationship to literature was developing into something quite different than theirs. Literature for Flaubert had replaced life, had taken absolute precedence over his own "drame", and had become absolutely an end in itself.

La Tentation de Saint Antoine

1848-1849

Le lyrisme, qui était le fond même de sa nature et de son talent, l'avait si bien emporté qu'il avait perdu terre.
 (Lyricism, which was at the very heart of his nature and his talent, had so completely swept him away, that he had lost ground.)
 - Maxim du Camp. Reaction to the first *Tentation*.

Novembre and *L'éducation sentimentale* (both still Romantic works by any account) represent a clear shift: from spontaneity to planning; from rambling narrative to carefully drawn scenes; from subjectivity to objectivity; and from literary creation as phenomenon to literary creation as an art to think

⁴⁴ Bruneau, p.581

about and master. After trying his hand at the different Romantic genres—most notably autobiography—he slowly begins to develop an aesthetic methodology of his own influenced by his readings of classical literature.

Despite this modification in his approach to literature, and his will to work from the head and not the heart, to ground his work in the real, to meld like Homer and Shakespeare his “*passion*” with “*combinaison*”, Flaubert was not yet able to renounce to pure passion. While the Flaubert of *Madame Bovary* restrained himself (even though he preserved the Romantic and passionate urge to abandon himself “...à tous les lyrismes, gélades, et excentricités philosophico-fantastiques qui me viendraient.”), the Flaubert of 1848 wasn’t ready. The result is *La tentation de Saint Antoine* (1849).

The transition between the Flaubert of *La Tentation* (1848-1849) and the Flaubert who writes *Madame Bovary* (beginning in 1851) is the most intense transformation of his career. It is between these two novels, and during the composition of the second that the thoughts on the novel form and technique that he had as early as *Novembre* will come to fruition as Flaubert learned the lessons of restraint and self-censorship that would allow him to fuse the ideal and the real. The mastery of literature he had so admired, and yearned to emulate—as we’ve seen in the last chapter of *L’éducation*, in his intimate diaries, in his correspondence—will become his thanks to *la Tentation*.

Madame Bovary as we will see is conceived and wrought only in reaction and opposition to *la Tentation*.

This is not, by any means, to imply that *La Tentation*—a work with great qualities of its own—is a step backwards. Flaubert, like Cervantes—who after writing *Don Quixote*, the most famous satire and critique of the genre of the chivalric romance, *spent his old age writing a romance*—cannot be forced into a linear literary evolution. The issue is that *La Tentation* did not advance Flaubert in his impetus towards grounding his imagination in a carefully planned work of prosaic subject and style. On the contrary, it seemed more an exercise in flaunting the most lyrical, unrestrained, and fantastical powers of his imagination: a sprawling, quickly written tale of the parade of civilizations passing before a third century monk. Contrary to his developing habit of carefully drafting his prose, this lengthy project (five hundred and forty one pages) was speedily conceived and executed in under a year and a half.⁴⁵ Upon finishing the work, he spent four days reading it in its entirety out loud to his two closest friends and literary companions: Louis Bouilhet and Maxim Du Camp. Although this chapter of Flaubert's development may indeed be well known to most readers, it is crucial in understanding the new course it put him on.

According to Du Camp, he and Bouilhet awaited Flaubert's unveiling of his new work with great anticipation. Since all three had often discussed the

subject of Saint Antoine together, and since they had attended every step of his progress thus far, Flaubert's friends were confident in their predictions as to what the work would be like. However, instead of a work along the lines of what they had expected, what Flaubert produced was, apparently, a shock to both of them. The following passage—which I have abridged for the sake of brevity-- describes Du Camp's and Bouilhet's impression of the work.⁴⁶

Bouilhet et moi, nous nous trompions; Gustave avait fait un mystère, dialogue en deux volumes, qui était, non pas une réminiscence, mais une exagération de l' *Aashvérus* d'Edgar Quinet. ...Les heures pendant lesquelles...nous restâmes à écouter Flaubert sont demeurées très pénibles dans mon souvenir...esperant toujours que l'action allait s'engager...et toujours nous étions déçus, car l'unité de la situation est immuable depuis le commencement jusqu'à la fin du livre. Saint Antoine...voit défiler devant lui les diverses formes de la tentation ...Ce ne sont pas seulement ses sens qui sont tentés.... c'est son esprit auquel toutes les hérésies, toutes les religions, toutes les philosophies ...Nulle progression dans ce long mystère, une seule scène jouée par des personnages divers et qui se reproduit incessamment. *Le lyrisme, qui était le fond même de sa nature et de son talent, l'avait si bien emporté qu'il avait perdu terre.* Nous écoutions ce que disaient le sphinx, la chimère, la reine de Saba, Simon le magicien, ...et Pluton, et Diane, et Hercule, et même le dieu Crepitus. Peine inutile! Nous ne comprenions pas, nous ne devinions pas où il voulait arriver, et , en réalité, il n'arrivait nulle part.

(Bouilhet and I were wrong. Gustave had written a mystery, a dialogue in two volumes, which was not a reminiscence, but an exaggeration of Edgar Quinet's "Aashvérus"...The hours we spent listening to Flaubert unfolded pathetically, as far as I can remember...we waited and waited for the action to begin, and we were disappointed again and again, as there was no change in the unity of the plot from the beginning to the end of the book. Saint Antoine sees temptation, in all its diverse forms, parade before him. Not only are his senses tempted...but his spirit is also assailed by every heresy, every religion, every philosophy...There is absolutely no progress in this long mystery, it is simply one scene

⁴⁵ Flaubert began working on *la Tentation* on May 24, 1848 and finished on September 12 1949.

⁴⁶ Du Camp, Maxim. "Souvenirs Littéraires" in Flaubert, Gustave *Oeuvres Completes*. P.25

played out by different characters, and repeated ad infinitum. Lyricism, which was at the very heart of his nature and his talent, had so completely swept him away, that he had lost ground. We listened to the words of the Sphinx, of the Queen of Sheba, Simon the Magician, Pluto, Diana, Hercules, and even the god Crepitus. What a waste! We understood nothing, nor could we guess what he had hoped to achieve, and in reality, he achieved nothing.)

The kind of work Du Camp describes is exactly what one imagines when thinking of “unrestrained romanticism”. While Du Camp’s above description of the work seems tinged with ill-will (jealousy perhaps?), his overall characterization of the work nevertheless seems accurate.

Du Camp and Bouilhet’s expectations of Flaubert’s progress had been based on the evolution we have been tracing : a move towards detailed plans, use of contemporary subjects, controlled style. They both saw *la Tentation* as a historical/mystical work written with a surprisingly reckless abandon and lacking in unity. Having been silent during three days of reading, the two friends discussed what they thought, and prepared to give their response—which Flaubert awaited impatiently.

Sous prétexte de pousser le romantisme à outrance, Flaubert, sans qu’il s’en doutât, retournait en arrière, revenait à l’abbé Raynal, à Marmontel, à Bitaupe même, et tombait dans la diffusion. Il fallait l’arrêter sur cette voie où il perdrait ses qualités maîtresses.. ..Bouilhet était timide mais nul ne se montrait plus ferme...il répondit “Nous pensons qu’il faut jeter cela au feu et n’en jamais reparler.” (my italics)⁴⁷

(With the pretext of wanting to push romanticism to the limit, Flaubert, without hesitation, had gone backwards, and returned to l’abbé Raynal, to Marmontel, even to Bitaupe. He had fallen into a state of diffusion. It

⁴⁷ Ibid

was necessary to stop him in his tracks, for he was on the way to losing his key qualities...Bouilhet was shy, nevertheless, even he was firm on his point. His response was: "We think you should throw this (*La tentation*) in the fire and we should never speak of it again".)

Needless to say, their response was a blow. Yet Flaubert would come to agree with his friends. He agreed that he had tried to push Romanticism to its limits. Yet if he had set out to caricature the qualities of Romanticism by presenting them in an exaggerated, deliberately falsified light, he failed. The first *Tentation* is not a caricature, but is instead *characteristic* of Romanticism; it is not a deliberate falsification, but instead an obviously authentic expression of Romanticism. Du Camp and Bouilhet criticized the vague subject, the elusive style, and the indistinct development. The overall work seemed like nothing but uncontrolled digressions and chaotically associated characters, events, and places. Flaubert apparently agreed quickly that he may have become a bit overwhelmed by his subject and carried away by the whole experience. Yet, what made him desperate at their reaction was his conviction that this tendency to be "carried away" by great enthusiasms and passions was part of his being. How could he eradicate his penchant for the fantastic, the lyric?

Madame Bovary: Romanticism Conquered

Oh! Hereux temps de *Saint Antoine*, ou êtes vous? J'écrivais là avec mon moi tout entier!
(Oh! Happy times of Saint Antoine, where are you now? When I could write with my entire self!)

Flaubert, Letter to Louise Colet, 1853⁴⁸

Qui sait, Monsieur, si dans quelque temps on ne dira pas en parlant d'une femme incomprise, romanesque, aux idées idéales: *c'est une bovary*, comme on dit d'un faux dévot, *c'est un tartuffe*.

(Who knows, Sir, if people may not end up saying about a misunderstood, novelesque woman with idealistic ideas: "there's a Bovary", just as we now say about a hypocrite, "there's a Tartuffe")

Emile Cailteaux, Letter to Flaubert, 1857⁴⁹

Flaubert did not have much time to mull over the disappointing response *La tentation* had received. He and Du Camp left almost immediately for their famous tour of the East. Nonetheless, even abroad he was distressed by the memory of his failure, and his concern about how and what he would write next. For the first time in his life, Flaubert doubted his vocation as a writer. His most candid and frequent expression of his fears was to Bouilhet as the following excerpts show:

(1) Je t'avertis très sérieusement que mon intelligence a beaucoup baissé. Cela m'inquiète, ce n'est pas une plaisanterie, je me sens très vide, très aplati, très stérile. Qu'est-ce que je vais faire une fois rentré au gîte, publierai-je, ne publierai-je? Qu'écrirai-je? Et même écrirai-je? L'histoire de *saint Antoine* m'a porté un coup grave, je ne le cache pas...⁵⁰

(2)...je rumine ma vie passée avec des intensités profondes. Ils me reviennent beaucoup des choses oubliées...Est-ce que je touche à une période nouvelle? Ou à une décadence complète? Et, du passé, je vais revassant à l'avenir, et là je n'y vois rien, rien. Je suis sans place, sans idée, sans projet, et ce qu'il y a de pire, sans ambition...

(1) (I must warn you in all seriousness that my intelligence level has plunged. This concerns me, and it's no joke. I feel empty, flat, sterile. What am I going to do once I get home? Will I publish or

⁴⁸ Ibid. V.II. Letter to Louise of January 28, 1853. P.243

⁴⁹ Ibid. V.II. Emile Calteaux's letter to Flaubert. June 4, 1857 in *Notes et variantes*. P.1382.

⁵⁰ Corr, V.I. Letter to Louis Bouilhet, March 13, 1850

not? What will I write? Will I write at all? The business with Saint Antoine was a serious blow to me, I admit it.)

- (2) (I've searched my past life with deep intensity. Many forgotten things are coming back to me. Might I be on the brink of a new phase? Or perhaps I'm entering complete decadence? From the past, I seem to idly float towards the future, and there, I see absolutely nothing. I have nowhere to go, no idea, no project, and worst of all, no ambition.)

Many other statements of self-doubt can be found in Flaubert's letters during his journey. The two years of his travels were fraught with worries and incertitude regarding his literary career combined with a searching of his past for meaningful clues about the future. In a letter to his mother he reviewed the enduring importance and influences of his first experiences upon his present existence. This is the first reference—in a series of many to come-- to Cervantes's masterpiece and the special position it has for him:

Les premières impressions ne s'effacent pas, tu le sais. Nous portons en nous notre passé; pendant toute notre vie nous nous entons de la nourrice. Quand je m'analyse, je trouve en moi, encore fraîches et avec toutes leurs influences ... la place du père Langlois⁵¹, celle du père Mignot⁵², celle [de] don Quichotte et de mes songeries d'enfant dans le jardin, à côté de la fenêtre de l'amphithéâtre.

(Our first impressions never disappear, you know. We carry our past within us and gorge ourselves on it as if it were a wet-nurse. When I analyze myself, I find within me, still fresh and with all their powers of influence intact... the place of the Langlois Sr., of Mignot Sr., and of Don Quijote, and my childhood daydreams in the garden, next to the window of the amphitheater.)

⁵¹ Eustache-Hyacinthe Langlois (1777-1837) was a painter and family friend

⁵² Amedée Mignot read the first children's edition of *Don Quichotte* to Flaubert and corrected and praised Flaubert's first stories which were imitations of stories from *Don Quichotte*. Mignot was the grandfather of Flaubert's best friend from his childhood and youth, Ernest Chevalier.

Upon his return to France his discussions about his next literary move were resumed with his friends. Du Camp and Bouilhet prescribed the following tactic to get Flaubert out of the literary rut he saw himself in: in order to restrain his lyricism, they warned, he had to tackle a wholly unlyrical subject. They advised that he adhere to a “real” subject matter, with the idea that the style and structure would inevitably have to adhere. What was the least lyric subject matter imaginable? What did Flaubert hate above all? The bourgeoisie. It was in this direction that Flaubert, begrudgingly, was pushed to write about in his next novel.

Il faut renoncer aux sujets diffus qui sont tellement vagues par eux-mêmes que tu ne réussis pas à les concentrer; du moment que tu as une invincible tendance au lyrisme, il faut choisir un sujet où le lyrisme serait si ridicule que tu seras forcé de te surveiller et d’y renoncer. Prends un sujet terre à terre, un de ces incidents dont la vie bourgeoise est pleine, quelque chose comme la *Cousine Bette*, comme le *Cousin Pons*, de Balzac, et astreins-toi à le traiter sur un ton naturel, presque familier, en rejetant ces digressions, ces divagations, belles en soi, mais qui ne sont que des hors-d’œuvre inutiles au développement de ta conception et fastidieuses pour le lecteur.⁵³

(You must give up these long-winded subjects that are so vague in and of themselves that you can’t manage to condense them. If what you have is an invincible lyrical tendency, then you must choose a subject for which lyricism would be so out of place that you’ll be forced to censor yourself and renounce to the lyrical. Pick a down to earth subject, some incident from bourgeois life, like Balzac’s *Cousine Bette* or *Cousin Pons*, and limit yourself to using a natural, familiar tone. Avoid any digressions or meanderings, for though beautiful in and of themselves, they are extraneous to the development of your plan, and are tiresome for the reader.)

⁵³ Ibid, p. 26

Flaubert was evidently displeased by this reasoning, yet eventually understood both the criticism and the advice. He is said to have, eventually, been grateful for this advice and recognized its value by saying : “J’étais envahi par le cancer du lyrisme, vous m’avez opéré; il n’était que temps, mais j’en ai crié de douleur”. Though we only have Du Camp’s claim to this statement, it seems logical as Flaubert indeed abandoned—not without great chagrin—the tale of Saint Anthony.⁵⁴ It seems safe to assume that had Flaubert been truly satisfied with *la Tentation*, he would never have thought of pursuing a work such as *Madame Bovary*.

Since he accepted Du Camp and Bouilhet’s rejection of *la Tentation* , he was prepared to tackle this, for him, singularly unappealing venture into the lives of the bourgeois. The only thing missing was a subject. Here Bouilhet fatefully and singularly entered Flaubert’s evolution. He suggested the story of Madame Delaunay⁵⁵, which as is commonly known, becomes the tale of Emma Bovary.

Bouilhet thus found the subject, which Flaubert accepted with enthusiasm. Yet Bouilhet’s importance as mentor does not lie solely in this fact. Bouilhet and Flaubert formed an exceptionally strong literary alliance which would permeate the creation of *Madame Bovary*. Ironically, it was

⁵⁴ Of course, Flaubert would come back to *la Tentation* two decades later, finishing the definitive version in 1872.

⁵⁵ There seems to be some confusion as to the the name of the couple the story of Emma and Charles Bovary is based on. It varies from Delaunay to Delamare. Du Camp uses Delaunay in

precisely because Bouilhet was so different from Flaubert that his advice would become indispensable. They complemented one another and Flaubert was to benefit enormously from Bouilhet's aesthetic counterbalance. Bouilhet, a poet and student of ancient poetry and poetics, viewed prose as an unwieldy, suspicious medium. How could one conquer and fashion prose? His view was that fantasy, while a fertile element of poetry, could be introduced only with the most extreme reserve in prose. Prose fiction should come as near as possible to history in its tone, since the narrative of imaginary acts was destined to produce the illusion or impression of reality.⁵⁶

Bouilhet kept Flaubert in check throughout the author's work on *Madame Bovary*. He curbed his friend's lyricism, and furthermore, he urged him to eliminate any part of the narrative that is not absolutely indispensable. For Bouilhet, a work of literature had to be approached purposefully. Any element not vital to the purpose was seen as useless and even detrimental. Bouilhet would say "Tu vas enlever cette incidence parce qu'elle est inutile à ton récit, et qu'en pareil cas ce qui est inutile est nuisible."⁵⁷ Bouilhet's influence in Flaubert's approach to *Madame Bovary* (and the subsequent definitive version of *L'éducation sentimentale* and *Salammbô*) cannot be emphasized enough. His indebtedness to his friend is manifest in the fact that Flaubert dedicated *Madame Bovary* to him, and when Bouilhet died in 1869 he

his *Souvenirs*, but writes Delamare in a letter to Flaubert. Jean Bruneau uses Delaunay-Delamare or Delamare alternately.

⁵⁶ Du Camp, p.29

wrote “C’est pour moi une perte irréparable; j’ai enterré avant-hier ma conscience littéraire, mon cerveau, ma boussole.”⁵⁸

Bouilhet’s concerns about prose echo ideas often mentioned in *Don Quixote* (the coincidence is easily explained: Bouilhet and Cervantes were both disciples of classical poetic principles) which Flaubert started reading again as he worked on *Madame Bovary*. The influence of Cervantes, indirectly, and Bouilhet, directly, dominated the conception of *Madame Bovary*. We know that Flaubert was usually mirroring one author or another at any given point in his career: it was at this point that he turned to imitate the author of the work that first stimulated his literary imagination.

Of course it is not just in the approach to style and method that Cervantes will influence Flaubert: there is also the subject. While it is true that the story was clearly inspired by the *drame intime* of Delaunay, the facts of the story are just the skeleton of Flaubert’s narrative. There is one fundamental feature missing from the Delaunay tale which Flaubert added and made central to his novel’s subject. To appreciate the difference we will first look at the Delaunay story⁵⁹ focussing on the description and fate of Delaunay (who will become Charles Bovary) and his young wife (whom Emma is based on):

Delaunay était un pauvre diable d’officier de santé qui avait été l’élève du père Flaubert...il épousa une jeune fille sans fortune...Elle était la

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.30

⁵⁸ Corr., V.III. July, 1869

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.26. Again, Du Camp is the only source for this tale—or at least the same version of the tale as Flaubert would have heard.

proie d'une des formes de la grande névrose qui ravage les anémiques. Atteinte de nymphomanie et de prodigalité maniaque ...elle était peu responsable...elle ne guérissait pas...Accablée de dettes, poursuivie par ses créanciers, battue par ses amants, pour lesquels elle volait son mari, elle fut prise d'un accès de desespoir et s'empoisonna...le pauvre homme, ruiné...fabriqua lui-même du cyanure de potassium et alla rejoindre celle dont la perte l'avait laissé inconsolable.⁶⁰

(Delaunay was a poor devil, a small-time surgeon who had been a student of Flaubert's father⁶¹. He married a young girl with no dowry who was prey to an acute neurosis of the kind that destroys anemics. Overcome by nymphomania and maniacal excess...she was careless...(and) did not recover...Overwhelmed by debts, pursued by creditors, beaten by her lovers—for whom she stole from her husband—she poisoned herself in a fit of desperation...The poor man (Delaunay) was ruined...and he made himself a concoction of potassium cyanide in order to join the woman whose loss had left him inconsolable).

The reader of *Bovary* will see many parallels between the stories. Like Madame Delaunay, Emma also had all kinds of nervous disorders which seem to have caused or exacerbated her situation. Along with many other changes, additions, and subtractions Flaubert made to the story (Mme Delaunay was short and overweight with yellow hair while Emma is dark haired, slim and very attractive, etc.) the key strategy is that *Emma is a reader of sentimental romances*, and it is the influence of these readings upon her will alter her life and lead her towards her fall. This element—taking into account the conversion from chivalric romances-- is clearly from *Don Quijote* and will be a rich source of irony in the work—as it is in Cervantes's masterpiece. The provincial Emma, and the provincial Alonso Quijano will both crucify

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Flaubert's father (like Cervantes's, incidentally) was a surgeon.

themselves upon the altar of outmoded, popular, romances. Even the character's names resound with the similarity of their authors' mission to amalgamate the unlikely: the prosaic and the poetic. *Emma*—a typical name for romantic heroines—loses all its romanticism when combined with *Bovary*, a name more suggestive of the earthy, vulgar word *bovine* than anything else. *Don Quijote de la* could be an auspicious name, as fitting for a chivalric knight as Emma is fitting for a sentimental damsel—until it is attached to *Mancha*. *Mancha* (stain in Spanish) deflates the name's (and the character's) pretensions. Furthermore, *La Mancha* is the least fertile—least poetic—region of Spain. This glance at the titles is merely a microscopic example of the kind of ironic juxtaposition that is sustained throughout both works. This combination—so perfectly illustrated by Cervantes--was precisely what Flaubert hoped to achieve in *Madame Bovary*. “Toute la valeur de mon livre, s'il en a une, sera d'avoir su marcher droit sur un cheveu, suspendu entre le double abîme du lyrisme et du vulgaire (que je veux fondre dans une analyse narrative).”⁶² (The entire value of my book, if there is one, will be in my having known how to walk a tightrope, suspended between the double abyss of lyricism and vulgarity (which I would like to meld in a narrative analysis))

To achieve this delicate balance, Flaubert realized that he would have to approach his composition reasonably and objectively. Impersonality and control—which he struggled so to achieve in this work—seems to have

⁶² Corr., V.II, letter to Louise of March 20, 1852 p.57

become an aesthetic point of honor for him. And after the novel's publication, Flaubert would have us think that in *Madame Bovary* there is not a scrap of his former autobiographical self left in his work. Around the time of the trial,⁶³ especially, he defended the autonomy of his inventions firmly and proudly. First, in a letter to Mlle. Leroyer de Chantepie (a fan of Flaubert's with whom he maintained a warm, literary correspondence for a number of years):

Je vais donc répondre à vos questions. *Madame Bovary* n'a rien de vrai. C'est une histoire *totale*ment inventée; je n'y ai rien mis ni des mes sentiments ni de mon existence. L'illusion (s'il y en a une) vient au contraire de l'*impersonnalité* de l'oeuvre. C'est un de mes principes, qu'il ne faut pas *s'écrire*. L'artiste doit être dans son oeuvre comme Dieu dans sa création, invisible et toute puissante; qu'on le sente partout, mais qu'on ne le voie pas. Et puis, L'Art doit s'élever au-dessus des affections personnelles et des susceptibilités nerveuses! Il est temps de lui donner, par une méthode impitoyable, la précision des sciences physiques! ⁶⁴

I will answer your questions. There is nothing real in *Madame Bovary*. The story is completely invented and devoid of any traces of my own feelings and existence. On the contrary, the illusion of the work (if it in fact has one) comes from the impersonality of the work. This is one of my principles: one must not write oneself. The artist must be in his work as God is within his creation, invisible and all-powerful, felt everywhere yet seen nowhere. Moreover, Art must elevate itself above personal attachments and nervous sensitivity! It is time to give Art, through the application of merciless method, the precision of the material sciences!

Just a few months later, he echoed this defense in a letter of response to Emile Cailteaux:

Non, Monsieur, aucun modèle n'a posé devant moi. *Madame Bovary* est une pure invention. Tous les personnages de ce livre sont complètement imaginés, et Yonville-L'Abbaye lui-même est un pays *qui n'existe pas*, ainsi que la Rieulle, etc. Ce qui n'empêche pas qu'ici, en Normandie, on

⁶³ *Madame Bovary*, for reasons we will see, is considered a scandal and Flaubert is tried for immorality.

⁶⁴ Corr. , V.II Letter to Mlle Leroyer de Chantepie. March 18, 1857.

n'ait voulu découvrir dans mon roman une foule d'allusions. Si j'en avais fait, mes portraits seraient moins ressemblants, parce que j'aurais eu en vue des personnalités et que j'ai voulu, au contraire, reproduire des types.”⁶⁵

(No sir, no model posed for me. Madame Bovary is pure invention. The characters in the book are completely made up, and Yonville-L'Abbaye itself is a district that does not exist, and the same goes for Rieulle, etc. None of this has impeded people here in Normandy from finding all sorts of allusions in my novel. Had I in fact drawn from actual people, less resemblances would be found between my portraits (and reality) since in that case I would have had individuals in mind, and here, on the contrary I tried to create types.)

Despite Flaubert's familiarity with the Delaunay story, and despite the fact that Emma surely has many ingredients from Mme. Delaunay and from Flaubert's personal life, the above statements are true. The Delaunay story *is not Madame Bovary*, and it is for his transformative achievement that Flaubert, quite rightly, yearns for praise. The raw materials are inconsequential to the ability to create universal types, types that exist thanks to careful method and which can be called Art. What has Art to do with real towns, and sordid hysterical women? Nothing, is Flaubert's stubborn answer, the Art in my novel is thanks to my method. This is the great discovery of *Madame Bovary*, the near irrelevance of the subject.

Several critics have pointed out that there is a tension between the Flaubert who says “Madame Bovary n'a rien de vrai. C'est une histoire totalement inventée” and “Madame Bovary c'est moi”⁶⁶. As we study the

⁶⁵ Ibid. letter to Emile Cailteaux, June 4, 1857.

⁶⁶ This statement was reportedly made by Flaubert to Mlle A Bosquet. Bruneau, p.479

technique and the model (*Don Quijote*) which I argue is used for *Madame Bovary*, we will find that there is not necessarily a discrepancy between these statements: Emma Bovary both is and isn't Flaubert; and the story is both entirely invented, and true. Emma shares a great deal *with Flaubert's romantic youth*—but not with his prosaic present; and *Madame Bovary's* “truth” owes nothing to reality, and everything to Flaubert's mastery of the art of illusion. *Madame Bovary* is artistically true.

Curiously, we may also look to Cervantes to find support for Flaubert having made his famous statement “*Madame Bovary c'est moi*” for Flaubert may have again been borrowing from the Spanish author. The literary magazine *Musée des Familles*—which we know Flaubert read as a teenager—published a *nouvelle historique* in 1836 about *Don Quijote*. The novella focusses on the uproar caused by *Don Quijote* in Spain where it was suspected by Cervantes's contemporaries that the main character was a parody of a real person, instead of the invented figure Cervantes claimed him to be. Cervantes's alleged answer to this attack, as printed in *Musée des Familles* is the following: “Don Quichotte, dit-il avec un triste sourire, don Quichotte, c'est moi.”⁶⁷

Flaubert thus embarked on the work which to cure him of his “lyric cancer”. The treatment seemed to be restraint in every possible sense. It is useful at this point to recall the literary elements in techniques used by Flaubert

in his early Romantic phase: autobiography, confession, direct address to the reader; fantastical subjects (i.e. miracle plays); “automatic writing”, exuberant lyricism, and so forth. The composition of *Madame Bovary* entailed a systematic battle against each and every one of these Romantic tumors.

The young French author who was formerly “at one” with his Romantic generation, and proud of his lyricism and ability to strip his soul bare to his readers, was at this point a quasi-recluse at Croisset, desperately trying to figure out how to write without showing so much as a breath of himself. At odds with his generation, at odds with himself, had Flaubert thus severed all ties with romanticism? He would never cease to pursue the goal he failed to achieve in *La tentation* : to push Romanticism to its most extreme limit. He would succeed in *Bovary*, which presents Romanticism in a prosaic context. His work would no longer be a “Self-portrait of myself, Flaubert, the Romantic”; it would be about the prosaic, mature Flaubert watching the young romantic (now dead as he claims) Flaubert—as Emma, as Frédéric in the second *L'éducation*.

If the young Flaubert can be said to have created a Romantic prose, Flaubert would show in *Madame Bovary* that he can also create a prosaic vision of Romanticism. His use of prose took on a new self-awareness. While as a youth he let his thoughts flow directly on to the page, he was now humbled by the

⁶⁷ Leclerc, Edmon.. “L’un et l’autre”, *Musee des Familles*, 1836-1837. P.49

difficulty of forging his own style in this seemingly unmanageable medium. Furthermore, he had become sensitive to the fact that prose was not just a medium, nor a style, but an approach to and conception of literature that demanded that every element of the work adapt to as an integral and pertinent part. The subject had to take the prosaic as a point of departure, the author had to become prosaic in his approach. Though daunted by the task of composing *Madame Bovary*, he sensed that he was on the brink of making enormous strides not just for his own career, but also for the career of the novel.

While it is important to keep in mind that by Flaubert's time the novel was not new in the way it had been in Cervantes's era, the parallels between the two authors' approaches and situations are nevertheless significant. In Cervantes's time, the *Romances* had become worn out, convention ridden works which badly needed to be surpassed. Incoherently written, based purely on the fantastic, escapist, and repetitive, these works did nothing to advance the reader nor the writer. On the contrary, they placed prose novels and their authors at the bottom of a literary heap ruled by poetry and theater. Cervantes rehabilitated prose by reconceiving its possibilities. He developed—by sifting through everything from Aristotelian poetics to the state of contemporary literature-- a poetics of prose. The crowning pronouncement of his thought is his pioneering and modern declaration that the epic may be written in prose as well as in verse. In Flaubert's time, *Romanticism* and all its conventions—modes, themes, techniques—were worn out. As Cervantes

turned to the classical poetics of antiquity, so would Flaubert, but in addition, Flaubert also turned to the classical poetics of modernity: Cervantes's prosaic poetics.

Since the crux of this dissertation is about linking Flaubert's mature vision of the novel by tracing his "literary education" back to Cervantes, I would like to briefly emphasize how important Goethe also was in Flaubert's development. Though this study does not have the scope to look at their relationship in depth, he was the only other novelist⁶⁸ whom Flaubert acknowledged as a major influence. The fact that Flaubert was also deeply indebted to Goethe is in fact complementary to our discussion. Goethe, like the Schlegels and other Germans of his generation, also looked on Cervantes as a master to emulate⁶⁹ and closely studied the Spanish author's work and novelistic techniques --as is apparent in his many comments on the subject, especially in *Wilhelm Meister*. For the Schlegel's and their Atheneum group—the most important aestheticians of the novel—Goethe's masterpiece came second only in rank to their favorite, *Don Quijote*.⁷⁰ *Don Quijote* and *Wilhelm Meister* are the two novels constantly compared and distinguished as the only two examples of Romantic prose. Like Flaubert, Goethe, and the

⁶⁸Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* along with *Faust* were probably the most significant models for Flaubert as he develops into the author of *Madame Bovary*. Since Flaubert was a novelist in the strict sense of the term, and concerned with developing a prose poetics specifically for this genre, I am not including other writers (non-novelists) who he also admired such as Dante, Shakespeare, Montaigne, Rousseau, etc. The influence of these authors does not fit the angle of this study which shows his struggle with a prose narrative.

⁷⁰ Ibid

Schlegels (among other Early German Romantics) saw *Don Quijote* as the consummate lesson in the modern art of the novel. As Goethe's aesthetic understanding of the novel owes a great deal to the early German Romantics' conception of the novel --as defined by their study of *Don Quijote*-- it is no surprise that Flaubert should have seen both authors as models.

This said, we must at this point try to focus exclusively on Cervantes's centrality to answer the following: How did Flaubert understand *Don Quijote*? And what did this understanding mean to the conception of *Madame Bovary*? In the following excerpt it is clear that he saw Cervantes's work as an absolutely fundamental part of himself:

Je crois à la *race* plus qu'à l'éducation. On emporte...la patrie à la semelle de ses talons et l'on porte au coeur, sans le savoir, la poussière de ses ancêtres morts. Quant à moi, je ferais là-dessus personnellement une démonstration par A+B. Il en est de même en littérature. Je retrouve toutes mes origines dans le livre que je savais par coeur avant de savoir lire, *Don Quichotte*..."

(I believe race more than I do in education. We carry our homeland with us in the soles of our shoes, and in our hearts, we unwittingly carry the dust of our dead ancestors. As for me, I can personally prove this with an A+B formula. The same goes for literature. I can find all my origins in the book that I knew by heart before I knew how to read, *Don Quijote*.)

The work is an ancestor –personally and above all, aesthetically. Flaubert, in going back to *Don Quijote* is not only going back to his own personal literary roots, but is also going back to find his education at the base of Modern prose fiction. As Cervantes had done in his time, and the Athaneum group in theirs—basing their vision of the novel on Cervantes-- Flaubert will

singlehandedly attempt to re-invigorate prose fiction, and to elevate the role of the novelist in his time.

After his return from his travels with Du Camp, the final phase in Flaubert's transition to the prosaic era of his career began as he was conceiving *Madame Bovary*. One of the key differences, which he had slowly been evolving towards, is that he realizes the importance of observation of detail as a novelistic ingredient. Reality, in all its detail, will be present in his next work. Secondly, in working with a subject more grounded in the real, he would have to change style. Lastly, he revealed his conviction that the author should be, like God in the world, invisible in his work. He himself declared his shift away from the author of *Saint Antoine* :

Je suis dans un tout autre monde maintenant, celui de l'observation attentive des détails les plus plats. J'ai le regard penché sur les mousses de moisissure de l'âme. Il y a loin de là aux flamboyements mythologiques et théologiques de *Saint Antoine*. Et de même que le sujet est différent, j'écris dans un tout autre procédé. Je veux qu'il n'y ait pas dans mon livre *une seule* réflexion de l'auteur.⁷¹

(I am in another world now, a world in which I attentively observe even the dullest details. My gaze is poring over the scum of the soul's rottenness. This is a far cry from the mythological and theological flamboyance of Saint Antoine. As the subject is different, my system of writing is also altogether different. I don't want there to be a single reflection of the author's in my book).

At this point, it is not merely the invisibility of God that Flaubert wishes to emulate. He also wanted to create a work of a certain size. If, as he sees it, Cervantes, Virgil, Shakespeare, etc. could create allegorical figures with a

unique power of transcendence and universality, why shouldn't he? This is clearly what he was searching for already in *Saint Antoine*, but as we have seen, this work lacked an approach. An exercise in spontaneous fantasizing, *Saint Antoine* came from the heart, not the head. But was this the "fault" of a careless Flaubert, or did the idea of this work fall flat because the approach to literature of spontaneous, authentic emotionalism (i.e. Hugo, Lamartine) was no longer enough to carry an author's talent? If the novelty of the direct expression of feeling had worn off and become mere convention, Flaubert will set out to conquer in a new manner. Now he will approach the universal through the particular, the infinite through the finite, the poetic through the prosaic. How will Flaubert achieve this transition? Even now, it won't come naturally, and he thus has to impose a severe discipline upon himself, and approach each line he writes methodically. On the one hand, he turns to masters such as Cervantes for inspiration, on the other he turns to authors he considers inferior as exemplary models of what to avoid. "What to avoid" becomes a central issue in this new era of Flaubert's work, bringing to mind Cervantes's own declaration of the importance of self-censorship. Lest we forget, he reminds us in *Don Quijote* that the author should be thanked not for what he puts in a work but for what he leaves out.

So, first, what is to be avoided? Simply, the vestiges of his own youthful Romanticism tendencies. Does he eliminate them? No, yet while they

⁷¹ Corr, V.II, Letter to Louise Colet of February 8, 1852. P. 43

are as present as ever they have shifted tone and position. No longer the views of the author, he has poured them all into Emma and can now view them—and position the reader to view them-- from an ironic distance. For example, Flaubert wants at all costs to avoid the popular sentimentality of Paul de Kock—a Romantic author of the time who wrote popular, emotionally charged works. He worries in a letter to Louise that if he fails by a hair's breadth in giving *Madame Bovary* a sufficiently literary form, it will be indistinguishable from novels of this kind.⁷² The solution? To make Emma's character sentimental, popular, and emotional and ironize these characteristics in impersonal, objective prose. In other words, Flaubert will subject the subjectivity of Romanticism to his newly forged objective tone and style.

The Romantic tendency to choose monumental historic or religious subjects is also foresaken for an entirely different view of literary subjects. Flaubert, following Bouilhet's advice, not only avoids a monumental subject for *Bovary*, he believes that monumental subjects are to be shunned altogether. He sees it as the writer's duty to be able to elevate any subject whatsoever through style, therefore, any subject is as good as another if it is written about well. To rely on grand subjects is thus seen to be a habit of the past and/or of inferior writers incapable of carrying a work on style. Flaubert's reaction to Delphine de Girardin's 1847 tragedy *Cleopatra* reveals his views. (Though this

⁷² Corr, V.II, Letter to Louise of September 13, 1852. P.155

view was in fact expressed just before *Saint Antoine* , it is a portentous and accurate summary of Flaubert's latter approach to his subjects):

J'ai lu cette ratatouille. Ou diable s'aller attaquer à des sujets pareils! Il y a des idées tellement lourdes d'elles-mêmes qu'elles écrasent quiconque essaie de les soulever.—Les beaux sujets font des œuvres médiocres.⁷³

(I read that mishmash. Why would anyone apply themselves to such a subject? Some ideas are so heavy in and of themselves that they crush whoever tries to lift them. Beautiful subjects make for mediocre works.)

It took *Saint Antoine*'s failure for Flaubert to come to practice this idea himself. It is significant that in the same letter, just a few lines later, he mentions that he is reading the new translation of *Don Quixote* ⁷⁴ His present reaction to his first literary love ("J'en suis ébloui, j'en ai la maladie de l'Espagne. Quel livre! Quel livre! Comme cette-poésie là est gaiement mélancolique!")⁷⁵ has not lost any of his early enthusiasm. For, what work tackles a humbler subject than Cervantes's masterwork? And what novel is more successful in elevating its subject to soaring heights?

Flaubert's famous devotion to style begins with *Madame Bovary*. This is not a superficial notion of style, but a style with the power to elevate even the basest subject and turn it into literature. Thus there is no separation between style and substance, between *forme* and *fond*. He will try to prove in *Madame Bovary*

⁷³ Corr., V.I. Letter to Louise of end of November (?), 1847. P.486

⁷⁴ Cervantes, *L'Admirable don Quichotte de la Manche*, translated by Damas-Hinard, Paris, Charpentier, 1847, 2 vol. in-12.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.487

that he is capable of fulfilling what he holds now as the noble position of the artist and his responsibility to his art: “L’artiste doit tout élever”⁷⁶. Convinced now that there are no set *beau sujets* for art, anything at all can be written about by a true artist. This true artist does not need Constantinople to inspire a masterpiece, Yvetot will do just as well. In his new approach to literature, Emma Bovary is as good as Helen of Troy.

Flaubert sees the truth of this new approach—for which he owes a good deal to Bouilhet and Cervantes—and will adhere to it diligently, yet it will remain a struggle for him. Immersing himself in the description and development of the bourgeois, provincial milieu is distasteful to him. Furthermore, he laments not being able to write as freely and naturally as he takes a breath of air, and will curse what he calls the “maliciousness” involved in achieving a level of style based on scheming, planning, and plotting.⁷⁷ Just as Cervantes’s recipe for art requires *desatino con propriedad* (folly tempered with propriety), Flaubert will subject his *passion* to *combinaison*. The balance between these two elements is crucial to the potential of prose as a vehicle for Art and never has Flaubert been as aware of this as when he begins the work that will disprove the image *Saint Antoine* gave him.

Je t’ai dit que *L’éducation* avait été un essai. *Saint Antoine* en est un autre. Prenant un sujet où j’étais entièrement libre comme lyrisme, mouvements, désordonnements, je me trouvais alors bien dans ma nature et je n’avais qu’à aller. Jamais je ne retrouverais des éperduments

⁷⁶ Corr., V.II Letter to Louise of 25 June, 1853. P.362

⁷⁷ Ibid

de style comme je m'en suis donné là pendant dis-huit grands mois. Comme je taillis avec coeur les perles de mon collier! Je n'y ai oublié qu'une chose, c'est le fil! Seconde tentative⁷⁸ et pis encore que la première. Maintenant j'en suis à ma troisième. Il est pourtant temps de réussir ou de se jeter par la fenêtre.⁷⁹

(I told you that *L'éducation* was an experiment. Saint Antoine was yet another. Taking a subject that gave me complete freedom—in terms of lyricism, movement, lack of order—all I had to do was let myself go. I will never again suffer from stylistic bewilderment as I did during eighteen long months. With all my heart I shaped the pearls of my necklace! And I only forgot one thing: the thread! My second attempt was even worse than the first. Now I'm on the third. It is thus time to succeed, either that, or throw myself out the window.)

This declaration to Louise demonstrates his resolve to approach his new work with level-headed calculation. The images are different, yet he is repeating the same insight: the pearls of his heart (*passion*) won't disappear, *but this time he won't forget the thread (combinaison)*. In order to maintain control over this balance, he maintains that writing must be a cold affair. Nothing could be further from the overflow of imagination and creativity so dear to the younger Flaubert. He is now distrustful of “so-called” inspiration which he sees as owing more to nervous emotion (*passion*) than to “muscular” strength (*combinaison*). This sort of inspiration makes his mind teem with ideas and his pen to flow with ease, but the result of this seductive creative experience is never worthwhile, and always regrettable. With a weary tone he says to Louise (with whom he loyally—to no great avail—tries to share his new found poetics) “...je connais ces bals masqués de l'imagination, d'où l'on révient

⁷⁸ “Seconde” refers to *Saint Antoine*, the first being *L'éducation*

avec la mort au coeur, épuisé, ennuyé, n'ayant vu que des faux, et débité que des sottises.”⁸⁰ (*...I know these masked balls of the imagination, from whence one returns with death in one's heart, exhausted, bored, having seen nothing but falsehoods, and having generated only nonsense.*)

Flaubert's current ideas echo the cautionary anecdote of the painter Orbaneja in *Don Quixote*.⁸¹ The significance of this anecdote, which I have already noted, can be reviewed in the context of Flaubert's development of an artistic method. Orbaneja's plan is to paint a rooster. When he wants to paint, he lets inspiration reign at the expense of technique. Shunning a plan, and defending the supremacy of unchecked creativity, he mindlessly lets his imagination guide his brush. Finally, when the painting is finished and all the viewer can see are nonsensical and indecipherable brushstrokes, he is not discouraged. He compensates by placing an identifying sign on the painting “Rooster”. Needless to say, if a sign is necessary, it is the fault of the painter's execution and lack of procedure.

Orbaneja is used by Cervantes as a visual example of the lack of artistic procedure that the authors of the chivalric romances are guilty of. An artist who has no purpose, no plan, and creates something unrecognizable, *cannot*

⁷⁹ Corr. V II, Letter to Louise of 16 January 1852 p.31

⁸⁰ Ibid, Letter to Louise of February 27, 1853. P.252

⁸¹ This anecdote is mentioned twice in *Don Quixote*. I believe, as Cervantes must have, that is is a clear illustration of his ideas on the dangers of letting the imagination govern artistic creation.

represent truth. Orbaneja's painting of the rooster is thus not merely a clumsy effort, it is false. The sign that says "rooster" lies, for the painting is of nothing. The painter's work is thus merely a "*bal masqué de l'imagination*". But while Cervantes enjoys immensely the imagination of the chivalric romances, he sees them as being undermined by a lack of planning and purpose. It is precisely the lack of these two elements that he will parody in his own works, while of course avoiding making the same mistake himself. The chivalric romances are inferior to classical works (i.e. epics), yet this is not what Cervantes denigrates in them. He knows that no work in his time nor in the future can fully match the epic, nor should it try to. As we have seen, the prose novel if conceived calculatedly and purposefully, can fulfill for modernity the role which the epic fulfilled in antiquity. The rich display of the imagination of the chivalric romances combined with a carefully wrought prose (governed by the precepts of an overhauled classical poetics designed for the prose novel) is the recipe for modern literature as presented in *Don Quixote*. In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert satisfies the aesthetic precepts set out in the famous dialogue between Don Quixote and the Canon in *Don Quixote* —Cervantes's most complete and profound statement of a theory of literature.⁸²

How can it be, we may ask, that Flaubert, two and a half centuries later, will find no example more modern and useful for his own novel than this *quixotic* poetics of prose? Can it be partly Flaubert's nostalgia for the work he

loved as a child? This possibility should be considered, but it doesn't account for the aesthetic admiration for, and identification with Cervantes. As Flaubert did, we must understand Cervantes's prescience and the fact that he introduces the terminology and general principles of contemporary literary theory. Since Flaubert's development as a writer and his relationship to *Don Quijote* are so intertwined, it is often difficult to gauge to what extent he fashioned his development from the lessons in the novel, and to what extent he—as a modern novelist—coincided with Cervantes. While we cannot delineate the exact balance, in any event, two points are clear: First, that the parallels between Cervantes' and Flaubert's relationships to their respective times, and their understanding of the prose novel's potential are fundamental. Second, that Cervantes's lifelong sway over Flaubert's literary development first comes to bear directly on Flaubert's novelistic approach with *Madame Bovary*. Needless to say—and this will be addressed after our discussion of Flaubert's evolution towards and throughout *Madame Bovary*—Flaubert's "belatedness" vis-à-vis Cervantes poignantly complicates his emulation of the Spanish author. In other words, there are necessarily major differences between *Madame Bovary* and *Don Quijote*. Yet I hope to demonstrate that the differences between these two novels --of such different times and place—gain resonance only after one considers Flaubert's obsessive desire to transcend his time and place, erasing any difference between himself and the author of *Don Quijote*. This study gives precedence to a deliberate consideration of the similarities between

Madame Bovary and *Don Quijote* in order to illuminate how meaningful the differences in fact are.

It is important to keep in mind—as has already been mentioned—that Flaubert had always imitated other authors. His imitations evolved: from the youthful emulation of his contemporaries to this later focus on Cervantes. He was neither ashamed to admire the masters passionately, nor to humble himself before their lessons, nor to let their techniques infuse his work: on the contrary he saw it as an intelligent approach to writing. His advice to Louise Colet in his devoted attempts to stir her out of her literary mediocrity (which she clearly doesn't follow as he seems obliged to repeat it year after a year) makes his views on imitation and influence very clear:

C'est une chose toi, dont il faut que tu prennes l'habitude, que de lire *tous les jours* (comme un bréviaire) quelque chose de bon. Cela s'infiltré à la longue. Personne n'est original au sens strict du mot. Le talent, comme la vie, se transmet par infusion et il faut vivre dans un milieu noble, prendre *l'esprit de société* des maîtres.
(There is something you should get in the habit of doing, which is that you should read something good every single day, as if it were the bible. In the long run, it will filter in. Strictly speaking, no one is original. Talent, like life, is transmitted through infusion, and it is important to live in a noble sphere, and to adopt the spirit of the masters.)

Like Cervantes with his fondness for chivalric romances, Flaubert will always feel a kinship with the sentimental (Romantic, in the sense of the literary vogue of his youth) romances. He will always yearn nostalgically for being able to write with abandon, as he did in his youth. Additionally, he continues to enjoy

the very novelists he caricatures in *Madame Bovary* such as Walter Scott. He confesses to Louis Bouilhet that “J’ai lu ...*Le Pirate* de W. Scott. C’est fort joli, mais trop long. *Cela néanmoins m’a excité l’imagination*”⁸³ (*I read Walter Scott’s The Pirate. It’s quite beautiful, but too long. Nonetheless, it has excited my imagination.*) Yet while we are obliged to acknowledge his weakness for these works, we must do him justice by emphasizing his strength in finding a way to *surpass them*. If Cervantes knew he had missed the Golden Age of antiquity, and was not satisfied—from a literary point of view-- by the lively but careless Romances of the more recent past, Flaubert’s sense of belatedness and dissatisfaction with his era are even more acute. It is not an exaggeration to say that Flaubert, at least as he perceived it, was faced with the task of *singlehandedly re-inventing prose fiction*. Is it so surprising, then, that he would turn to Cervantes, the last great innovator in this arena? When Flaubert says, halfway through the writing of *Madame Bovary* “Il faut montrer aux classiques qu’on est plus classique qu’eux, et faire p^qlir les romantiques de rage en dépassant leurs intentions...la perfection a partout le même caractère, qui est la précision, la justesse”⁸⁴ (We must show the classics that we are more classical than they are, and we must make the Romantics turn white with rage by surpassing their aspirations...perfection always has the same character which is precision, and accuracy) is this not Cervantes’s spirit *par excellence*?

⁸³ Ibid, Letter to Louis Bouilhet of August 7, 1854

⁸⁴ Ibid, letter to Louise Colet of June 25, 1853

While it is accurate and even insightful to say—as Harry Levin⁸⁵, among others have done “*Don Quijote* is mock-chivalric, *Madame Bovary* is mock-sentimental” we cannot leave it at that. If we accept that such self-conscious works must engage in *purposeful* mockery: then, what is the purpose? These two novels can mock these genres, with all their conventions, because Cervantes and Flaubert position themselves to be able to mock all conventional genres. Romances---chivalric and sentimental—are so vulnerable to ridicule because they are built on conventions and not on a poetics. Conventional romances—whether Chivalric or Romantic—fail to acknowledge their historical position and their inheritance of classical poetical rules. Opting for the freedom of disregarding any aesthetic system, and instead founding themselves on convention alone, namely the convention of *exciting the reader's imagination* (or escapism) they are artistically insubstantial and unoriginal. Cervantes's criticism of the chivalric romances is a re-interpretation of the classical conception of the dangers of imaginative literature. The chivalric romances, as discussed in Don Quijote's dialogue with the Canon, are not dangerous to the moral fiber of society (on the contrary, Don Quijote declares how virtuous and noble he has become thanks to his readings). They are, in their mixture of repeated conventions and unbridled imaginings, *dangerous to literature*. It is the future of literature, the security of its place in the world, that Cervantes and Flaubert are singularly devoted to.

⁸⁵ Levin, Harry. *The Gates of Horn*

Flaubert wanted to create a portrait of contemporary life over which he would have the utmost control and from which he would have a maximum distance. Like the puppet master Maese Pedro in *Don Quijote*, he will present his artistic depiction of the bourgeoisie to the real bourgeoisie. The latter, unable to see the puppet strings and taken in by the illusion of reality-- will recoil in horror as if unexpectedly seeing their reflection in a mirror. This mirror reflects an unpleasant image --and not because it distorts grotesquely, which would make it easier to dismiss as some kind of evil sabotage, but because it is true. The mirror of *Madame Bovary*, too true to dismiss as ludicrous, and too detailed and harshly lit to flatter, will leave some of its readers—many the real life counterparts of its characters—feeling personally offended and threatened. This was certainly Flaubert's intention for he felt that contemporary literature—especially Romantic novels—had fallen into the complacency of conventions. Novels created for pure entertainment and built on meaningless repetition of conventions paralyzed literature's evolution and stripped it of its power. He expresses—while in the throes of creating *Madame Bovary* -- frustration at the direction Art has taken in a world governed by bourgeois masses who only value the entertaining aspect of literature:

Qu'est-ce que ça fout à la masse, l'Art, la poésie, le style? Elle n'a pas besoin de tout ça....D'où vient le prodigieux succès des romans des Dumas ? C'est qu'il ne faut pour les lire aucune initiation, l'action en est amusante. On se distrait pendant qu'on les lit. Puis, le livre ferme, comme aucune impression ne vous reste ...on retourne à ses affaires.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Corr. V.II. Letter to Louise Colet of June 20, 1853

(What difference do Art, poetry, or style make to the people? They have no need for any of it... Why are Dumas' novels so prodigiously successful? Because one needs no initiation in order to read them, the action is fun. One is entertained while one reads. Then, the book is closed, and as it leaves no impression...one simply returns to one's business.)

The Flaubert of *Madame Bovary* has as little patience for authors who use conventions in literature as he does for people who try to live according to literary convention:

Sont des même farine tous ceux qui vous parlent de leurs amours envolés,...qui baisent des médaillons, pleurent à la lune, délirent de tendresse en voyant des enfants, se pâment au théâtre, prennent un air pensative devant l'Océan. Farceurs! farceurs! et triples saltimbanques!⁸⁷
(They are birds of the same feather, all those who tell you of their vanished loves...who kiss their medallions, cry at the moon, go into raptures of tenderness when they see children, swoon at the theater, assume a pensive air at the oceanside. Jokers!jokers! and charlatans three times over!)

The novel as conceived by Cervantes, as delineated and envisioned by the Atheaneum group, as interpreted by Flaubert should follow *no conventions*. This ideal novel, on the other hand, should have an immanent, systematic, unity, which allows it to exist as *something else*. It is no accident that *Don Quijote* and *Madame Bovary* have been such enduring “best-sellers” or “modern classics”. These novels can thumb their noses in parody of convention, and because of this rejection of convention, will always be a universal “hit” in their novelty, and universally misunderstood. It is the nature

⁸⁷ Corr. V.II. Letter to Louise Colet of July 6, 1852, p.128

of the unprecedented novel—unprecedented because it scraps all preceding convention—to confuse those who look for outside points of reference to penetrate its meaning. Its meaning is immanent. As we have seen in our discussion of Cervantes's life, he once believed in the heroic values of chivalric honor. But disillusioned by seeing how his heroism and noble behavior in battle did nothing to improve his life, he chose literature over life. Flaubert, having himself fallen victim to the conventions of Romanticism in his youth, has, as he sees it, no more room for them in life, but the authority to now represent them in fiction:

J'ai eu aussi, moi, mon époque nerveuse, mon époque sentimentale, et j'en porte encore, comme un galérien, la marque au cou. Avec ma main brûlée j'ai le droit maintenant d'écrire des phrases sur la nature du feu...Mais avant, autrefois, j'ai cru à la réalité de la poésie dans la vie, à la beauté plastique des passions, etc. J'avais une admiration égale pour tous les tapages; j'en ai été assourdi et je les ai distingués.⁸⁸
 (I have also had my nervous phase, my sentimental phase, and like a galley-slave, I am branded. My burned hand gives me the right to write sentences about the nature of fire...But before, in bygone times, I believed in the reality of poetry in life, of the plastic beauty of passions, etc. I admired all noises equally, but then I became deaf and could distinguish amongst them.)

Thus historically, there are parallels between Cervantes and Flaubert's positions, for there are parallels between the situation of literature in their respective times. In Cervantes' time, we must remember, prose was absolutely inferior to poetry.⁸⁹ Both authors aimed to rescue fiction from an inability to

⁸⁸ Corr. V.II, letter to Louise Colet of July 6, 1852. P. 128

represent truth—from a progressive devaluation towards popular escapism-- and to show that fiction can contain truth if it consists of a masterful illusion of reality devoid of convention.

Flaubert's determination to create a unique work of his own—as *unique as Don Quijote* – took him, as he knew it would, to the literary limelight. The scandal caused by *Madame Bovary* upon its publication came as no surprise to Flaubert. Three years before completing the work he anticipated the uproar because he already knew he was writing something true and unprecedented: “La seule chance que j’aie de me faire reconnaître ce sera quand *Bovary* sera publiée. Et mes compatriots rugiront, car la couleur normande du livre sera si vraie qu’elle les scandalisera.”⁹⁰ (The one chance I have for recognition will be when *Bovary* is published. My compatriots will blush, since the Norman tone of the books will be so true that they will be shocked.) Flaubert, as opposed to Orbaneja, and to the Flaubert of the first *Saint Antoine*, will have no need to hang an explicatory sign above his work this time. The truth of *Madame Bovary* will be acknowledged even –or perhaps we should say especially– by its detractors. As Flaubert knows very well, his contemporaries would rather not see the truth—especially not powerfully reflected in a work of fiction.

We have already seen that in Flaubert's new refined novelistic vision the artist's power to represent truth must be such that any subject will do. His famous description of *Madame Bovary* as *le livre sur rien* displays his

awareness that he has mastered this power. It is the artist's mission to be able to strip anything and everything of contingencies and show it as it really is. It is in this sense that we must understand the *quixotic* rehabilitation of Aristotle's concept of verisimilitude. Cervantes would stretch the limits of this concept by demonstrating that the artist must strive for verisimilitude within the work of art, by the standards of verisimilitude set by the work of art itself. The novel, as work of art, must have a unity which sets a measure for every element in the novel. Thus, a man battling windmills is not verisimilar as an isolated act, but within the harmonious unity of Cervantes's work, Don Quijote battling windmills corresponds to his madness and is perfectly realistic. To achieve this verisimilitude, it is necessary that the artist fashion his inspiration into a coherent synthetic world. This aesthetic unity represents the opposite of the Chivalric romances which blithely and carelessly—without concern for reason—indulge the taste for the fantastic. Flaubert is enthusiastically conquering his own passion for the fantastic and his previous oblivion to reason in art. He seems to cheer himself along this new found avenue of lucidity in the following appeal to Louise: "...aimons le Vrai avec l'enthousiasme qu'on a pour le fantastique, et à mesure que les autres baisseront, nous monterons."⁹¹ (...we must love the True with the same enthusiasm we feel for the fantastic, and as the others descend, we will rise). This demands, to repeat Flaubert's

⁹⁰ Ibid, letter to Louise Colet of April 10, 1853

⁹¹ Ibid, Letter to Louise of November 16, 1852

image of the divine creator, a god-like surveillance and attention to the most minute detail, on the one hand, and impersonality on the other. He sees impersonality as being an important quality in all art, but especially in prose. In prose, the writer must absolutely repress his desire to reveal himself. He complains to Louise that "...les malheruex prosateurs, comme moi, sont obligés de tout rentrer...Pour dire quelque chose d'eux-mêmes il leur faut des volumes...S'ils ont du gout, ils s'en abstiennent...car c'est là ce qu'il y a de moins fort au monde, parler de soi".⁹² (Unhappy prose writers, like myself, are forced to repress everything. They need volumes to say one thing about themselves... If they have taste, they abstain, since to speak about oneself is the weakest thing in the world.) Impersonality is also crucial to universality:

Car il y a deux classes de poètes. Les plus grands, les rares, les vrais maîtres résumant l'humanité; sans se préoccuper ni d'eux-mêmes, ni de leurs propres passions, mettant au rebut leur personnalité pour s'absorber dans celles des autres, ils reproduisent l'Univers...⁹³
(There are two kinds of poets. The great ones, the exceptions, the true masters who sum up all of humanity; without worrying about themselves, nor about their own passions. They discard their own personalities in order to be absorbed by those of others; they reproduce the Universe.)

If the artistic is god-like, the personal in the novel is banal and mortal.

Flaubert will now ferociously curb his mortal, emotional self and keep it as far as possible from his art which he hopes will be immortal and cerebral. He knows the result of putting the personal at the center of a novel : the

⁹² Ibid, letter to Louise Colet of January 29, 1853

spontaneous, passionate, derivative, and inconsequential works of his youth. The exaltation of sentiment, nervous sensibility, personal outpourings—the very core elements of the Romantic idea of literature he had cherished—now seem to him profoundly flawed. His sharp analysis of the limitations of Musset's potential as an artist, about which he writes to Louise (during the writing of *Madame Bovary*) reveals his vision of what genius is, and of what Art should and should not be.

Musset n'a jamais séparé la poésie des sensations qu'elle complète. La musique, selon lui, a été faite pour les sérénades, la peinture pour le portrait, et la poésie pour les consolations du coeur. "les nerfs, le magnetisme, voilà la poésie". Non...La Poésie n'est point une débilité de l'esprit, et ces susceptibilités nerveuses en sont une...La passion ne fait pas les vers.—Et plus vous serez personnel, plus vous serez faible. J'ai toujours péché par là, moi; c'est que je me suis toujours mis dans tout ce que j'ai fait.—A la place de Saint Antoine, par exemple, c'est moi qui y suis. La tentation a été pour moi et non pour le lecteur. *Moins on sent une chose, plus on est apte à l'exprimer comme elle est* (comme elle est *toujours*, en elle-même, dans sa généralité, et dégagée de tous ses contingents éphémères). Mais il faut avoir la faculté de se la faire sentir. Cette faculté n'est autre que le genie. Voir. —Avoir le modèle devant soi, qui pose.--⁹⁴

(Musset never separated poetry from the sensations that it perfects. For him, music was made for serenades, painting for portraits, and poetry for the consolations of the heart: "nerves, magnetism, this is poetry". No...Poetry is not at all a weakness of the spirit, which is what nervous sensibilities are. Passion does not make poetry. The more personal one is, the weaker. I have always sinned in this way, I've always put myself into what I was creating. Instead of Saint Antoine, for example, I wrote about myself. The temptation was for me, and not for the reader. The less we feel something, the more apt we are to express it as it is (as it always is, in itself, in its generality, and disengaged from contingent ephemerality). But one must have the faculty to make the thing felt.

⁹³ Corr., V.I. Letter to Louise. October 23, 1846

⁹⁴ Ibid. V.II, letter to Louise Colet of July 6, 1852. P. 128

This faculty is none other than genius. To see. To have the model before you, posing.)

The faculty “*de se la faire sentir*” is one of the aspects he admires most in Cervantes’s *Don Quijote* -- Flaubert wants desperately to create a work that shows the power of art, and for this it must be an art governed by reason, not weakened by emotion. The artist must be able to make himself feel- deliberately. This is genius. But to let his own feelings overflow into the work is not As usual, his literary advice to Louise is also his advice to himself:

C’est avec la tête qu’on écrit. Si le coeur la chauffe, tant mieux, mais il ne faut pas le dire (my emphasis). Ce doit être un four invisible.—Et nous évitons par là d’amuser le public avec nous-mêmes, ce que je trouve hideux, ou trop naïf.—Et la personnalité d’écrivain qui rétrécit toujours une oeuvre.⁹⁵

(One must write with one’s head. If the heart warms the head, so be it, but this must not be revealed. The heart must be an invisible oven. Thus we can avoid entertaining the public with ourselves, which I find hideous or too naïve. It is always the author’s personality that diminishes a work.)

As he admits readily, he himself was (recently) ignorant of these criteria and guilty of transgressing them. Nevertheless, while Flaubert’s development may be partially thanks to personal experience, he is echoing classical aesthetic debates which were present in his readings of this time--specifically, the literary debate on imagination and the senses between Don Quijote and the Canon.

⁹⁵ Ibid, letter to Louise Colet of November 16, 1852

In Cervantes' time, Romances—as *Romanticism would later be* --had long been criticized for appealing to the lower faculties, the imagination and the senses, and to the class which was most dominated by these faculties: the *vulgo*.⁹⁶ The Canon candidly admits to having—as a victim of idleness and false taste—read the beginning of almost every chivalric romance in print. However, he never finishes them for when he brings his intellect to bear on them he finds them all identical (conventional) with no aim but to please by inciting only the most vulgar emotional responses—and even this they barely achieve since the reader can barely follow narratives so full of *desaforados disparates* (colossal nonsense).⁹⁷ Flaubert aims to control his creation by reason and refuses to leave room for any emotional or imaginative “nonsense” in *Madame Bovary*. He wants to create one thing alone in his work: illusion. He is not after bringing his reader to tears:

La première qualité de l'Art et son but est *l'illusion*. L'émotion, laquelle s'obtient souvent par certains sacrifices de détails poétiques, est une toute autre chose est d'une ordre inférieur. J'ai pleuré à des melodramas qui ne valaient pas quatre sous et Goethe ne m'a jamais mouillé l'oeil si ce n'est d'admiration.⁹⁸

(The foremost quality of art, and its goal, is illusion. Emotion, which is often achieved through the sacrifice of poetic details, is an entirely different thing—a thing of inferior order. Worthless melodramas have made me cry, and Goethe has never brought a tear to my eye—except in admiration.)

⁹⁶ Forcione, Alban K. *Cervantes, Aristotle, and the Persiles*. Princeton UP: Princeton, 1970

⁹⁷ *Don Quijote*, Book I, Chapter 47, p.386 in Lathrop edition

⁹⁸ Corr. V.II. Letter to Louise of September 16, 1853. P. 433

Along with censoring his penchant for the fantastic and his emotions, Flaubert also wants to create a work devoid of moral opinions. The pursuit of impersonality must be accompanied by a strict impartiality. Any work meant to be read as morally prescriptive is by nature limited in his view. And furthermore, more often than not, such works are lack verisimilitude. In the following passage Flaubert expresses this—initially in response to the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and proceeds to include Balzac as an author also guilty of this corruption. How can a great novel a political or social agenda? In his view, a specific agenda necessarily precludes a work's universality. Literature should be above the contingencies of political and/or moral dogma. Preaching morality and ideology should be left to the church and the government. He concludes by stating that a work of art—far from seeming to be a product of an identifiable set of values—should be objective:

C'est pourquoi l'Oncle Tom me paraît un livre étroit. Il est fait à un point de vue moral et religieux. Il fallait le faire à un point de vue *humain*. Je n'ai pas besoin pour m'attendrir d'un esclave que l'on torture, que cet esclave soit brave homme, bon père, bon époux, et chante des hymnes et lise l'évangile... Est-ce qu'on a besoin de faire des réflexions sur l'esclavage? Montrez-le, voilà tout... Balzac n'a pas échappé à ce défaut, il est legitimiste, catholique, aristocrate.—L'auteur, dans son oeuvre doit être comme Dieu dans l'univers, présent par tout, et visible nulle part. L'art étant une seconde nature, le createur de cette nature-là doit agir par des procédés analogues: que l'on sente dans tous les atomes, à tous les aspects, une impassibilité cachée et infinie. L'effect, pour le spectateur, doit être une espèce d'ébahissement.⁹⁹
(That's why I find Uncle Tom to be a narrow book. It is written from a moral and religious point of view. It should have been written from a human point of view. In order to feel empathy for a slave, I have no

⁹⁹ Corr. V.II Letter to Louise Colet of December 9, 1852. pp203-204

need for him to be tortured, nor must he be a brave man, a good father, nor a good husband who sings hymns and reads the Gospel... Is it really necessary to reflect on slavery? Show it, that's all that's needed. Balzac was not spared from this weakness either: he was legitimist, catholic, aristocratic... The author in his work must be as God is in the universe, omnipresent, yet completely invisible. Art being a second nature, its creator should have a procedure analogous to God's: he must be palpable in every atom, in every aspect, yet remain impassively hidden and infinite. The effect on the reader must be one of amazement).

To recapitulate, during the writing of *Madame Bovary* Flaubert's is fanatically obsessed with the following: the style of his prose, and the determination to elevate a base subject through Art; the preparation of detailed outlines; the deliberate restraint of Romantic excesses (fantastical imaginings, personal outpourings, creative spontaneity, sentimental manipulations); and the pursuit of impartiality and objectivity. In short, his approach to composing in prose has shifted from the freedom of Romanticism to an impersonal, almost scientific method—one which he had heralded as early as 1845¹⁰⁰

His research for the novel and detailed planning of every scene will obsess him. Though he complains incessantly about the difficulty of writing in such a way, not to mention his intense hatred of the subject ("sujet, personnage, effet, etc., tout est hors de moi")¹⁰¹ he enjoys his new approach of technical discipline and observation. He proceeds to examine the bourgeoisie as if he were an envoy from another planet gathering information on an alien species.

¹⁰⁰ See end of first *L'éducation sentimentale* and first letters to Louise

None of the above will come easily, and the composition of *Madame Bovary* will be a singularly unpleasant experience for Flaubert. He ceaselessly complains about the slowness of the writing, the distasteful vulgarity of his subject, the prison like restraint of the need to represent things exactly as they would be in life. His two main sources for the novel include the minute research of life around him combined with an inner reserve of material: memory of the passions and desires of his Romantic youth. It is easy to see why Flaubert suffers so while writing: drawing from the first source, the observation of contemporary life, is alienating and disgusting, while plumbing the depths of the second, memory, is painful and exhausting.

It may seem surprising that we will be re-visiting the Romantic young Flaubert when he, and we, have seemingly been moving steadily away from both his era and his aesthetic characteristics. How can the reasonable, mature prosaic novelist of *Madame Bovary* have anything to do with the fantastical, passionate, imaginings of youth? Simply put: rules without imagination do not make a work of art.

Let's not forget that Flaubert always admired the fusion of opposites—*passion et combinaison* in Homer and Shakespeare; illusion and reality in Cervantes. The two opposite sides of Flaubert, the Romantic (passion and illusion) and the Prosaic (*combinaison* and reality) can also be allied—not harmoniously, but ironically. I propose that both Flauberts are present in

¹⁰¹ Corr. V.II Letter to Louise Colet of July 26, 1852

Madame Bovary—a work that for the first time gives room to both sides¹⁰² of the author by allowing him to play one against the other. Jean Bruneau understands this combination of the two extremes in the following way:

Rien n'interdit au romancier impersonnel d'utiliser sa propre vie, à condition que cette vie soit pour lui un moyen et non un but¹⁰³; il peut s'observer lui-même comme il observe les autres. Flaubert a donc pu souvent, très souvent, se servir de soi dans son oeuvre, sans qu'on puisse l'accuser de manquer à ses principes.¹⁰⁴
(There's nothing to stop the impersonal novelist from using his own life, as long as his life is used as a means, not as an end in itself; he can observe himself as he observes others. Often, very often, Flaubert was thus able to use himself in his work, without being guilty of betraying his own principles.)

Bruneau's observation -- that despite the fact that much of *Madame Bovary* is drawn from Flaubert's own life, the work remains, on principle, impersonal is a basic but very important insight. If we recall the suggestion that he *must have* used a "real life" model for *Madame Bovary* (made by both his guileless fans and his perfidious critics) in light of Bruneau's point, it is easy to see how misunderstood Flaubert must have felt. Anyone who thinks that the events and characters in the novel *Madame Bovary* -- as presented and arranged by its

¹⁰² Let's not forget his important comment on this subject: Pas si reveur encore que l'on pense, je sais voir et voir comme voient les myopes, jusque dans les pores des choses, parce qu'ils se fourrent le nez dessus. Il y a en moi, littérairement parlant, deux bonshommes distincts un qui est épris les sonorités de la phrase et des sommets de l'idée; un autre qui fouille et creuse le vrai tant qu'il peut, qui aime à accuser le petit fait aussi puissamment que le grand, qui voudrais vous faire sentir presque matériellement les choses qu'il reproduit; celui-là aime à rire et se plaît dans les animalités de l'homme.

¹⁰³ This is a reference to Romantic autobiography where the telling of the life was the end in itself.

¹⁰⁴ Bruneau, p.479

author Flaubert—correspond to any *specific reality*, is of course as ridiculous a reader as Emma or Don Quijote in their attempt to make literature real.

The Theme of the Reader

One praises the taste for reading that is widespread now, but good Lord! What a mess and excess of reading that is! It damns itself through the very fact that it seizes so restlessly at the new, though it may not be new at all. Only the clumsiest of passivities can lead to this addiction, that can neither think nor act; and such people are not able to even have regular dreams or they would otherwise be capable of imagining much better things than those that can be found in their novels. Their own life is insignificant and empty.

August Wilhelm Schlegel

We have thus generally established that Flaubert has learned—from his own mistakes, from Bouilhet, and especially from Cervantes—a new approach to literature. He will work as a conscious and disciplined artist; avoid excesses of all kinds, elevate his subject through superior style, sustain the illusion of reality; and maintain an impersonal and objective tone throughout. In *Don Quijote*, Cervantes imitates reality and he imitates fiction: Flaubert has essentially *learned to imitate Cervantes's imitation of both*. Though we will not consider each and every formal parallel between the two novels, it is useful to look at a few examples to grasp and illustrate the specific implications and extent of Flaubert's "imitation" of *Don Quijote*. The above mentioned techniques in the approach to *Madame Bovary* allow Flaubert to reproduce, to some degree, the deep irony of Cervantes's novel: the collision course between

the hero's extravagant ideas (poetic, romantic) and the vulgarity of the material world (prosaic, real) which infiltrates every level of *Don Quijote*. As we will see in the following examples, it is the analogous use of the constant violence produced by the clashes of these two extremes—the poetic and the prosaic—that gives such vigor, scope, and novelty to both novels.

First, let's briefly consider the role of the novels within the novels—those that fuel the imagination of the two main characters. Both Alonso Quixano and Emma have “home bases” in provincial towns in which there is nothing better to do than read popular romances. Both characters read obsessively and go to extremes in order to devote their attention to the fantasy existences fed by their readings. Alonso Quixano stays up all night to keep fanning the fires of his imagination, and Emma even reads at the table while taking meals with her husband. As we know from the very first chapter of *Don Quijote, Part I*, Alonso Quixano's readings of chivalric romances drive him “mad”. No longer content with living the great adventures of the chivalric knights of yore vicariously, he is determined to do the impossible: to become, in contemporary Spain, a chivalric knight himself. Emma's passion is, as we know, the reading of the sentimental romances by Walter Scott, George Sand, etc. She equally is not satisfied with *merely* reading *about* the romantic heroines in the novels, or the great emotions described by romantic poets, and also would like to translate the fiction into reality and become a real-life romantic heroine. I emphasize the “merely” for the great irony is that she, like

Alonso Quixano, should expect anything more from the reading of a romance novel than distraction and entertainment. Yet they both believe that the reading of fictions should change reality, and confer new identities upon them.

Alonso's imagination is inflamed enough to spark his radical transformation into Don Quijote *de la Mancha* (a slight transformation of the name of his favorite knight from the romances –*Amadis de Gaula*).

Novels are thus presented as pernicious and contagious. They are clearly at odds with the social values of their respective provincial, Catholic milieus (La Mancha and Rouen) for in both works it is common knowledge that novels pose a great danger to society. The fact that Alonso Quijano and Emma delude themselves simply proves the existence of this danger to the other characters. Alonso Quijano's books—except for the innocent pastoral novels—are burned at the stake (by the Canon, the Barber, the housekeeper, and the niece) in an *auto da fe* resonant with inquisitorial symbolism. The Canon and the Barber will recommend that he read religious works instead of the novels. Novels in the world of *Madame Bovary* are equally feared. Emma first discovered novels while at her convent—only because a disobedient seamstress secretly lent them to “the older girls”. Later when Emma is married and her reading has become her sole activity, her mother-in-law, whose voice echos that of the general public, complains to Charles about Emma's habits: “Elle s'occupe! A quoi donc? A lire des romans, des mauvais livres ... qui sont contre la

religion...quelqu'un qui n'a pas de religion finit toujours par tourner mal.”¹⁰⁵

(She keeps herself busy! With what? With reading novels, evil books...that are anti-religious...a person with no religion always turns out badly). Charles's mother's resolve to forbid Emma's reading habits to continue is as ironically amusing as the scene of the burning of Don Quijote's “evil” books:

Donc, il fut résolu que l'on empêcherait Emma de lire des romans. L'entreprise ne semblait point facile. La bonne dame s'en chargea: elle devait, quand elle passerait par Rouen, aller en personne chez le loueur de livres et lui représenter qu'Emma cessait ses abonnements. N'aurait-on pas le droit d'avertir la police, si le libraire persistait quand même dans son métier d'empoisonneur?¹⁰⁶
(Thus, it was resolved that Emma would be forbidden to read novels. The undertaking wouldn't be at all easy. The good woman took charge: the next time she passed through Rouen, she would go in person to the book-lender and tell him that Emma was cancelling her suscriptions. Wouldn't they be in their right to contact the police, if the book-seller persisted in his role of poisoner?)

Charles's mother, Madame Bovary I, in her belief that novels are poison, and that their procurers (the clerks of lending libraries) should be subject to criminal penalty, echos Don Quijote's niece and housekeeper who beg the Canon and the Barber to burn all the books in the hero's library. They are convinced that the books contain evil spirits that, like germs, will infect the household if not destroyed by fire. The attacks on novels are an important theme in both works that reflects a sentiment ruefully felt by their authors: that society is always fundamentally anti-literature. *Don Quijote* and *Madame Bovary* would respectively be subjected to censorship in their times.

¹⁰⁵ MB, p. 156

Literature is presented as playing two possible roles in worlds of our two novels. The first is as escapist entertainment that is clearly *potentially* morally pernicious –yet not all the characters who enjoy these literary escapes meet the fates of our hero and heroine. For example in *Don Quijote* the innkeeper's daughter enjoys listening to the romances, and succumbs to their escapist pull temporarily, yet they do not seem to affect her sanity. The innkeeper's response to the fantastic tales of the chivalric knights, however, shows how tenuous the general public's understanding of fiction is. He insists that every fantastic act described in the novels is true (i.e. that the knight Felixmarte de Hircania cut five giants in half at the waist, that he singlehandedly defeated an army of millions, that snakes in the palace gardens could become old men, etc.). He defends his belief by stating that were these tales lies, the Royal Council would never have allowed them to be published! Despite his steadfast belief in the tales, the innkeeper explains that he would never suffer the imitative madness of Don Quijote for one logical reason-- he knows very well that the custom of chivalric knights has gone out of fashion long ago!¹⁰⁷

In *Madame Bovary* Emma is not the only character affected by reading. Léon, her young lover, is also fond of literature—though he prefers poetry to prose as he finds the former tenderer and more conducive to tears. This

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ DQ, p.I, Book 32

distinction aside, he shares Emma's romantic affinities and describes the experience of reading in the following manner, to which Emma agrees enthusiastically.

On ne songe à rien, continuait-il, les heures passent. On se promène immobile dans le pays que l'on croit voir, et votre pensée, s'enlacant à la fiction, se joue dans les détails ou poursuit le contour des aventures. Elle se mêle aux personnages; il semble que c'est vous qui palpez leurs costumes.

--C'est vrai! c'est vrai! disait-elle¹⁰⁸

("One thinks of nothing", he went on "the hours pass. On strolls immobile through a land one believes to actually see, and your thought, intertwined with the story, has a part in following every detail of every adventure. You become one with the characters, and it seems that it is your heart that beats under their clothes.

"It's true! It's true!" She said.)

His description of the effects of Romantic literature is accurate, however Léon is not as vulnerable to these effects as Emma. As he reveals later on in the novel, he is—despite his claims to the contrary—more prosaic than poetic and would never gamble real security and comfort for any romantic ideal. Léon uses the novels' overblown romanticism—to entertain himself, to make himself feel a more interesting, sensitive, and passionate soul, to establish a common connection to Emma—but he disengages from the novelistic world at will.

Thus an assortment of characters from both novels enjoy popular romances (the innkeeper, his daughter; Léon, etc.) yet only the main characters, Don Quixote and Emma, are radically transformed by their

readings. Only they, unwilling to disengage from the fantasy, come to inhabit an imaginary world built upon novelistic conventions and desires. As their readings delude them into an unrealistic, seductive vision of an imaginary world, they become oblivious to the social and moral norms of the real world. Preferring the poetic fantasy of their romances, these readers not only imitate the lives of the heros/heroines of these novels, but also of course cease to imitate their prosaic realities. In other words, Emma and Don Quijote—in their effort to emulate the lives of their model heros/heroines--cease to conform to society. In an ironic twist on the renaissance concept of “exemplarity” in art, instead of imitating life, they choose to imitate art and in this sense they may both be seen as figures for the artist. The question is: *what kind of artists?*

Don Quijote is a firm believer in imitation and compares his imitation of chivalric heroes to the artist’s imitation of reality. His idea is that the key to fiction—imitation-- can be applied to life. The idea that life and fiction are inseparable was essentially Flaubert’s idea in his youth—an idea that would, of course, disillusion him and which he would surpass. Most of Flaubert’s early ideas about life had been heavily influenced by fiction making him prey to the exact same confusion that Don Quijote is the victim of. Flaubert’s early search for his dreams of passion and idealism in life, in love, even briefly in

¹⁰⁸ MB; p.107

religion¹⁰⁹ taught him that the active life does not correspond to the imagination. As we know, his realization made him determined to not fall victim again to disillusionment. He thus withdrew to devote his life to his imagination. Don Quijote and Emma both have similar moments of lucidity, but not until their deaths. When Emma dies by poison, we cannot help but think of Charles's mother's accusation that the novels are poison. In a way Emma dies poisoned by her inability to give up the impossible mission to make the real adhere to her dreams.

She is clearly drawn from the model of Flaubert in his youth, and it is not without a certain smugness—the superiority of his newfound irony and objectivity-- that he dashes her illusions again and again, and shows the irony of her situation. Emma and Léon's dialogue at the inn at Yonville—in which they discover with joy their shared sentimental romanticism—is a parody of everything they enthusiastically claim to hold dear. When Emma, who has the most conventional and common “dreams” imaginable defiantly declares to Léon that “Je déteste les héros communs et les sentiments tempérés, comme il y en a dans la nature”¹¹⁰ the chasm between her idea of who she is, and who she in fact is, becomes all too evident. Yet while Flaubert uses irony in the presentation of his heroine in this scene, he does not want us to be able to simply, and coldly, dismiss Emma as a laughable character. Irony is used in

¹⁰⁹ For more on Flaubert's religious and mystical crises, see Bruneau, *Les Oeuvres de Jeunesse*

¹¹⁰ MB, p. 107

Madame Bovary, as it is in *Don Quixote*, not as a means of satiric annihilation of the ideal, but instead to highlight the difference between real and ideal.

However ludicrous and empty Emma's ideas about herself, about life, about art may be, her character nevertheless possesses a certain pathos. Flaubert precisely describes the effects he wished to produce in this scene in the following

extract:

Je suis à faire un de conversation d'un jeune homme et d'une jeune dame sur la littérature, la mer, les montagnes, la musique, tous les sujets poétiques enfin.—On pourrait la prendre au sérieux, et elle est d'une grande intention de grotesque. Ce sera, je crois, la première fois qu'on verra un livre qui se moque de sa jeune première et de son jeune premier. L'ironie n'enlève rien au pathétique. Elle l'outre au contraire—Dans ma 3^e partie, qui sera pleine de choses farces, je veux qu'on pleure.¹¹¹

I am writing a scene with a dialogue between a young man and a young lady on literature, the sea, the mountains, music, in short all the poetic subjects. It could be taken seriously, but its intention is decidedly grotesque. It will be, I think, the first time we see a book that mocks both its heroine and its hero. Irony doesn't interfere with pathos, on the contrary, it pushes pathos even further. In the third part of my book, which will be full of farcical moments, I want the reader to cry.

It is logical that Flaubert seems pleased with himself for it has taken him tremendous willpower and repression to become an objective author. No longer will he confuse life and art, nor purposelessly and ingenuously let his imagination and passion run free, and rule his reason. Up until now, lest we forget, he had written (compared to the originality and method in *Madame Bovary* and later works) highly derivative and/or chaotic and clumsy works. It

¹¹¹¹¹ Corr. V.II Letter to Louise Colet of October 9, 1852

isn't really until he is planning and writing *Madame Bovary* that he can manipulate the aesthetics of prose to produce the precise and subtle effects he desires. In contrast to the Romantic artists he now has contempt for—and which Emma and Don Quijote are both figures for—Flaubert, like Cervantes, can regulate his imagination with reason. The Flaubert before *Madame Bovary* was still blinded by the dazzling effects of art—like Don Quijote thinking Maese Pedro's puppets were real. With *Madame Bovary* he takes a lucid craftsman's interest in artistic creation: he notices the puppet strings and learns from the master puppeteer—Cervantes (who is the Maese Pedro of the novel form) how they are manipulated. Cervantes's character Maese Pedro is in fact an apt figure for the secular creator—like God he is all-controlling and invisible—ruling the literary work.

We have seen where abandoning oneself to the winds of the imagination got Flaubert in *La Tentation* (and where it leads the main characters of the two novels under discussion: death and disillusionment). Ironical as it may seem, and this is central to the *quixotic* legacy, the road to freedom in the novel—as master-minded by Cervantes—is self-censorship. This lesson, filtered through Flaubert's multiple readings of the *Quijote*, would be crucial to his approach to writing.

The *quixotic* novel is thematically complex since it juxtaposes so many elements: fiction and reality, new and old, current imitators and their models from the past. To recapitulate, the reader as character has a particular use in

Don Quixote and *Madame Bovary*. Novels and other forms of literature—roughly from Cervantes’ time onwards—were to become increasingly available. While this situation obviously had advantages, it also had drawbacks. First, the population of popular readers would grow and would affect and determine the kind of contemporary literature in distribution. More importantly perhaps, the situation became one of intense pressure for the novelist. What was the modern writer to do about the plethora of models he now had at his disposal? The Romanticism current in France in Flaubert’s youth proposes a solution: reject all models and celebrate the complete freedom of the imagination. Again, we’ve seen the dead-end to which that brought Flaubert. For literary models could be *rejected*—Flaubert and Cervantes both reject the romances within their novels—and they could also be *used* and transformed (as they also both do), but in the endeavour to create an important, original literary work, models could not be *disregarded nor merely imitated*. Both learned a difficult lesson: To disregard past models is to be unaware of one’s historical position within the literary tradition, on the other hand to *merely imitate* is to repeat emptily. The *quixotic* author is, *a priori*, acutely aware of his “belatedness”. It is this very awareness that gives shape to his/or her work and propels it into uncharted territory.

MADAME BOVARY AND DON QUIJOTE

The novelist must feel a peculiar tension between the words, conventions, and ideas that the masters of his craft have handed on to him and the facts, impressions, and experiences that life continues to offer. We do not wonder that the novel is such a self-conscious form, or that so many novels have been written about novels.

--Harry Levin¹

DON QUIJOTE AND MADAME BOVARY: GROUNDS FOR COMPARISON

It may seem, at first glance, that the differences between *Don Quijote* and *Madame Bovary* outweigh the similarities. Perhaps because of the apparent disparities in style, tone, subject matter—not to mention the different nationalities, language, and epochs of the authors—the works have rarely been compared. Despite Flaubert's repeated acknowledgement of his debt to the *Quijote*, the nature of the debt has received relatively little scholarly attention. When the two novels have been compared, attention has often been drawn to the two characters, their imaginations defined by idealized romance/Romantic illusions, pitted against the harsh reality of the "real world". But, is *Madame Bovary* in fact a novel about the conflict between Romanticism and realism? Emma's dreams have often been described as idealistic, as "higher" than anything the material world has to offer, and it has been said that Flaubert's sympathies really—at least partially—lie with his heroine.²

¹ "Romance and Realism" in *The Gates of Horn*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.

A well-known example of the comparison made on this basis comes from Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre did not live to write the projected volume of *L'idiot de la famille* in which he would have given, in detail, his reading of *Bovary*, but Hazel Barnes had access to Sartre and his notes for this project and she sums up his view on the matter: "Sartre notes that *Madame Bovary* and *Don Quixote* have the same subject...Sartre lays stress on the resemblance, not in the satiric intent of the two authors, but in the qualities of the hero and heroine—the grandeur of their aspirations, their fallen greatness, the tragedy that dignifies their foolishness—in short (in Flaubert's eyes, at least), their essential rightness in the face of common sense."

It is true that Don Quijote has grand aspirations, and a great deal of what he says in his moments of lucidity is not only right, but brilliant. Can the same really be said of Emma? Is Emma, as Barnes (reiterating Sartre) claims "in Flaubert's eyes", *right* in the face of common sense? And where, in *Madame Bovary*, is the common sense?

I would argue that Emma and Don Quixote are perhaps the most dissimilar features one comes across in comparing the two novels. Indeed, amongst a series of surprising—and profound-- parallels that emerge in a close examination of the novels, the fundamental difference between the protagonists is what makes each novel so particular to its author's vision, so reflective of its

² See for example, the chapter on *Madame Bovary* in Barnes, Hazel. *E.Sartre and Flaubert*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

epoch. What makes the novels similar is their use of language, the constant ironic tension created between the idealized language of romance convention, and the de-idealized language of literary realism. Both novels show an acute awareness of their positions within the tradition of prose literature by playing with, and stretching the bounds of these prose genres. Regarding the issue of literary genre, Harry Levin pointed out (in a famous remark from one of the few studies that addresses the points of contact between Flaubert and Cervantes) one of the profound similarities between the works: that Flaubert wanted to “set forth what Kierkegaard had spied out, to invade the continent of sentimentality, to create a female Quixote--mock romantic where Cervantes had been mock-heroic”.³

The parallel set up by Levin also highlights a discrepancy between the works: heroic is *not* the same as sentimental. Heroic evokes a person, or epoch, a person or figure with heroic qualities. Cervantes was familiar with the heroes of epic poetry and of the chivalric romances, and he had also been a hero himself in several battles including the battle of Lepanto. Throughout his life Cervantes remembered the period of his heroic adventures proudly and with great nostalgia, and the character of Don Quijote, though he is also mad, foolish, and stubborn, retains some positive heroic qualities at least in his imagination.

³ Levin, Harry. “The Female Quixote” in *Madame Bovary and the Critics: A Collection of Essays*, ed. B.F. Bart (New York: NYUP, 1966)

On the other hand, By the time Flaubert wrote *Madame Bovary* he had read many sentimental romances and had “overcome” his own sentimental adventures. Flaubert does not think of his “sentimental” past with nostalgia and pride, but instead he views them with contempt and derision. In Emma’s role of mock-sentimental “heroine” there are few redeeming qualities. Emma does not stand in contrast to convention—which Don Quijote does, despite his great attempts to become a conventional chivalric hero—but instead illustrates even in the depth of her “illusions” the repetitiveness, banality, and materiality of convention.

At the end of the *Quijote*, after Don Quijote’s death, the pen belonging to the “author” of the novel (technically this is the “fictional author” but in my opinion it is Cervantes speaking—in a rare personal manifestation) has the last word in a moving farewell speech: “Para mí sola nació don Quijote, y yo para él. El supo obrar, y yo escribir. Solos los dos somos para en uno...” (For me alone Don Quixote was born, and I for him; it was his to act, mine to write; we together make but one...) Far from this moving intimacy that Cervantes establishes between pen, character, and reader, Flaubert ends *Bovary* on a note of (heavy-handed) irony that reports on Homais : “Il vient de recevoir la croix d’honneur”. Flaubert’s novel, which begins with Charles and ends with Charles and Homais, leaves no place for emotion at the end. The world goes on about its business after Emma’s death, and the world and its business, represented by Homais, is *not* the world of “common sense”. From a Marxist perspective it

would be tempting to pit the immaterial dreams of Emma against the commonsense bourgeois, i.e. Homais. But Emma herself is bourgeois, her desires are absolutely material, and the chasm perceived between her character and that of Homais is not so great.

In a famous line from his correspondance, Flaubert claimed that his “heroine” could be found crying in twenty villages all over France. On the one hand this shows what he saw as the universality of his character, but it also reveals what her creator saw as her commonplaceness. While the character of Don Quijote has been read in many ways, it is impossible to ascribe to him the mediocrity Flaubert clearly intended Emma to represent. This is one of the key differences between the novels.

The challenge Flaubert took on in *Madame Bovary* was to reveal the conventions of both literature and society in a work of literature that dodged convention. The only unconventional feature is Flaubert’s writing upon which he depends entirely to differentiate himself, his novel, from the very mediocrity it sets out to mock. In 1852 he complains about the difficulty of this endeavour in a letter to Louise Colet: “Quelle lourde machine à construire qu’un livre, et compliquée surtout! Ce que j’écris presentement risque d’être du Paul de Kock si je n’y mets une forme profondément littéraire.”⁴ Of what does this *forme profondément littéraire* consist? What techniques does Flaubert use in order to ensure the differentiation of his novel from one of a Paul de

Kock? Charles-Paul de Kock—a bestselling novelist who wrote over a hundred comic and sentimental popular novels—stands in relation to Flaubert as the authors of the authors of the chivalric romances stood in relation to Cervantes. As we have seen, Flaubert was a renegade Romantic by the time he wrote *Bovary*—he had enjoyed being swept off his feet by Romantic attitudes but had since realized that as a novelist he was better off trying to keep his feet on the ground. This keeping of feet on the ground is what I refer to as his turn towards self-consciousness. Flaubert himself describes the kind of writing he aspires to produce as “barefoot” writing, to which he contrasts works that “wear boots”. *Don Quijote* is the example he gives of a “barefoot” work, whereas the work of Beaumarchais (i.e. *The Marriage of Figaro*) “wears boots”:

Quelle pauvre création, par exemple, que Figaro à côté de Sancho! Comme on se le figure sur son âne, mangeant des oignons crus et talonnant le roussin, tout en causant avec son maître. Comme on voit ces routes d’Espagne, qui ne sont nulle part décrites. Mais Figaro où est-il? A la Comédie Française. *Littérature de société*. Or je crois qu’il faut détester celle-là. Moi je la hais. J’aime les oeuvres qui *sentent la sueur*, celles où l’on voit les muscles à travers le linge et qui marchent pieds nus, ce qui est plus difficile que de porter des bottes.⁵

(Compared to Sancho, for example, Figaro is such a feeble creation! How easy it is to imagine Sancho on his donkey, eating raw onions and spurring on his nag, all the while chatting away with his master. How clearly we see those Spanish roads, though they are described nowhere. On the other hand, where do we imagine Figaro? At the Comédie Française. Society literature. Well I think it should be detested. I hate it. I like works that smell of sweat, works that show their muscles through

⁴ Correspondence, II, p. 156

⁵ Correspondance, Volume II, p. 418

their underclothes, and that walk barefoot—which is more difficult than wearing boots.)

Litterature de société is artificial and facile, Flaubert wants to create a work which like the *Quijote* walks barefoot through its prosaic subject, in a transparent style that shows the work's muscles. For this, the prose must be mobile, and like a great actor, be able to make itself invisible as it lends itself to the portrayal of all kinds of different roles without interfering and clouding in its own representation. For Flaubert, Figaro cannot transcend his contingent existence on the stage, and in this specificity he is not *true*. To be true literature must represent universal, not contingent types:

Ce qui distingue les grands génies, c'est la généralisation et la création. Ils résument en un type des personnalités éparses et apportent à la Conscience du genre humain des personnages nouveaux. Est-ce qu'on ne croit pas à l'existence de Don Quichotte comme à celle de César?⁶ (What distinguishes great geniuses is their ability to generalize and create. In one type they can sum up scattered personality traits, and can bring new characters to the attention of human kind. Isn't the existence of Don Quijote as believable as that of Cesar?)

In an important insight, Harry Levin transforms Pascal's maxim "True eloquence makes fun of eloquence" into "le vrai roman se moque du roman" to show that Flaubert's "barefoot" prose exposes the artifice of other types of literary art⁷. By deprecating the "literary" that conceals art under a pair of boots—whether sentimental romance, *litterature de société*, or realism—the

⁶ Correspondence, Volume II, p. 164

⁷ Levin, Harry. *Gates of Horn*. p. 51

true novel shows that it imitates critically, and not through empty convention. This of course sounds very much like parody or a “mock” genre, but in this case the goal is not solely humorous. The goal is to overhaul and renew the nature of prose fiction. The strategy in achieving this goal is once again the following fundamental idea from the *Quijote*: only by acknowledging—yet not falling prey to—the trappings of convention and genre, can a novel hope to represent truth.

Flaubert’s criticism of Emma’s imagination is a sort of recapitulation of the Romantic movement itself, covering the primitive idyll of *Paul et Virginie*, through the “polychromatic mysticism” of Chateaubriand, towards the vicarious passions of George Sand and Balzac.⁸ This is important because it is Flaubert’s position in his time—a position of resistance to falling into the category of “Romantic” (and likewise from falling into the tradition of “realism”—which he was, notwithstanding his protests, subsequently placed in) that aligns him quite closely to the counter-position Cervantes found himself in sixteenth century Spain. One might add to this the strict censorship of literature in Flaubert’s epoch in France and the challenges of writing under such circumstances—a challenge taken to the extreme in Flaubert’s case by the legal charges and trial he endured because of *Madame Bovary*’s perceived immorality. Had Flaubert written a manifesto in which he directly stated his distilled views on the church, the bourgeoisie, marriage, contemporary

literature and so forth—he surely would have not only been tried but imprisoned for life. The beauty of the novel form for Flaubert was that in it he could express his portrait of the world in an unassailable way. Maître Senard, the lawyer handling the defense of *Madame Bovary*, even managed to convince the jury that the novel was primarily an indictment of adultery!

It is these deep-seated similarities that makes, from Flaubert's own perception of his position within his contemporary literary scene, Cervantes' s novelistic techniques so appropriate, so timely. This attempt to elucidate the oft-mentioned, and seldom studied, “debt” of *Madame Bovary* to the *Quijote*, takes as its direction the points of contact between the authors, rather than between the characters. In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert embeds and transforms conventions from Romantic fiction, conventions from “realist” fiction, yet neither of these two defines the novel, as it works in opposition to both. As the *Quijote* simultaneously incorporated and resisted the picaresque and the romance, *Madame Bovary* shows its author's authors skill at playing his tune in the realist key, and in the Romantic key, but that these are only small components of a greater novelistic symphony.

Flaubert's childhood love of the *Quijote* marked him for life, as he himself confessed just before settling in to write *Madame Bovary* in 1850 :“
Quand je m'analyse, je trouve en moi, encore fraîches et avec toutes leurs influences... Don Quichotte et de mes songeries d'enfant” (“When I analyze

⁸ Levin, *The Gates of Horn* , p. 252

myself, I find within me, still fresh and with their powers of influence intact...*Don Quijote* and my childhood daydreams"); and again as he was beginning to write in 1852: "Je retrouve toutes mes origines dans le livre que je savais par coeur avant de savoir lire, *Don Quichotte*."⁹("I find all my origins in the book I knew by heart before I even knew how to read: *Don Quijote*"). Flaubert's childhood love of the novel is significant in and of itself—especially if we consider from a Proustian point of view the artist's task as a lifelong attempt to elucidate those first, defining childhood impressions (it surely is not a coincidence that Proust had read all of Flaubert's correspondence). Though Flaubert does not go into lengthy elaborations about the nature of the impact of the *Quijote* on his childhood, he makes the force of the impression very clear. A very eloquent statement on the relationship between childhood and artistic creation was made by the Polish author Bruno Schulz. Though this refers to Schulz himself and has nothing explicitly to do with Flaubert, I see it as applicable to Flaubert and especially to the way his childhood readings of Cervantes's work marked him.

I do not know just how in childhood we arrive at certain images, images of crucial significance to us. They are like filaments in a solution around which the sense of the world crystallizes for us...They are meanings that seem predestined for us, ready and waiting at the very entrance of our life...Such images constitute a program, establish our soul's fixed fund of capital, which is allotted to us very early in the form of inklings and half-conscious feelings. It seems to me that the rest of our life passes in the interpretation of those insights, in the attempt to master them with all the wisdom we acquire, to draw them through all the

⁹ Correspondance

range of intellect we have in our possession. These early images mark the boundaries of the artists's creativity. His creativity is a deduction from assumptions already made. He cannot now discover anything new; he learns only to understand more and more the secret entrusted to him at the beginning, and his art is a constant exegesis, a commentary on that single verse that was assigned him. But art will never unravel that secret completely. The secret remains insoluble. The knot in which the soul was bound is no trick knot, coming apart with a tug at its end. On the contrary, it grows tighter and tighter. We work at it, untying, tracing the path of the string, seeking the end, and out of this manipulating comes art.¹⁰

Thus joined to —and always shaped by-- the power of these childhood impressions and their defining, lifelong impact, are Flaubert's mature attempts to write his own novel, to devise an aesthetics of prose fiction. When, as an adult, he read the *Quijote* again, he had a different aesthetic appreciation of the work's techniques and achievements. It seems likely that Flaubert's adult appreciation of the *Quijote* was influenced —directly or indirectly--by Friedrich Schlegel, and directly by Goethe. Flaubert's literary models reveal that his taste coincided to a great extent with that of Friedrich Schlegel. It is probable that he was familiar with the work of this German thinker. In the first *Education Sentimentale* Schlegel is mentioned, among other authors whose works are on the protagonist Henri's desk. Since this early novel is largely autobiographical it is tempting to say that the works of Schlegel were also on the young Flaubert's desk, however there is no other direct mention—at least none that I have found--of the man or his work in Flaubert's letters.

¹⁰ in the Introduction by Jerzy Ficowski to Schulz, Bruno *The Street of Crocodiles* New York:Viging

Nevertheless, there is a great affinity in Flaubert and Schlegel's understandings of Cervantes's contribution to evolution of prose. For Schlegel the only two novelists of all time were Cervantes and Goethe—in that order-- and Flaubert agrees with this judgement. Furthermore, Goethe too admired Cervantes enormously, and *Don Quijote* played a strikingly similar role in both Goethe and Flaubert's literary developments. The relationship between Goethe and Cervantes is a vast subject that demands a focus that the current study cannot accommodate, however there are a few key features that can be briefly pointed out as they illuminate Flaubert's relationship to Cervantes. We may even wonder—though, again, this question would have to be answered elsewhere-- whether Flaubert didn't borrow the idea of “borrowing” techniques of *Don Quijote* from Goethe.

Goethe also borrowed many techniques from Cervantes which can all be categorised as ironic. For example, in *Wilhelm Meister* he borrows the device of explicitly –and repeatedly--assuring the reader that the narration is adhering strictly to historical truth as opposed to being a “mere” literary work. This pretense of obeying historical objectivity is one of the central themes of the *Quijote*. In another example, Goethe's play *Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit* clearly shows Goethe's adoption of Cervantean techniques. In this play, the character of the prince has fallen under the spell of popular contemporary literature exactly as Don Quijote fell under the spell of the chivalric romances.

The significance of this is that it addresses Goethe's own transition from subjectivity to objectivity and irony. Goethe had been –to use the term of of Lienhard Bergel—a “Schwärmer” of the purest strain and had expressed this attitude from his sentimental period to the hilt in *Sorrows of Young Werther*. Like Herder before him, Goethe subsequently “outgrew” this mood and became its severe critic. In his ironic artistic depiction of the Romanticism he had outgrown, Goethe borrowed Cervantes's techniques of self-reflectiveness and parody. This new attitude was revealed in a series of farcical plays which ridiculed “Schwärmerei”.¹¹ In his play, the sentimental prince Oronaro adores a doll, which, as revealed by later inspection, is stuffed with books reflecting “fashionable” literary tastes of the time. These books are the cause of the prince's sentimental “disease” and among the books is *Sorrows of Young Werther*. This recalls the scene in which the priest and the barber in the *Quijote* purge Don Quijote's library, their inventory finds the title *La Galatea* written by a certain Miguel de Cervantes. Thus the playful attitude towards levels of reality and fiction is also borrowed by Goethe. The prince also acts out long monodramas in which he pours forth his devotion to the marionette, and like Don Quijote he is conscious of the theatrical element of his behaviour, yet does not let his consciousness interfere with his performance! The effects of

¹¹ Bergel, Lienhard. “Cervantes in Germany” in *Cervantes Across the Centuries*. Edited by Flores, Angel and Benardete, M.J. New York: Dryden Press, 1947.

literature on the public, the role of the artist, and many other *quixotic* elements are thus revived by Goethe in an ironic Cervantean way.

Goethe mentions *Don Quijote* most frequently “in the years following the sentimental crisis of his youth, at the time when he disciplined himself into taking the complete opposite of his former attitude”.¹² If we substituted the name Flaubert, for Goethe, this statement remains absolutely true.

Another important link between Cervantes and Goethe—which again can be extended to Flaubert—comes from an observation made by Heine and identifies the connection between political and social repression and the use of irony in literature. For Heine, the common element between Cervantes and Goethe was their use of what he calls “humoristic irony”.¹³

Just as Cervantes, at the time of the Inquisition, had to take recourse to humoristic irony in order to hint at his real convictions, without giving open offense to the representatives of the Holy Office, Goethe chose the tone of humoristic irony for that which he, the courtier and minister of state, did not dare to express frankly. Goethe never concealed truth; instead, when he was prevented from showing it nakedly, he clad it in humor and irony. Writers who smart under censorship and mental compulsion of all kinds, are particularly dependent on the ironic and humorous form of expression. This is the only recourse left for intellectual honesty, and in the humoristically ironic disguise this honesty reveals itself most impressively.

As we know, both Cervantes and Flaubert were subjected to censorship by the state, and one wonders to what extent this censorship was internalized and subsequently manifest in their styles as irony. Indeed, self-censorship is one of

¹² Ibid, p. 318

the most prominent features of the *quixotic* author. It is important not only as a safeguard against censorship by the moral/political authorities, but also becomes an aesthetic principle. The authors of the chivalric and sentimental romances paid no heed to censoring themselves, and thus produced prose works weakened by all the flaws which Cervantes and Flaubert parody. The constant surveillance of irony precludes the possibility of falling into the traps of the authors of the romances. Prose and self-censorship, or restraint, are intimately linked for Flaubert who sees his vocation of *prosateur* as a painful, and constant process of repression, and surveillance.

THE PROSAIC FUSION OF IDEAL AND REAL: 1851-1856

...je ne *dé-lis* (sic) pas...*Don Quichotte* ...ce qu'il y a de prodigieux dans *Don Quichotte*, c'est l'absence de l'art et cette perpétuelle fusion de l'illusion et de la réalité qui en fait un livre si comique et si poétique. Quels nains que tous les autres à côté! Comme on se sent petit, mon Dieu! comme on se sent petit!¹⁴

(I can't figure out Don Quijote...what's prodigious about it is the absence of artifice and the perpetual fusion of illusion and reality that make it such a comic and poetic book. What dwarfs all other works are in comparison! How small it makes one feel, my God! How tiny one feels.)

It was the central figure of Saint Flaubert who incarnated and handed on the legend of the artist, who brought the discipline of poetry to the composition of prose, whose religion of style canonized a pedestrian genre into a work of high art.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid, p. 320

¹⁴ Correspondance, Volume II, p. 179. 1852

¹⁵ Levin, Harry. *The Gates of Horn*. p. 448

The previous chapter on Flaubert's literary education illustrated Flaubert's transition into a new conception of his role as an author. Indeed, his vision of himself as a writer is often reminiscent of Don Quijote—he has his models and as they change, so does his conception of himself and of his “vocation”. As I have argued, his re-reading of the *Quijote* corresponds with his search for a way to write a more prosaic—both in the sense of *forme* and *fond*—novel than he has ever written. That novel, over which he will aspire to have complete control, in which nurture will reign over nature, is *Madame Bovary*.

The correspondence from the period of Flaubert's life spent writing *Madame Bovary* (from the autumn of 1851 to the spring of 1856) is full of echos of the commentaries on artistic creation from the *Quijote*—in particular from the dialogue with the Canon and from this especially the final pronouncement of the Canon—“The epic can be written in prose as well as in verse”. Flaubert is obsessed with creating a new kind of prose novel as is reflected by his repeated references to his ambitions and sufferings. If the *Quijote* can be said to offer a coherent theory or vision of what the prose novel should—and should not—be, Flaubert's *Correspondance* offers an equally rich exposition of the writer's newfound appreciation of these principles.

As it was for Cervantes, prose is for Flaubert a raw medium that must be given form. Unlike poetry, it is free, but this freedom is both an advantage and a potential risk therefore the author's first principle must be restraint. The

following excerpts from letters to Louise Colet reveal his goal : to create a prose that is completely new, and at the same time like poetry in its intrinsic unity and beauty. The dates are important for he is in the midst of the composition of *Bovary*.

...pour des vers c'est plus net, la forme est toute *voulue*. La bonne prose pourtant doit être aussi précise que le vers, et sonore comme lui.
 (...with poetry it is much clearer, the form is necessary and determined.
 Yet good prose should be as precise and sonorous as poetry.)
 (letter to Louise Colet, 26-VI-52¹⁶)

Quelle chienne de chose que la prose! Ça n'est jamais fini; il y a toujours à refaire. Je crois pourtant qu'on peut lui donner la consistance du vers. Une bonne phrase de prose doit être comme un bon vers, *inchangeable*, aussi rythmée, aussi sonore. Voilà du moins mon ambition (il y a une chose don't je suis sûr, c'est que personne n'a jamais eu en tête un type de prose plus parait que moi; mais quant à l'exécution, que de faiblesses, que de faiblesses mon Dieu!
 (What a devil prose is! It is never finished, it must always be rewritten. Nevertheless, I think it possible to give prose the consistency of poetry. A good prose sentence should be like a good line of poetry, unchangeable, and equally rhythmic and sonorous. This is, at least, my ambition. (There's one thing I am sure of: no one besides me has ever has in mind a more perfect kind of prose. But as far as my execution goes, there are many weaknesses, my God, so many weaknesses!)

(letter to Louise Colet, 22-VII-52¹⁷)

Les poètes sont heureux; on se soulage dans un sonnet! Mais les malheureux prosateurs, comme moi, sont obligés de tout rentrer.
 (Poets are happy; they take solace in a sonnet! But miserable prose-writers, like myself, are obliged to hold themselves back).
 (letter to Louise Colet, 29-I-1853¹⁸)

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 118

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 135-136

¹⁸ Correspondance, II, p. 245

I would like to illustrate some of the key strategies, by giving a selection of examples, that Flaubert borrows from Cervantes to elude literary conventions and create his own prose style. Like Cervantes, Flaubert hoped to produce a work that broke categories: neither ideal, nor real, but a perpetual fusion of these two types of novelistic language. The author is omni-present, yet never seen; the narrative is at times verisimilar, at times fantastic; the numerous “purple passages” are quickly, and ironically, deflated; and every sign that points the reader to expect a conventional turn, leads instead to a dead end.

As we will see the style of *Madame Bovary*, like that of the *Quijote*, is set up in a pattern of ebb-and-flow between the opposing forces of real and ideal. This system permeates the smallest detail of the language which throughout operates through meaningful juxtaposition of opposites. Charles’s first wife was “bourgeonnée”¹⁹(real) “comme un printemps”²⁰ (ideal)²¹; as Emma and Léon walk towards the wet-nurse’s house, through the outskirts of Yonville, the descriptions of the landscape follow a similar scheme, first with an idealized vision of nature: “...un petit sentier que bordaient des troènes. Ils étaient en fleur et les véroniques aussi, les églantiers, les orties et les ronces légères qui s’élançaient des buissons.” (...a little path bordered by privet hedges. Also in flower were the veronica, the sweet-briers, the wild nettles,

¹⁹ covered in pimples

²⁰ like the Spring

²¹ *Madame Bovary*, p. 71

and the thickets of blackberries sprouting from the bushes.) These bucolic images are undercut, in the very next line, by a more realistic vision: “Par le trou des haies, on aperçevait, dans les *masures*, quelque pourceau sur un fumier, ou des vaches embricolées frottant leurs cornes....devant eux un essaim de mouches voltigeait, en bourdonnant dans l’air chaud.”²² (Between the hedges, one could see some shacks with hogs lying about on dung-heaps, cows rubbing their horns against tree trunks...A swarm of flies flitted about them (Emma and Léon),droning in the hot air.) One can imagine how careful Flaubert was in his conception since this pattern pervades the novel. The examples of this contrasting descriptive style can be found throughout the work, for they are the very identity, the architectural structure of *Madame Bovary*, as they are of *Don Quijote*.

The unity of style in *Madame Bovary* is something Flaubert worked very hard to achieve, watching his own creative process like a hawk. In this period he developed a patience, dedication, and endurance that made him practically unrecognizable from the author of the first *La tentation*. His new artistic motto was borrowed from La Bruyère : “Un bon auteur croit écrire raisonnablement” .(A good author believes he is writing reasonably) But this is easier said than done: “C’est là ce que je demande, écrire raisonnablement et c’est déjà bien de l’ambition...il faut entasser l’un sur l’autre un tas de petits

²² Ibid, p. 156

cailloux pour faire nos pyramides.”²³ (That’s all I ask, to write reasonably, and that in itself is ambitious...in order to build our pyramids, we must pile up our little pebbles, one on top of the other).

In its unedited form, the manuscript of *Bovary* was three thousand and six hundred pages, which were whittled down through endless revisions to three hundred and sixty four. The result is a novel with a particularly well-ordered episodic structure in three parts. Along with the *Quijote*, Flaubert read Dante during the composition of *Bovary* and the clear three part symmetry—with a defined beginning, middle, and end—recalls the classicist aesthetic. Another parallel to Cervantes’s work is the mounting process of illusionment, which reaches a central climax and then descends into disillusionment—the final blows being respectively, Don Quijote’s disenchantment with Dulcinea, and Emma’s disenchantment with Rodolphe.

As the initial readers of *Don Quijote* were mostly those who enjoyed chivalric romances—and expected to find in the novel the kind of adventures and fun they were used to—so Flaubert must have hoped to lure readers accustomed to the conventions of sentimental romances to read *Madame Bovary*. Had their not been a highly publicized trial, in which case the novel would have appeared on bookshop shelves without the reader knowing much about it, Flaubert’s novel would probably have attracted the readers of sentimental novels. From the title, readers would have assumed that it was a

²³ Ibid, p. 288

story about a woman, and therefore probably within the genre of sentimental romance.

The titles of Cervantes's and Flaubert's novels are metonymical illustrations of the ironic fusion of ideal and real operating throughout the works. In *Madame Bovary* the title alone—a woman's name, yet without any aristocratic *de, de la, Princesse*, etc. sets up a very similar situation to *Don Quijote*. The full title of Cervantes's work is *Don Quijote de La Mancha*. Though the "Don" reflects nobility, its juxtaposition with the unflattering "de La Mancha" (as I've noted, on the one hand *mancha* literally means "stain" or "blemish"; on the other the geographical region designated by La Mancha is an infertile and desolate province) deflates any association the reader might have made to the idealized verdant forests of the chivalric tradition. The subtitle of Flaubert's novel—*moeurs de province*—combined with the *Madame Bovary* of the title conjures up a story about a married provincial woman (a "housewife"). Though the etymology of the name Bovary is a debated topic amongst Flaubert scholars, suffice it to say that it is singularly undistinguished—evocative primarily of beef and eggs—and thus wholly unsuited as a name for the heroine of a novel!

Don Quijote's passion for chivalric romances is matched by Emma's desire to emulate the heroines of the Romantic novels she is so fond of. Harry Levin's insight of this parallel between the novels is worth exploring for it is key in Flaubert's *renouvellement* of Cervantes. The Romantic novels Emma

enjoys have many similarities to the chivalric romances. This is not coincidental for one of the founding fathers of the Romantic novels—to whom Flaubert refers several times—is Sir Walter Scott. Sir Walter Scott was a fervent hispanophile and his own novels are tributes not only to the Spanish chivalric romances that Don Quijote read, but also to the *Quijote* itself. Therefore the Spanish chivalric romances are at the very heart of the interconnections between Cervantes, Walter Scott, and Flaubert. Scott's romances share the virtues of their Spanish forerunners—they are entertaining, full of imagination and excitement, but they also share the aesthetic flaws. Hastily written and lacking in verisimilitude, they challenge the educated reader's ability to suspend his or her imagination. Furthermore, their pale beautiful heroines, heroes on horseback, castles and glens, are not only clichés, but very old clichés as they were already outworn genre conventions in the 1500s. Yet none of these flaws impedes Emma from finding vicarious pleasure in these novels.

The effect of portraying the protagonists—Alonso Quijano and Emma—as readers who expect their lives to conform not only to fiction, but more specifically to the conventions of a particular genre—chivalric and sentimental romances—puts the readers of the *Quijote* and *Madame Bovary* in a very strange position. If we expect either of these novels to follow the conventions of the chivalric romance and the sentimental romance—and all readers, no matter how level-headed get involved to some degree in the

adventures of both characters, and if they don't they're missing a key part of the experience—we quickly learn that we were mistaken.

In overhauling outmoded convention ridden genres, Cervantes and Flaubert both knew that a new kind of author was necessary—themselves—a new kind of prose, and a new kind of reader. The reader accustomed to plunge into a “vicarious” existence full of adventures—heroic or amorous—through *Don Quijote* or *Madame Bovary* has their expectations dashed repeatedly.

But Harry Levin's insight about the two novels only offers a partial view of what they have in common. Both Cervantes and Flaubert mock an existing genre, but this is not all they accomplish. Were these two novels merely satires of chivalric and sentimental romances, we would –instead of identifying with the protagonists—merely laugh at them. In fact, if this were the case, the initial responses to Cervantes's work—that it was a parody—would have been correct.

The fact that the protagonists expect from life the same adherence to convention that the reader in Cervantes of Flaubert's time had come to expect from prose fiction is the key to the irony of both works. As a reader, once it has been established that neither novel is a romance, we may entertain the possibility that it is a mock-epic, or mock-romance, but while both have *satiric features*, many other features don't fit the “mock” genre. Clearly neither novelist had as his goal *simply* to send his reader into fits of laughter.

Thus the ironic role of the reader in both novels must be understood as a strategy to coax an ironic response from the reader of the *Quijote* and of *Madame Bovary*. We are intermittently encouraged to laugh (especially in the *Quijote*) to identify with the character, and even to empathize (again, this is much more pronounced in Cervantes's work) but our fundamental position is one of distance from the protagonist whom we cannot ultimately identify with. While parodic genres may cause us to laugh at literary conventions, and satiric works usually have quite a clear target, these novels are more complex because they are permeated by irony, and impose an ironic attitude on the reader, an attitude that makes the reader self-conscious in the reading process. The *quixotic* model that Flaubert borrows is not a model for satire, but a model for irony. Irony and satire may occasionally serve one another, but they are not identical—nor even compatible—in their essence. In his studies on Flaubert, Victor Brombert differentiates satire and irony in a way that is as useful in understanding Cervantes, as it is for understanding Flaubert:

Irony inverts, subverts, camouflages, dissimulates, and recreates, ultimately producing an elegant self-conscious code. Even when communicating, it remains strangely private. Satire on the other hand, pretending to repudiate the Muse for the sake of public weal is openly indignant, denounces visible vices and follies, and explicitly affirms the permanence and priority of a social reality.²⁴

The self-conscious reader is, of course, the diametrical opposite of the unconscious reader represented by Emma and Alonso Quijano—who are

unconscious of the unbreachable chasm between popular fiction and life. Our attitude towards these unconscious readers is always, I think, ambivalent. As readers of the *Quijote* and *Madame Bovary* we're not invited to put ourselves in their shoes—but all readers have been in those shoes before, albeit in less extreme ways. And Cervantes and Flaubert know this little secret about their readers, for they've been in those shoes as well--they're writing from the vantage point of the author, but also from that of the reader. Thus both novels—despite the fact that Flaubert's novel has been accused of coldness, impersonality, brutality, etc.—create an intensely personal experience for the reader. Reading is an intimate adventure, and in both novels we see our intimate reading selves portrayed, and we are given the opportunity to transform our conception of the relationship between life and literature-- not by trying to merge the two unconsciously, like Emma and Don Quijote, but through self-conscious reflection.

Irony became an inescapable mode for Flaubert at this period in his life: “L’ironie pourtant me semble dominer la vie” he wrote to Louise Colet in May of 1852.²⁵ Nothing could be more appropriate to manifest an ironic attitude than a novel about novels.

²⁴ Brombert, Victor. “The Temptation of the Subject” in *The Hidden Reader*. P. 152

²⁵ Correspondance, Volume II, p. 84

LUCIE DE LAMMERMOOR AND THE CONVENTIONS OF THE SENTIMENTAL ROMANCES

Avant qu'elle se mariât, elle avait cru avoir de l'amour; mais le bonheur qui aurait dû résulter de cet amour n'étant pas venu, il fallait qu'elle se fut trompée, songeait-elle. Et Emma cherchait à savoir ce que l'on entendait au juste dans la vie par les mots de *félicité*, de *passion*, et d'*ivresse*, qui lui avaient paru si beaux dans les livres.

--*Madame Bovary*, p. 94

(Before she married, she thought that she had found love; but since the happiness this love should have brought never came, she imagined that she must have made a mistake. And Emma wanted to know what exactly was meant in life by the words happiness, passion, and rapture, words that in books had seemed so beautiful to her.)

In his well-known work *Mensonge Romantique et Vérité Romanesque*, René Girard designates the *Quijote* as the foundational work of his theories on mediated desire. Most fictional works, according to Girard, have a direct relationship between desiring subject and object of desire. One could use as an example many of Balzac's characters. In *Cousine Bette*, the expert *courtesane* Valerie Marneffe wants money and social status. There is no specific mediating figure. But in the *Quijote*, because the chivalric hero Amadís de Gaula is the mediator of desire, Alonso Quijano doesn't have his *own* desires.

Everything he desires is mediated by the model of Amadís, and thus it is desire *selon l'Autre* as opposed to desire *selon Soi*.²⁶

Girard opposes this type of mediated desire, in other words, desire mediated through a fictional character, to the desire experienced by Emma Bovary, which he sees as mediated by the image of Paris, and all the trappings of the Parisian lifestyle:

Chez Cervantès, le médiateur trône dans un ciel inaccessible... Chez Stendhal, ce même médiateur est descendu sur terre... C'est chez Cervantès, évidemment, que cette distance est la plus grande. Aucun contact n'est possible entre Don Quichotte et son Amadis légendaire. Emma Bovary est déjà moins éloignée de son médiateur parisien. Les récits des voyageurs... les dernières modes de la capitale. Emma se rapproche encore du médiateur lors du bal chez les Vaubyessard... mais ce rapprochement restera fugitif. Jamais Emma ne pourra désirer les incarnations de son "idéal"; jamais elle ne pourra rivaliser avec celles-ci; jamais elle ne partira pour Paris.²⁷

(In Cervantes, the mediator rules over an inaccessible heaven... In Stendhal, this same mediator has come down to earth... It is, clearly, in Cervantes that the distance is the furthest. There is no possibility of contact between Don Quijote and his legendary Amadis. Emma Bovary is less distanced from her Parisian mediator. She's heard stories from travellers ... the latest fashions from the capital. Emma becomes even closer to her mediator at the time of the ball at Vaubyessard... yet this closeness is but fleeting. Emma will never be able to desire the incarnations of her "ideal"; she will never be able to compete with them; she will never leave for Paris.)

It is true that many of Emma's desires could be reduced to those of, say, a Valerie Marneffe. Emma wants real things: curtains, perfumes, silk robes, and so forth, whereas Don Quijote is stubbornly faithful to Amadís and impervious to worldly matters. Yet Girard overlooks the importance of the role of fictional

²⁶ Girard, René. *Mensonge Romantique et Vérité Romanesque*. Paris: Bernard Grasset. 1961, p. 13

mediators in Emma's life: all the heroines of Romantic novels and their sentimental adventures. This makes *Madame Bovary* fundamentally *quixotic*, for in fact all her desires are triggered, like Alonso Quijano's, by fictional mediators. Emma's desires are not simply portrayed as those of the "modern capitalist bourgeois consumer". Her ulterior motive—her real desire—is to be like the heroine in a sentimental novel. The trappings are only complements to enhance her fantasy. Like Alonso Quijano with Amadís, what Emma really wants is for her life to follow the models and conventions of sentimental romances.

IMITATION OF SENTIMENTAL CONVENTIONS

The novelist Sir Walter Scott is mentioned a few times in *Madame Bovary*, and the conventions of his novels are, I think, as key to understanding Flaubert's work as the conventions of the chivalric romances are to the *Quijote*. In these features, the novels of Scott and the popular chivalric romances have a great deal in common. Taking just one of Scott's novels as an example, the similarities are clear: 1) They were hastily and carelessly written (i.e. the two hundred and sixty-nine page *Bride of Lammermoor* was written in seven months²⁷) 2) They are full of improbabilities: idealized visions of landscapes, beauty, etc., impossible characters, unbelievable adventures,

²⁷ Girard, p. 17

²⁸ Alexander, J. H. "Essay on the Text" in Scott, Walter. *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995.,p. 271

strange coincidences, etc. 3) The use of “pseudo-historical” presentation device (i.e. *The Bride of Lammermoor* is supposedly, according to the narrator, the true history of the events of Ravenswood castle.) 4) The use of “found manuscript” device in which the story is not the work of the narrator, but has been deciphered from someone else’s manuscript (the narrator’s friend Dick Tinto has discovered the true history of Ravenswood and passes it on to our narrator in the form of a manuscript “...a parcel of loose scraps, partly scratched over...”²⁹) 5) The appearing and disappearing narrator, a device that was widely criticized in the chivalric romances, is rehabilitated by Scott. (i.e. The first chapter of *The Bride of Lammermoor* is narrated in the first person, and then our narrator vanishes.) 6) The setting in far away times, and often far away places

Walter Scott was a devoted admirer of the chivalric romances *and* of the *Quijote*, (the *Bride of Lammermoor* begins with a quote from *Don Quijote*, and there are mentions of Cervantes’s characters in the novel) thus it is not suprising that he rehabilitates so many of the characteristics of the chivalric romances in his own work. If we remember that Flaubert was an enthusiast of the *Quijote* *and* of Sir Walter Scott, we thus come full circle in the rehabilitation and parody of the conventions of the romances. In this light we can see the function of the coincidences in *Madame Bovary* : (Emma runs into Léon at the opera in Rouen; She goes for a boat ride with Léon and discovers

²⁹ Ibid, p. 14

that Rodolphe had just been on the same boat; she repeatedly crosses paths with the blind man, and so forth); and the disappearing and reappearing narrator—a feature which has puzzled so many—can be read as one of the mocking tributes to Walter Scott, Cervantes, and the confused narration of the chivalric romances before him.

It is my theory that Flaubert was explicitly invoking the works and style of Walter Scott in *Madame Bovary*, and specifically the *Bride of Lammermoor*. Scott is explicitly named twice in the novel, and the implicit references to his work are numerous. In other words—and this is crucial to understanding the ramifications of the parallels between the *Quijote* and *Madame Bovary*, we can consider *The Bride of Lammermoor* (and the tradition it represents) vis-à-vis *Bovary* as we have considered *Amadis de Gaula* (and its tradition) vis-à-vis the *Quijote*.

The first time Scott is mentioned is at the beginning of Emma's career of a reader when his novels mark her deeply, defining the scope of her imagination for the rest of her life:

Avec Walter Scott, plus tard, elle s'éprit de choses historiques...Elle aurait voulu vivre dans quelque vieux manoir, comme ces châtelaines au long corsage qui...passaient leurs jours... à regarder venir du fond de la campagne un cavalier à plume blanche qui galope sur un cheval noir... (Later with Walter Scott, she became taken with historical tales...She would have liked to live in some old stately home, like the ladies of the manor, wearing a long-waisted bodice...who spent their days watching for a white-plumed knight on a black horse to appear over the horizon)

It is at the opera in Rouen, where Emma has the most extreme vicarious response to *Lucie de Lammermoor* that Scott is again summoned to our imaginations. First, through the title of the opera, and second through Emma's response:

Elle se retrouvait dans les lectures de sa jeunesse, en plein Walter Scott. Il lui semblait entendre, à travers le brouillard, le son des cornemeuses écossaises se répéter sur les bruyères. D'ailleurs, le souvenir du roman facilitant l'intelligence du libretto, elle suivait l'intrigue phrase à phrase, tandis que d'insaisissables pensées qui lui revenaient se dispersaient... Elle se laissait aller... Elle n'avait pas assez d'yeux pour contempler les costumes, les décors, les personnages, ...les manteaux...les épées...³⁰

(She was taken back to her childhood readings, deep in Walter Scott. She seemed to hear, through the fog, the echo of Scottish bagpipes through the briars. Furthermore, her memory of the novel made the libretto come to life, and she followed the action line by line, while fleeting thoughts came and went from her mind... She let herself go... She didn't seem to have enough eyes to take in the costumes, the sets, the characters...the capes...the swords...)

In a unique moment, Emma tries to regain control and detachment over her emotions. She tries to have an objective aesthetic response to the work, fueled by a jaded outlook from her failed affair with Rodolphe:

Elle connaissait à présent la petitesse des passions que l'art exagérait. S'efforçant donc d'en détourner sa pensée, Emma voulait ne plus voir dans cette reproduction de ses douleurs qu'une fantaisie plastique bonne à amuser les yeux, et même elle souriait intérieurement d'une pitié dédaigneuse quand, au fond du théâtre, sous la portière velours, un homme apparut en manteau noir.

(She now knew the smallness of the passions that art exaggerated. Forcing herself to turn away from her thoughts, Emma no longer wanted to see in this reproduction of her sorrows anything but an amusing well-crafted fantasy, and she even smiled inwardly, with a disdainful sort of

³⁰ p. 292

pity, when from the back of the theater a man in a black coat appeared through the velvet curtains.)

Ironically, Emma's lucid detachment and resistance to "art" does not last for more than a few seconds! The appeal and familiarity of Lammermoor was just a warm-up to the total response the opera will elicit from Emma as she becomes engrossed in the drama. The character of Edgar Lagardy is particularly effective in removing any boundary that still existed between Emma and the stage:

Toutes les velleités de dénigrement s'évanouissaient sous la poésie du rôle qui l'envahissait, et, entraînée vers l'homme par l'illusion du personnage, elle tâcha de se figurer sa vie, cette vie retentissante, extraordinaire, splendide, qu'elle aurait pu mener, cependant, si le hasard l'avait voulu. Ils se seraient connus, ils se seraient aimés! Avec lui, par tous les royaumes de l'Europe, elle aurait voyagé...partageaient ses fatigues et son orgueil, ramassant les fleurs qu'on lui jetait...puis, chaque soir, au fond, d'une loge, derrière la grille à treillis d'or, elle eût recueilli, béante, les expansions de cette âme qui n'aurait chanté que pour elle seul; de la scène, tout en jouant, il l'aurait regardé! *Mais une folie la saisit: il la regardait, c'est sûr! Elle eut envie de courir dans ses bras pour se réfugier en sa force, comme dans l'incarnation de l'amour même, et de lui dire, de s'écrier: "Enlève-moi, emmène-moi, partons! A toi, à toi! Toutes mes ardeurs et tous mes rêves!" Le rideau se baissa.*³¹
(my italics)

(All her watchfulness against denigration disappeared beneath the poetry of his role, which invaded her and drew her towards him through the illusion of his character; she tried to imagine her life, this sensational, extraordinary, splendid life, which she could have led, yet, if chance had willed it. They would have met, they would have loved each other! With him, she would have travelled the realms of Europe...sharing his hardships and pride, gathering the flowers thrown to him...then, every night, from her seat behind a latticed gilded screen, she would have received with open arms the demonstrations of this soul who would have sung for her alone; from the stage, while performing, he would have looked at her! Suddenly, a mad idea struck her, he was

³¹ MB, p. 295

looking at her, she was certain! She had the desire to run into his arms in order to take refuge in his strength, as if he were the incarnation of love itself, and to cry out “Take me away, take me with you!”)

This scene has its antecedent in the *Quijote*. In Part II, chapter twenty-six, A puppet master, Maese Pedro, appears to put on a show. If we overlook the superficial attributes of “refinement” associated with attending the opera, we see that the wandering puppet shows were to the public of sixteenth century provincial Spain, what the Rouen opera was to the French provincial nineteenth century public.

As Emma’s opera represented a well-known sentimental, Romantic narrative, Maese Pedro’s show is also taken from the Spanish and French romances. Since this is the *Quijote*, it is a chivalric romance about Gaiferos, who is Charlemagne’s nephew. His lady, Melisendra has been kidnapped by Moors, and Gaiferos sets out from Paris to save her. This kind of adventure is just Don Quijote’s cup of tea. So familiar is he with the conventions and style of this kind of chivalric adventure tale that he constantly interrupts the show to correct Maese Pedro in his presentation. However, like Emma, his critical detachment doesn’t last long .

Don Quijote, however goes even further than Flaubert’s character as he joins in the action not just in mind and spirit but also in body. The puppet master has just narrated the scene in which Gaiferos has saved Melisendra and the couple is leaving the Moorish city. The suspense builds as he tells of the

risks the pair face for they are being followed by a “mob” of moors who would gladly capture them, tie them to the tails of their horses, and drag them back into the city. This is too much for Don Quijote who only wants to see the couple leave the city safely. He jumps up from his seat in the audience, brandishes his sword, and proceeds to behead all the Moorish puppets, and eventually destroys the puppet set!

On the way to the convent, her father and the then thirteen year-old Emma stop off at an inn for dinner. In this new world of Flaubert’s –in which everything is *inchangeable*, each object has a special importance. At the inn it is the plates that draw our attention:

...ils eurent à leur souper des assiettes peintes qui représentaient l’histoire de Mademoiselle de La Vallière. Les explications légendaires, coupées çà et là par l’egratignure des couteaux, glorifiaient toutes la religion, les délicatesses de coeur et les pompes de la Cour.
(...at dinner they were served on plates decorated with scenes from the story of Mademoiselle de La Vallière. The legendary illustrations, which had been scratched here and there by knife marks, glorified religion, the sentiments of the heart, and the pomp of the court.)

This moment is remarkable for a few reasons. The first is the irony created by the contrast of these romantic, legendary images and the knife marks produced by everyday people having their simple meals at a provincial inn: the representations are incongruous. Secondly, Mademoiselle de La Vallière is exactly the kind of heroine Emma would like to be, and Emma’s desires can be reduced to those represented on the worn plates: to be a religious heroine, a sentimental heroine, and an aristocratic heroine. Mademoiselle de La Vallière

is Emma's model and literally—as she eats from these images on the plate—feeds Emma's imagination and charts the territory of her “dreams”. Furthermore, Emma is clearly not the first to have these dreams. The representation of the scenes on plates shows their conventionality, and the knifemarks and the fact that they're used at a lowly inn shows how common and worn out the images are. Secondly, this scene seems to play on the scene in the *Quijote*, Part II, chapter 71 in which Don Quijote and Sancho stop at an inn which is decorated with painted fabric hangings of scenes from the *Aeneid* which show Don Quijote's great model : Aeneas. This scene highlights the irreality of Don Quijote's dreams, for even more than Mademoiselle de la Vallière, Aeneas is indeed a hero of yesteryear.

In what may be a tribute to another of Flaubert's favorite authors, the Marquis de Sade, Emma begins reading at the convent. Flaubert's contempt for Christianity was great, and clearly he saw Emma's belief in the sentimental romances as being as silly as his fellow countrymen's belief in the Catholic Church. This is especially ironic if we think that novels lead to her ruin: thus the convent, far from instilling any Christian values in Emma, is presented as the locus for the beginning of her moral decay. When she arrives at the convent and begins to read—borrowing forbidden novels from a spinster seamstress that comes in once a week—she quickly becomes fluent in the language of the romances:

Elle avait lu *Paul et Virginie* et elle avait rêvé la maisonnette des bambous....Il y avait au couvent une vieille fille ...Elle contait des histoires ...Ce n'étaient qu'amours, amants, amantes, dames persécutées s'évanouissant dans des pavillons solitaires, postillons qu'on tue à tous les relais, chevaux qu'on crève à toutes les pages, forêts sombres, troubles du coeur, serments, sanglots, larmes et baisers, nacelles au clair de lune, rossignols dans les bosquets, *messieurs* braves comme des lions, doux comme des agneaux, vertueux comme on ne l'est pas, toujours bien mis, et qui pleurent comme des urnes...Avec Walter Scott, plus tard, elle s'éprit de choses historiques...Elle aurait voulu vivre dans quelque vieux manoir, comme ces châtelaines au long corsage qui, sous le trèfle des ogives, passaient leurs jours, le coude sur la pierre et le menton dans la main, à regarder venir du fond de la campagne un cavalier à plume blanche qui galope sur un cheval noir...Jeanne D'Arc, Héloïse, Agnès Sorel, la belle Ferronnière et Clémence Isaure, pour elle, se détachaient comme des comètes sur l'immensité tenebreuse de l'histoire...³²

(She had read Paul and Virginie and had dreamt about the little bamboo hut...At the convent there was a spinster...who told stories...full of loves, lovers, persecuted ladies who fainted in solitary pavilions, postilions killed at every turn, horses ridden to death on every page, dark forests, problems of the heart, sermons, sobs, tears, and kisses, moonlit gondolas, nightingales in woodland groves, gentlemen as brave as lions and as gentle as sheep, impossibly virtuous, always elegantly turned out, and who cried like fountains...Later, with Walter Scott, she was taken by historical tales...She would have liked to live in some old stately home, like those ladies of the manor who wore long waisted gowns, and spent their days under the trefoil of gothic arches, their elbow resting against the stone, their chin in their hands, watching a knight with a white feather galloping towards them from far away in the countryside...Jeanne D'Arc, Héloïse, Agnès Sorel, the beautiful Ferronnière and Clémence Isaure, all detached themselves like comets from the dark immensity of history.)

This passage follows the description of Don Quijote's romance saturated imagination in Part I, chapter 1:

...los ratos que estaba ocioso, que eran los más del año...se daba a leer libros de caballerías...Llénosele la fantasía de todo aquello que leía en

³² MB, p. 97

los libros, así de encantamientos como de pendencias batallas, desafíos, heridas, requiebros, amores, tormentas y dispárates imposibles...Decía él que el Cid Ruy Díaz había sido muy buen caballero...Mejor estaba con Bernardo del Carpio porque en Roncesvalles había muerto a Roldán el encantado...sobre todos estaba bien con Reinaldos de Montalbán³³, y más cuando le veía salir de su castillo.... Diera él, por dar una mano de coces al traidor de Galalón, al ama que tenía, y aún a su sobrina de añidadura³⁴

(...his idle moments, which were most moments of the year...he spent reading books of chivalry...His imagination became filled with all that he read in the books, with enchantments, as much as with quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, love stories, loves, misfortunes, and impossible nonsense...He said that the Cid Ruy Díaz³⁵ had been a very good knight...but he thought Bernardo el Carpio³⁶ was better because in Roncesvalles he had killed the enchanted Roland...above all he liked Reinaldos de Montalbán, es pecially when he set out from his castle... He would have given his own housekeeper-- and even his niece—to give that traitor Galalón a good beating.)

These passages are extraordinarily similar. Cervantes and Flaubert, respectively, use such passages to delineate the conventions from the romances of their respective epochs, including a detailed list of some of the main heros and heroines, and both point out the nonsense of such works. For Flaubert the gentlemen are described to be “comme on ne l’est pas” (i.e. impossible, or “as no one is”) and for Cervantes the romances are full of “dispárates imposibles”. Thus in both cases the narrator debunks the highflown style of the genre. In these descriptions, we see the imagination, and expectations of the hero and heroine at work. What is characteristic is not just that they are fond of the adventures and tales that they read, but that *they sincerely would like to get*

³³ One of Roland’s companions. Known in french as Renaut de Montauban

³⁴ DQ, I, p. 24

³⁵ Spain’s national hero (11th Century) and the subject of the *Poema de mio Cid*

³⁶ Bernardo is a legendary hero who appears only in Spanish versions of the story of Roland

involved in the fictions themselves. Emma would have liked to live in one of those manor houses, and Alonso Quijano would have done anything for the chance to give Galalón a few good blows himself.

In the passage describing Emma's reading of Chateaubriand's *Genie du Christianisme*, the narrator is explicitly critical not only of what is being read, but also of how it is being read by Emma. The idealized language of the work is presented, and subsequently deflated by the criticism of Emma's reading habits:

Comme elle écouta, les premières fois, la lamentation sonore des mélancolies romantiques se répétant à tous les échos de la terre et de l'éternité! Si son enfance se fût écoulée dans l'arrière-boutique d'un quartier marchand, elle se serait peut-être ouverte alors aux envahissements lyriques de la nature, qui, d'ordinaire, ne nous arrivent que par la traduction des écrivains. Mais elle connaissait trop la campagne; elle savait le bêlement des troupeaux, les laitages, les charrues. Habitée aux aspects calmes, elle se tournait au contraire vers les accidentés. Elle n'aimait la mer qu'à cause de ces tempêtes, et la verdure seulement lorsqu'elle était clairsemée parmi les ruines. Il fallait qu'elle pût retirer des choses une sorte de profit personnel; et elle rejetait comme inutile tout ce qui ne contribuait pas à la consommation immédiate de son coeur, étant de tempérament plus sentimentale qu'artiste, cherchant des émotions et non des paysages.³⁷

(How she listened, those first times, to the sonorous lamentations of romantic melancholy, which resounded and echoed throughout the earth, and throughout eternity! Had her childhood been spent in the backroom of a trade district, perhaps she would now have been open to being filled by the lyricism of nature, which normally happens to us only once it has been transformed by writers. But she knew the countryside all too well; she knew the bleating of the herds, the dairy, the ploughs. Accustomed to the calm facets of life, she now searched for the eventful. She loved the sea only for its storms, greenery only if it was scattered amongst ruins. She needed to be able to draw a personal profit from everything; and she rejected as useless anything that her

³⁷ MB, pp95-96

heart couldn't directly consume. Her temperament being more sentimental than artistic, she sought emotions rather than landscapes.)

We are explicitly warned by the critical tone of this passage—and many others-- of how not to read: personal profit is not to be sought in books, and neither is the *consommation* of the heart.

LINGUISTIC GAMES

Flaubert clearly did not want the reader of his novel to read passively. From almost the beginning of *Madame Bovary*, the reader's attention is divided between *what* is being told, and *how* it is being told. The novel begins with first person plural "Nous étions à l'étude..." (*We were in study hall*) which would seem to indicate that we will have a first person narrator. This voice, who speaks for "nous" describes the scene in which a new pupil (who we will learn is Charles Bovary) has arrived at the school. This new pupil, as a type, is a kind of village idiot—his awkwardness only exacerbated by being forced into the painful social situation of being the new boy in school. Aside from the fact that he is so shy that he can't say his own name clearly, what is really exceptional about this poor boy is his hat:

C'était une de ces coiffures d'ordre composite, où l'on retrouve des éléments du bonnet à poil, du chapska, du chapeau rond, de la casquette de loutre et du bonnet de coton, une de ces pauvres choses, enfin, don't la laideur muette a des profondeurs d'expression comme le visage d'un imbécile. Ovoïde et renflée de baleines, elle commençait par trois boudins circulaires; puis, s'alternaient, séparés par une bande rouge, des losanges de velours et de poil de lapin; venait ensuite une façon de sac qui se terminait par un polygone cartonné, couverte d'une broderie en

soutache compliquée, et d'où pendait, au bout d'un long cordon trop mince, un petit croisillon de fils d'or, en manière de gland. Elle était neuve; la visière brillait.³⁸

*(It was one of those hybrid pieces of headgear, in which one can find traces of the busby, the chapska, the beret, the otterskin, and the nightcap, a pathetic object, in short, as deeply expressive in its mute ugliness as the face of an idiot. Ovoid, dilated with whalebone, it began with a circular headband composed of three sausage-like rolls; then lozenges of velvet alternated with others of rabbit fur, edged in red; next came a bag, topped by a polygon reinforced with cardboard and embroidered in an elaborate braided pattern, from which, at the end of an excessively thin cord, hung a small tuft of gold thread, intended as a tassel. The cap was new; the visor gleamed.)*³⁹

Who has ever seen such a dunce's cap? This cap is *literally* incredible, in other words, it is impossible and it is therefore disruptive in what has been a heretofore verisimilar—or “realistic”—description of a new awkward boy entering a hostile classroom. This poor school-boy, dressed in shabby clothes, but topped off by an impossible hat is a walking personification of the *quixotic* ideal/real fusion.

This description is as spectacular as Don Quijote's description of the fountain which the Knight of the Lake sees.⁴⁰ The style is characterized by the juxtaposition of an extensive collection of disparate and preposterous features, and the use of the past participle (*ovoïde, renflée, couverte*, etc.) which draws

³⁸ Madame Bovary, p. 62

³⁹ translated by Lawrence, Merloyd. *Madame Bovary*. Boston: Riverside. 1969. P.2

⁴⁰ This description is discussed in the chapter “The Dialogue with the Canon”. The fountain is : “a lo brutesco adornada, adonde las menudas conchas de las almejas, con las torcidas casas, blancas y amarillas del caracol, puestas con orden desordenada, mezclados entre ella pedazos de cristal luciente y de contrahechas esmeraldas, hacen una variada labor de manera que el arte, imitando a la naturaleza, parece que la vence.” (“grotesquely adorned, upon which minute clam shells, along with twisted yellow and white snail houses, arranged in a disorderly fashion, mixed with bits of luminous glass and imitation emeralds, make up a varied piece of work so that art, imitating nature, seems to conquer it.”)

attention to the presence of a creative agent. Both techniques serve—exactly as in Don Quijote’s description, to highlight artifice. While Don Quijote’s highly artificial description is produced in defiance of the Canon’s insistence upon verisimilitude *and* is simultaneously a parody of the preposterous fantasies of the romances, Flaubert’s description of Charles Bovary’s cap is a parody of techniques of the “realist” novel (i.e. detail doesn’t necessarily make for verisimilitude!) *and* of the flights of fancy typical of Romanticism.

The insertion, at the very beginning of the novel, of such a fantastic description—one that draws such attention to its fantastic status—is to be read as a declaration of independence from, for example, the realism of Balzac with its all-inclusive detailed cataloguing and description of accumulated background. This novel, this author, Flaubert seems to be proclaiming, is not subordinate to the material world and has no need to try and “live up to” the “real” objects in it. *Au contraire*, this novel is creating a new world, one in which the artist is the ruling God. Flaubert is rehabilitating the analogy between poem/cosmos; world/ God, and re-invigorating it as an analogy fit for a counter-realist, counter-romantic work of prose.

With the last line of the description, “elle était neuve, la visière brillait” we are landed with our feet back on the ground, which is, Flaubert seems to say, where he has had them all along. This type of description disconcerts the reader of *Bovary* and I think that Flaubert hoped to shock his reader at regular intervals to keep his audience on the alert. While composing *Bovary*, he wrote

to a friend “This is my secret purpose: to astound the reader so much that it drives him crazy”. This kind of playfulness is kept up throughout the novel, and while it is playful, it has a serious motivation. A novel could only aspire to the level of dialogue between author and reader if the reader was somehow made aware of the process of literary creation and engaged in it—as opposed to simply being a passive recipient of a story. By using language in surprising ways, Flaubert kept the reader on his toes. Another notable example is the description of Charles and Emma’s wedding cake:

A la base, d’abord c’était un carré de carton bleu figurant un temple avec portiques, colonnades et statuettes de stuc autour dans des niches constellés d’etoiles en papier doré; puis se tenait au second étage un donjon en gâteaude Savoie, entouré de menues fortifications en angélique, amandes, raisins secs, quartiers d’oranges; et enfin, sur la plate-forme supérieure, qui était une prairie verte où il y avait des rochers avec des lacs de confiture et des bateaux en écales de noisettes, on voyait un petit Amour, se balançant à une escarpolette de chocolat, dont les deux poutreaux étaient terminés par deux boutons de rose naturelle, en guise de boules, en sommet.⁴¹

(The base, of blue cardboard, was a temple surrounded with porticoes, colonnades, and statues of sugar paste set into niches studded with gold paper stars; the second layer was a castle of fruitcake, encircled with battlements of angelica, almonds, raisins, crystallized orange sections; and finally, on the top layer, in the shape of a green meadow with candy rocks, nutshell boats floating on ponds of jelly, was Cupid, swaying back and forth on a chocolate swing. At the very top of the two uprights, as finials, were real rosebuds.)⁴²

The description of the cake differs from that of the cap in that its aim is primarily to mock the vulgarity of this “romantic” object. However, it is like

⁴¹ p. 88

the cap in the fact that the description—with so many minute aesthetic details—of such a cake is nearly impossible to visualize, and certainly an object lacking in verisimilitude in the context of this country wedding.

Despite certain bizarre signals, a reader accustomed to novelistic conventions may have still hoped even after encountering Charles, to “meet” a young and beautiful heroine. Where was the Madame Bovary promised in the title? Charles’s mother is, of course, a Madame Bovary, but she doesn’t have the makings of a heroine. Thus it will be Charles’s wife, however unlikely it seems that this character—who is as ungainly a young man as he was a schoolboy—will marry a woman with the qualities of a heroine. Despite the unlikelihood of Charles’ being able to seduce anyone—let alone a beautiful heroine—Flaubert knows that the reader will read on, patiently waiting for her to appear. The expectations set by convention are a stronger force in the reader’s imagination than reason.

At the end of Part I, chapter 1, Charles’s mother finds him a wife. Ah ha!, the reader might say, here she is. But then this new Madame Bovary is described: “la veuve d’un huissier de Dieppe, qui avait quarante-cinq ans et douze cents livres de rente. ...elle fût laide, sèche comme un cotret, et bourgeonnée comme un printemps.”⁴³ These are not the makings of a protagonist, and the fact that her name is Heloïse, only heightens the

⁴² Lawrence, Merloyd. P. 23

⁴³ P. 70

discrepancy between *Madame Bovary* and a great love story. What a relief the reader feels when this second Madame Bovary (Héloïse—ironically the name of one of Emma’s literary heroines) leaves Charles free to find “true love”, which he ostensibly does when he meets Emma.

Names are used throughout the novel—as they are in the *Quijote*—to remind us of the overall ironic tone of the work, to show us that not a word of this novel is there by accident. As Don Quijote travels on the run down nag Rocinante, Emma makes her transition to Yonville-L’Abbaye on *L’Hirondelle* (the swallow) which is as inappropriate a name as possible for a carriage that is slow, rickety, heavy, and filthy. Emma’s first lover Rodolphe has the unromantic surname of Boulanger (baker), her second lover, Léon lacks any lion-like qualities (strength, bravery, etc); and the tradesman Lhèreux—far from bringing Emma any happiness- is the fundamental cause of her ruin (and that of Charles) and of her subsequent suicide. The names that the pedantic Homais has given his children, and his reasons for choosing them --“Napoléon représentait la gloire et Franklin la liberté; Irma, peut-être, était une concession au romantisme; mais Athalie un hommage au plus immortel chef-d’oeuvre de la scène française”⁴⁴ (“Napoleon represented the glory of France, while Franklin stood for liberty; Irma was, perhaps, a concession to romanticism; while Athalie was an homage to the greatest immortal masterpiece of the French stage”) -- reflect his desire to evoke great figures and illustrious acts.

The irony of his bombastic aspirations is only heightened by the fact that his children have already been described as “...les petits Homais, marmots toujours barbouillés, fort mal élevés et quelque peu lymphatiques.”⁴⁵ (“...those little Homais brats, always dirty, badly brought up, and a bit lymphatic”)

Don Quijote carefully weighs different options when choosing the names for himself, his horse, and his one true love, Dulcinea. Emma only has one chance to bestow a name—on her newborn daughter-- and she proceeds with the same literary care as Cervantes’s character:

Pendant sa convalescence, elle s’occupa beaucoup à chercher un nomme pour sa fille. D’abord elle passa en revue tous ceux qui avaient des terminaisons italiennes, tels qu Clara, Louisa, Amanda, Atala; elle aimait assez Galsuinde, plus encore Yseult ou Léocadie. ...Enfin, Emma se souvint qu’au château de la Vaubyessard elle avit entendu la marquise appeler Berthe une jeune femme; dès lors ce nom-là fut choisi.⁴⁶

(During her convalescence, she amused herself by thinking of names for her daughter. First, she reviewed all those names with Italian endings, such as Clara, Louisa, Amanda, Atala; she also liked Galsuinde, and even better Yseult or Léocadie...Finally she remembered that at the Chateau de la Vaubyessard she had heard the Marquess call a young lady Berthe; thus this name was chosen.)

This is strikingly similar to Don Quijote’s naming of his nag:

Fue luego a ver su rocín, y... le pareció que ni el Bucéfalo de Alejandro, ni Babieca el del Cid con él se igualaban. Cuatro días se le pasaron en imaginar qué nombre le pondría...y después de muchos nombres que...deshizo y tornó a hacer en su memoria e imaginación, al fin le vino a llamar ROCINANTE, nombre...que era antes y primero de todos los rocines del mundo.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ MB, p. 154

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 151

⁴⁶ MB, p. 155

⁴⁷ DQ, I p. 25

(He went to inspect his nag...which surpassed in his eyes the Bucephalus of Alexander or the Babieca of the Cid. Four days were spent in thinking what name to give him...and after many names had been unmade and remade in his memory and imagination, he finally decided upon Rocinante, a name that indicated the first and foremost of all the hacks in the world)

And to his naming of his lady:

Buscándole nombre que no desdijese mucho del suyo, y que tirase y se encaminase al de princesa y gran señora, vino a llamarla DULCINEA DEL TOBO SO, porque era natural del Toboso; nombre a su parecer, músico y peregrino, y significativo.⁴⁸

(Looking for a name that wouldn't differ too much from her real one, and that would resemble and suggest that of a princess and great lady, he decided upon Dulcinea del Toboso, since she was a native of El Toboso. A name that was—in his view—musical, rare, and significant)

This description of the naming process is clearly inspired by the *Quijote*, and gives the characters—albeit for a brief moment—the chance of showing their “creative talents”. However, what it really shows the powerlessness of language, when used superficially, to change reality. Poor Berthe, despite her name, will end up as an orphan and child laborer; and Dulcinea del Toboso will always remain the “dish-faced” barmaid she truly is.

INNS: THE LION D'OR AND LA VENTA

Emma and Don Quijote are not the only people in their respective works who are susceptible to novels. In both works, the social center is an inn—the *venta* of La Mancha, and the Lion d'or in Yonville L'Abbaye. Both

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 26

are places of reunion, and in both inns, respectively, the figures of Don Quijote and Emma serve as catalysts for discussions of literature. At the “venta” we have the responses to the romances of chivalry offered by the innkeeper, his daughter, and Maritornes and at the Lion d’or it is Emma and Léon who discuss how they are affected by sentimental novels.

Both provincial settings are populated by a corresponding series of people which include: Emma Bovary and Don Quijote; the *priest* and the *pharmacist* in Yonville, and the *priest* and the *barber* in the *Quijote* (keeping in mind that barbers in the sixteenth century and pharmacists in the nineteenth were both pseudo-doctors); Madame Bovary senior and Alonso Quijano’s housekeeper (who want to censor the readings of our heroine and hero) ; the aristocratic and cruel Rodolphe Boulanger and the unmerciful duke and the duchess in the *Quijote*, the innkeeper at the Lion D’or and the innkeeper at the *venta*.

The function of the inn is key to both novels for it is the only social place for reunion and discussion in which the ensemble cast can be portrayed. It is at the *Lion d’Or* that Emma meets *Léon* (the ironic redundancy of the word “lion” in the name of an inn, and as the name of a meek young fellow is another example of Flaubert’s relentless attack on the abuses of language). Emma and *Léon* sense an immediate affinity based upon their “refined sensibilities” which not only join them to each other, but also put them—from their perspectives—above and beyond the rest of the citizens of Yonville

L'Abbaye as represented by the group at the inn. The process of mutual recognition between these two "kindred" souls begins when Emma asks Léon if there are any bucolic spots to take walks near the town. Léon's answer and their subsequent dialogue portend the relationship to come in Part III :

...--Il y a un endroit que l'on nomme la Pâture... Quelquefois, le dimanche, je vais là, et j'y reste avec un livre, à regarder le soleil couchant.
 --Je ne trouve rien d'admirable comme les soleils couchants, reprit-elle, mais au bord de la mer, surtout.
 --Oh! J'adore la mer, dit M. Léon
 ...Emma reprit:
 --Et quelle musique préférez-vous?
 --Oh! La musique allemande, celle qui porte à rêver.
 --...Ma femme, ... dit Charles; aime mieux... toujours rester dans sa chambre, à lire.
 --C'est comme moi, répliqua Léon; quelle meilleure chose, en effet que d'être le soir au coin du feu avec un livre, pendant que le vent bat les carreaux, que la lampe brûle?...
 --N'est-ce pas? Dite-elle, en fixant sur lui ses grands yeux noirs tout ouverts.
 --On ne songe à rien, continuait-il, les heures passent. On se promène immobile dans des pays que l'on croit voir, et votre pensée, s'enlaçant à la fiction, se joue dans le détails ou poursuit le contour des aventures. Elle se mêle aux personnages; il semble que c'est vous qui palpitez sous leurs costumes.
 --C'est vrai! C'est vrai! disait-elle.⁴⁹
 (... "There's a place called the pasture... Sometimes on Sunday I go there and sit with a book, watching the setting sun."
 "I find nothing as admirable as sunsets" Emma answered. "But especially at the seaside."
 "Oh! I adore the sea." Said Monsieur Léon.
 ...Emma answered. "And what music do you prefer?"
 "Oh! German music, because it lures one into reverie"
 ... "My wife," said Charles, "Always prefers to stay in her room reading."

⁴⁹ Madame Bovary, p. 148

“Just like me.” Said Leon. “What could be better than to spend the evening curled up near the fire with a book, with a lamp burning and the wind beating against the windowpanes?”...

“Isn’t that so?” Emma said fixing her enormous black eyes, wide open, on him.

“One thinks of nothing,” he continued. “The hours pass. Without leaving one’s chair one travels through landscapes that seem real, and one’s imagination, intermingled with the details of the story, becomes one with the adventures. One seems to become the characters; and it seems that it is you who inhabits their beings.”

“It’s true! It’s true!” Emma said.)

This discussion—which in the context of the inn and its cast of characters reveals two “unique” individuals far from the other temperate and common inhabitants of Yonville—takes on an even greater ironic tone when juxtaposed to the discussions of the chivalric romances at the *venta*. Emma and Léon consider their tastes to be refined and perhaps even aristocratic. However, their words echo those of the illiterate characters in the *venta*: the innkeeper, the maid Maritornes, and the Innkeeper’s daughter on the chivalric romances:

The Innkeeper: “...no hay mejor letrado en el mundo, y que tengo ahí dos o tres dellos, con otros papeles, que verdaderamente me han dado la vida, no sólo a mí, sino a otros muchos...cuando es tiempo de la sega...siempre hay algunos que saben leer...y rodeámos del más de treinta, y estámosle escuchando con tanto gusto que nos quita mil canas. A lo menos, de mí sé decir que cuando oyo decir aquellos furibundos y terribles golpes que los caballeros pegan, que me toma gana de hacer otro tanto, y que querría estar oyéndolos noches y días.”

(There’s no better reading in the world—I have two or three of them over there with some papers, and they’ve really given me life; and not just to me, but to a lot of other people too...At harvest time, there’s always someone who knows how to read, and more than thirty of us gather round, and we listen with such pleasure that our white hairs disappear. At least for myself, I can say that when I hear about those

furious and terrible blows dealt by the knights, I want to join in the fight myself. I could listen to them for days and night on end.)

Maritornes: ...“yo también gusto mucho de oír aquellas cosas, que son muy lindas, y más cuando cuentan que se está la otra señora debajo de unos naranjos abrazada con su caballero y que les está una dueña haciéndoles la guarda, muerta de envidia y con mucho sobresalto. Digo que todo esto es cosa de mieles.

(I like to hear about those things too. They are so pretty, and especially when they tell about the lady under the orange trees in the arms of her knight, with a lady-in-waiting, enviously and nervously keeping watch over them. I say that these are the sweetest things...)

The innkeeper's daughter: “...también yo lo escucho, y en verdad que, aunque no lo entiendo, que recibo gusto en oírlo. Pero...gusto...de las lamentaciones que los caballeros hacen cuando están ausentes de sus señoras, que en verdad que algunas veces me hacen llorar de compasión que les tengo.

(I listen too, and the truth is that though I don't understand, I enjoy hearing them. What I like are the lamentations of the knights when they are absent from their ladies, and the truth is that sometimes I feel so much compassion for them that I cry.)

Both Cervantes and Flaubert used these scenes to describe the conventional responses to, respectively, the chivalric and sentimental romances. As we can see, the language is not so different from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Flaubert struggled in writing scenes such as these in which he forced himself to create characters expressing mediocre sentiments. In the following excerpt he writes to Louise Colet about his distaste in composing this particular scene at the Inn. It is interesting that though he dislikes writing this particularly effective and *quixotic* scene, he is aware that he is on the right track as far as his goals for the novel are concerned:

Que ma *Bovary* m'embête! Je commence à m'y débrouiller pourtant un peu. Je n'ai jamais de ma vie rien écrit de plus difficile que ce que je fais maintenant, du dialogue trivial! Cette scène d'auberge va peut-être me demander trois mois, je n'en sais rien. J'en ai envie de pleurer par moments, tant je sens mon impuissance. Mais je crèverai plutôt dessus que de l'escamoter. J'ai à poser à la fois dans la même conversation cinq ou six personnages (qui parlent), plusieurs autres (dont on parle), le lieu où l'on est, tout le pays, en faisant des descriptions physiques de gens et d'objets, et à montrer au milieu de tout cela un monsieur et une dame qui commencent (par une sympathie de goûts) à s'éprendre un peu l'un de l'autre...

(How my *Bovary* frustrates me! Nonetheless, I seem to be making headway. I have never in my life written anything as difficult as this trivial dialogue! This scene at the inn might take me three months to write, who knows. I feel so impotent that some times I feel like crying. But I would rather die in the attempt than not face the challenge. My task is to create a conversation with five or six characters (speaking), plus others (who are spoken about); to create the landscape, the local color with physical descriptions of people and objects, and to show in the midst of all this a man and a woman who are beginning (through their discovery of common tastes) to be taken with each other).

THE RUSTIC WEDDING

When Emma marries Charles, the scene of the country wedding—from which we have already considered the description of the cake—invokes the Renaissance literary set-piece of the open air, rustic celebration, and the wedding of Camacho in the *Quijote*. This is especially visible in the description of the feast (1) and the arrival of the wedding party (2) :

(1) *Madame Bovary*

C'était sous le hangar de la charretterie que la table était dressée. Il y avait dessus quatre aloyaux, six fricassées de poulets, du veau à la casserole, trois gigots et, au milieu, un joli cochon de lait rôti, flanqué de quatre andouilles à l'oseille. Aux angles, se dressait l'eau-de-vie, dans des carafes. Le cidre doux en bouteilles poussait sa mousse épaisses autour des bouchons.

(The table was laid out in the shed where the wagons were kept. On the table were four sirloins, six chicken fricassees, a veal casserole, three legs of lamb, and in the middle, a lovely roast suckling pig, flanked by four sausages with sorrel. The corners of the table displayed carafes of eau-de-vie. The bottles of sweet cider's had thick froth around their corks.)

Don Quijote

Lo primero que se le ofreció a la vista de Sancho fue, espetado en un asador de un olmo entero, un entero novillo...las liebres ya sin pellejo y las gallinas sin pluma que estaban colgadas de los árboles...Los pájaros y caza de diversos géneros eran infinitos...Contó Sancho más de sesenta zaques...todos llenos...de generosos vinos...En el dilatado vientre del novillo estaban doce tiernos y pequeños lechones.

(The first thing Sancho saw was, skewered on a spit made of a whole elm tree, a whole young bull...the hares had been skinned and the hens plucked and they hung from the trees...The birds and game of a variety of genres were infinite...Sancho counted more than sixty wineskins...all full...of heady wines...In the vast stomach of the of the young bull there were twelve tender and small suckling pigs.)

(2) *Madame Bovary*

Le cortège, d'abord uni comme un seule écharpe de couleur, qui ondulait dans la campagne, s'allongea bientôt...Le ménétrier allait en avant avec son violon empanaché de rubans à la ciquille; les mariés venaient ensuite, les parents....

The wedding party, moving in unity like a colored scarf, flowed through the countryside, and soon thinned itself out...The village fiddler led the way, the head of his violin embellished with ribbons; the bride and groom followed, and then the parents...

Don Quijote

...los novios...rodeados de mil géneros de instrumentos y de invenciones, venían acompañados del cura y de la parentela de entrambos y de toda la gente más lucida de los lugares circunvecinos, todos vestidos de fiesta.

(the bride and groom...surounded by a thousand kinds of instruments and inventions, were approaching, accompanied by the priest, by both their families , and by the most distinguished people from neighboring parts, all dressed for the festivities)

The wedding party in the *Quijote* is elegant and distinguished, and the bride is dressed in three-pile velvet and satin; and covered in pearls, gold, and coral.

There is music everywhere and rows of dancers dressed as nymphs performing gracefully. In contrast, Emma Bovary has an ill-fitting dress (“La robe d’Emma, trop longue traînait un peu par le bas...”) that drags along the ground. The sleeves on her father’s coat are also too long, the one musician at the party is s o bad that the sound of his violin makes the little birds fly away, guests are ruddy-faced and badly-groomed, etc. This is clearly a scene far removed from the idyllic set-piece wedding of Renaissance literature. The realistic descriptions with their unseemly portrait of a country wedding are what Flaubert sees himself as bound to by his time and place within the literary tradition. He must account for realism, yet he can also make fun of it.

Yet despite these variations, there is a similar balance between the idealized and the real styles in both works. The bucolic splendor of the *Quijote*’s lavish wedding scene is offset by Sancho’s ferocious appetite and his subsequent loud snores, and by Don Quijote’s mad antics that upset any

semblance of elegance. Conversely, the sordid descriptions of the wedding in *Madame Bovary* are framed by romantic visions: at the beginning with the description of the wedding Emma would have liked to have (“Emma eût, au contraire, désiré se marier à minuit, aux flambeaux”) which is the first glimpse we are given of Emma’s point of view; and at the end by her father’s nostalgic bucolic vision of his own wedding to Emma’s mother.

THOSE EVIL NOVELS

As the housekeeper and niece try to censor Alonso Quijano’s reading of the *heretic* “evil books”, Charles’s mother, Madame Bovary senior, attempts to stop her daughter-in-law from the dangerous habit. She lets her opinions be known to her son:

--Sais-tu ce qu’il faudrait à ta femme? Reprenait la mère Bovary. Ce seraient des occupations forcées, des ouvrages manuels! Si elle était, comme tant d’autres, contrainte à gagner son pain, elle n’aurait pas ces vapeurs-là, qui lui viennent d’un tas d’idées qu’elle se fourre dans la tête, et du désœuvrement qu’elle vit...elle s’occupe!a quoi donc? A lire des romans, des mauvais livres, des ouvrages qui sont contre la religion et dans lesquels on se moque des prêtres par des discours tirés de Voltaire. ...et quelqu’un qui n’a pas de religion finit toujours par tourner mal. ...Donc, il fut résolu que l’on empêcherait Emma de lire des romans. L’entreprise ne semblait point facile. La bonne dame s’en chargea: elle devait, quand elle passerait par Rouen, aller en personne chez le loueur de livres et lui représenter qu’Emma cessait ses abonnements. N’aurait-on pas le droit d’avertir la police, si le libraire persistait quand-même dans son métier d’empoisonneur?
(You know what that wife of yours needs?...She needs to keep herself busy with handiwork. If she were, like so many others, obliged to earn her bread, she wouldn’t put on these airs, which she from the piles of nonsense she crams into her head, and the idleness in which she lives... How does she keep herself busy?By reading novels, evil books, works

which are against religion and which make fun of priests with arguments borrowed from Voltaire...and a person who defies religion always ends up badly.”...It was thus resolved that Emma would be forbidden to read books. The good woman took charge. On her next trip to Rouen, she would go in person to the book lender and cancel Emma’s suscriptions. Wouldn’t it even, perhaps, be possible to alert the police, if the librarian persisted in engaging in his poisonous profession?)

Alonso Quijano has his own library, but Emma, of course, lives in a different time: the more modern and perilous world of the lending library. In a time when large numbers of people are literate, the *vulgo* takes on a new relevance, and the relationship between author and public becomes more complex. This difference is important, for while Don Quijote stands vis-à-vis his time and place as an exceptional and individual figure—cultivated, erudite, creative, imaginative, a connoisseur of literature—despite his madness, Emma has none of these qualities. She, and we can only imagine, thousands of indiscriminate readers like her with little experience of life, and a scant education, borrow books from public libraries. In this sense, she is common, and represents a cultural generation chronologically distanced from that of Cervantes, but not fundamentally evolved. In other words, Emma and other inhabitants of Yonville L’Abbaye—reflecting the reality of their time—though provincial are not illiterate, but this does not mean that they *know how to read a novel*.

For both characters outward displays of religion are seen as a wonderful accoutrement to inner martyrdom and as Don Quijote takes on a kind of Christ-like look and attitude, Emma begins to look like a Madonna

figure: “Emma maigrit, ses joues pâlirent, sa figure, s’allongea...”⁵⁰ (“Emma lost weight, her cheeks lost their color, her face lengthened ...”) Like Don Quijote, Emma is dead set on playing the part of a romantic heroine as she thinks befits her. Like her Spanish ancestor she fasts and tries to find vows to fulfill: “Elle essaya, par mortification, de rester tout un jour sans manger. Elle cherchait dans sa tête quelque vœu à accomplir.”⁵¹ (“She tried, for the sake of mortification, to spend an entire day without eating. She searched her imagination for some vow to fulfill”). As is fitting to a literary heroine, she would like her name to go down in history as a signifier of fame and glory. Unfortunately, as a married woman, her name is also her husband’s and far from being an ally, he is the impediment to the realization of her fantasies: “Elle aurait voulu que ce nom de Bovary, qui était le sien, fût illustre, le voir étalé chez les libraires, répété dans les journaux, connu par tout la France.”⁵². (“She would have liked this name of Bovary, which was hers, to have been illustrious, to have been displayed in bookshops, repeated in newspapers, and known throughout France.”) In this sense, her ultimate goal is to become a text, like Cervantes’s hero.

Emma tries to have sentimental adventures (vs. Don Quijote’s attempts at heroic adventures) and keeping with the tradition of the romances she departs for her first adventure with the conventional props and costume: on

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 172

⁵¹ Madame Bovary, p. 95

⁵² Ibid, p. 122

horseback, wearing a riding habit, and with a handsome aristocratic man (Rodolphe) at her side. Like Don Quijote with his windmills, Emma also tries to create scenes that imitate the lives from the novels she loves. She attempts, willfully, to be both the protagonist and the author of the narrative of her life and in the tradition of the *quixotic* hero her attempts are thwarted by the non-compliant secondary characters in her life.

She tries to subject her first lover, Rodolphe, to her artistic direction in his role as lover. On rainy nights they conduct their trysts in Charles's medical office where Rodolphe can't help but laugh at the pathetic objects and décor of Charles's life. Emma is frustrated by this reaction for it ruins her illusion of a passionate love affair, and her vision of herself as a desirable heroine fought over by two strong men.: "Elle eût désiré le voir plus sérieux, et même plus dramatique à l'occasion"⁵³ One night in the office they hear steps and Emma, thinking that Charles will come in and discover them, asks Rodolphe if he has his pistols with him. Rodolphe, baffled, asks what he would need them for, and when Emma replies "pour te défendre" he bursts out laughing. Rodolphe cannot go along with Emma's absurd fantasies about a duel between lover and husband. For Rodolphe, Charles is "le pauvre garçon". Unfortunately for Emma, her theatre is fundamentally flawed by an inadequate cast. Charles is not an intimidating figure, and Rodolphe does not love her passionately.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 236

The sentimental props and dialogue Emma writes into the drama of her love life are mere annoyances to her lover. This behaviour is described from Rodophe's point of view: "...elle devenait bien sentimentale. Il avait fallu échanger des miniatures, on s'était coupé des poignées de cheveux, et elle demandait à présent une bague, un véritable anneau de mariage, en signe d'alliance éternelle..." (...she had become deeply sentimental. They had been obliged to exchange miniature keepsakes, they had snipped locks of each other's hair, and now she wanted a ring, a real wedding band, as a symbol of their eternal alliance.) Far from increasing his love for her, her behavior merely causes Rodolphe to take her for granted.

ARISTOCRATS: RODOLPHE DE BOULANGER AND THE DUKE AND DUCHESS

Romances—chivalric and sentimental—both glorify the aristocracy and their country manors or castles. This convention is subverted by Cervantes and by Flaubert, as their aristocratic characters are perhaps the cruelest in both works. Emma's lover, Rodolphe Boulanger, has a similar role to those of the Duke and Duchess in the *Quijote*.

Don Quijote has been searching for castles and aristocrats since the beginning of his adventures; for they are the characters and settings he needs to play out his chivalric fantasies. The Duke and Duchess have heard about the ridiculous, comical, knight and his squire, for in Part II, the pair have been made famous by the publication of their adventures in Part I. When knight and

squire bump into the Duchess who is out for a ride on horseback, she invites them to her castle. Don Quijote is deeply satisfied that this noble, beautiful lady has officially invited him to “serve” her for this is exactly the opportunity he has been waiting for. The Duke and Duchess know that Don Quijote is mad and his squire a fool, yet they play along, for as idle and bored aristocrats, they see this as a rich opportunity to have some fun with the pair. So Don Quijote and Sancho go to the castle, thinking they are being treated as a famous and noble knight and squire duo, when in reality they are being duped into making fools of themselves for the sake of the Duke and Duchess’s pleasure. This sequence is like an enormous game of charades and the Duke and Duchess play along to enhance the fiction that Don Quijote and Sancho are great heroes.

Before knight and squire arrive at the castle the stage has been set: “...se adelantó el duque y dio orden a todos sus criados del modo que habían que tratar a Don Quijote”⁵⁴ (...the duke went ahead of them and explained to all his servants how they should treat Don Quijote.) Don Quijote is thus treated as Amadís de Gaula would have been treated upon his arrival at a castle. He is celebrated, asked to sit at the head of the table, and so forth. For Don Quijote, who absolutely believes that he has finally been recognized and treated according to his status, this is the greatest moment of his life:

...y aquel fue fue el primer día que de todo en todo conoció y creyó ser caballero andante verdadero, y no fantástico, viéndose tratar del mismo

⁵⁴ Don Quijote, P. II, p. 624

modo que él había leído se trataban los tales caballeros en los pasados siglos.

(...and that was the first day that he thoroughly felt and believed that he was a real knight errant, and not an imaginary one, seeing that he was treated in the same way as he had read of such knights being treated in past centuries.)

This is a moving moment in the novel for Don Quijote self-consciously appreciates that his life now corresponds to the fictional conventions he has been vainly chasing after for eighty three long and hard chapters. The reality is that he and Sancho have fallen into the hands of “noble” pranksters of the most merciless kind. In the long run—for what is left of the novel—the conniving ruses of the Duke and Duchess lead to all kinds of grotesque and barbarous incidents, and ultimately deal a deadly blow to Don Quijote’s illusions about the world, and about himself.

In Emma Bovary’s life, it is the romantic hero that was lacking—until Rodolphe enters the scene. Handsome, noble, wealthy, and the owner of a manor house, he fits the part perfectly. He also rides around on horseback, and as Don Quijote and Sancho depart for their adventures on horses, Emma departs for her amorous adventures on horseback with Rodolphe. Rodolphe plays the part of Emma’s lover for some time, however it is for him—as it was for the Duke and Duchess—only a part. Emma thinks that they are living a passionate love affair, and furthermore that it is “true love” and that they are the loves of each other’s lives. Like Don Quijote, Emma feels that Rodolphe’s treatment of her befits her fate of romantic heroine and because of him she

;

finally feels that her dreams have been fulfilled. After her initial escapade with Rodolphe, she delights in her achievement in a way that directly echoes Don Quijote's sense of achievement at the castle of the Duke and Duchess:

Elle se répétait: "J'ai un amant! un amant!" se délectant à cette idée comme à celle d'une autre puberté qui lui serait survenue. Elle allait donc posséder enfin ces joies de l'amour, cette fièvre du bonheur don't elle avait désespéré. Elle entraînait dans quelque chose de merveilleux où tout serait passion, extase, délire... Alors elle se rappela les héroïnes des livres qu'elle avait lus, et la légion lyrique de ces femmes adultères se mit à chanter dans sa mémoire avec des voix de soeurs qui la charmaient. Elle devenait elle-même comme une partie véritable de ces imaginations et réalisait la longue rêverie de sa jeunesse, en se considérant dans ce type d'amoureuse qu'elle avait tant envié.⁵⁵ (She repeated to herself: "I have a lover! A lover!. She delighted in this idea as if she had embarked upon a second puberty. She was finally going to possess the joys of love, the feverish happiness she had desperately longed for. She was embarking on a marvelous adventure which would consist of passion, ecstasy, delirium... She now recalled the heroines of the novels she had read, and the lyrical legion of adulteress women began to sing in her memory with the voices of charming sisters. She herself became a figure of her imagination, and she realized her longheld dream of youth, seeing herself as the type of lover she had so wanted to become).

Rodolphe plays along with her sentimental conventions, but the fact of the matter is that Emma is just one of many attractive young women who have served successively to amuse him. He is as crafty and heartless as the Duke and Duchess, and when Emma wants him to run away with her, she is no longer amusing to him. Before he writes to her to end their affair, we are given a glimpse of his amorous past. As he rummages through a box where he has kept

⁵⁵ MB, p. 230

Emma's letters, it becomes clear how insignificant she is in the line of

Rodolphe's conquests:

Enfin il lut de ses lettres; pour les trouver au fond de la boîte, Rodolphe déranger toutes les autres, et machinalement il se mit à fouiller dans ce tas de papiers et de choses, y retrouvant pêle-mêle des bouquets, une jarretière, un masque noir, des épingles et des cheveux—des cheveux! de bruns, de blonds; quelques-uns, même, s'accrochant à la ferrure de la boîte, se cassaient quand on l'ouvrait... En effet, ces femmes, accourant à la fois dans sa pensée, s'y gênaient les unes les autres... Enfin, ennuyé, assoupi, Rodolphe alla reporter la boîte dans l'armoire en se disant: "Quelle tas de blagues"... Ce qui résumait son opinion; car les plaisirs... avaient tellement piétiné son coeur, que rien de vert n'y poussait...⁵⁶

(Finally, he read her letters. In order to find them at the bottom of the box, he had to rummage through all the others. Mechanically he sorted through piles of papers and objects, haphazardly coming upon bouquets, a garter, a black mask, hairpins, and even hair—hair! Brown hair, blond hair; some had even become tangled on the box's latch and tore when he opened the box... These women, rushing back to his memory, antagonized each other. Finally, bored and sleepy, Rodolphe put the box back in the closet, saying to himself "What a lot of nonsense". This summed up his views, for pleasure had saturated his heart to the point where he no longer felt anything.)

After sorting through this human debris, he sits down to write a letter ending his affair with Emma and annulling their plan to run away together. Rodolphe is an expert manipulator and as he writes a letter full of the most obvious fictions—he even uses water drops to make the ink blur as if he had been crying while writing. He can blithely deceive himself—as he has done so many times before—that he is really doing her a favor by getting rid of her.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 269

Emma is devastated by Rodolphe's letter, which provokes her first ideas of suicide. However as she is about to jump out of the window, in a suspenseful reverie of passion and suffering, from downstairs the urgent cries of Charles and the maid Felicité interrupt her trance in typical Flaubertian counterpoint: lunch is waiting on the table and the soup is getting cold.

Rodolphe is stingy with—or perhaps incapable of—love. All he could do was pretend, like the Duke and Duchess, and use pretense and deceit as a means to an end, the end being the use of another person for pleasure. He is also stingy with money, and his refusal to help Emma is the main factor in her successful suicide at the end of the novel. With the bill-collectors hounding her, and her furniture about to be repossessed, if Emma doesn't find someone to help her, she and Charles will be permanently bankrupted, dishonored and she will only have herself to blame. One of her last illusions is that the wealthy Rodolphe will help “for old times sake”. His reply to her demand for three thousand francs is perhaps the ultimate destructive blow: “Je ne les ai pas, chère madame”; and again after she violently expresses her reproaches and disappointment: “Je ne les ai pas!” Répondit Rodolphe avec ce calme parfait dont se recouvrent, comme d'un bouvlier, les colères résignées. (*“I haven't got them!” Rodolphe replied with the perfect calm that protects resigned anger like a shield.”*)

Rodolphe has had his game with Emma, and he can be held accountable for nothing. This realization is the end of Emma's dreams and of her will to

live. This scene recalls the scene in which Don Quijote sees Dulcinea for the coarse peasant girl she really is. He never recovers from this disappointment, despite all of Sancho's efforts to convince him that the ugly, real Dulcinea he sees is as a mirage—the work of evil enchanters. Don Quijote has seen the truth and he can't turn back.⁵⁷ Though Don Quijote dies of natural causes, and Emma kills herself by swallowing poison, the cause of both deaths is essentially the same: disillusionment.

EMMA/CHARLES COMPARED TO DON QUIJOTE /SANCHO

While Homais and Charles both represent a kind of ying to Emma's yang, it seems to me that because of their unfortunately disparate coupling, it is really Charles who corresponds to Sancho. Charles has modest tastes. He is good-natured, enjoys simple food, and the country lifestyle. And for all his foolishness and often pathetic demeanour, he is one of the few characters whom we have any affection towards. Few moments illustrate the discord between husband and wife as well as their arrival home after the great ball at La Vaubyessard. Emma will never recover from having had to tear herself away from such luxury and grandeur and is disgusted by the sight of her small dingy house and inefficient servant. Charles, oblivious to his wife's inner drama, merely rubs his hands together with pleasure and declares how good it is to be home.

⁵⁷ For a detailed analysis of this episode see Auerbach, Eric "The Enchanted Dulcinea" in *Mimesis*.

Soon after their marriage, Emma tries to coach Charles—to no avail-- to perform the part of Romantic hero. Emma tries to infect Charles with her notions of sentimental longing and passion but he remains benevolently impervious:

“Cependant, d’après les théories qu’elle croyait bonnes, elle voulut se donner de l’amour. Au clair de lune, dans le jardin, elle récitait tout ce qu’elle savait par coeur de rimes passionnées et lui chantait en soupirant des adagios mélancoliques; mais elle se trouvait ensuite aussi calme qu’auparavant, et Charles n’en paraissait ni plus amoureux ni plus remué.”⁵⁸
(Nonetheless, following what she thought would be an effective strategy, she tried to embrace love. By moonlight, in the garden, she recited all the passionate poetry she knew, and sighingly sang melancholy adagios to Charles; yet afterwards, she was as calm as she had been beforehand, and Charles seemed neither stirred, nor more in love.)

For nearly the entirety of *Bovary*, Charles and Emma each live as if in their own monologue—Emma willfully so, and Charles quite obliviously. They have no dialogue, or rapprochement as Don Quijote and Sancho do in Part II of Cervantes’s novel. In Part II we have what Cervantes specialists refer to as the *quijotization* of Sancho and the *Sanchification* of Don Quijote. In this the novels are very different as only at the very end of *Bovary* does Charles succumb to Emma’s *bovarysme*.

On the other hand, in *Don Quijote* the evolving relationship between hero and squire mirrors the evolution of the knights “madness”. If Part I of the *Quijote* is about Alonso Quijano’s illusionment, Part II is about his disillusionment. On the one hand, disillusionment is always sad and Alonso

Quijano is our protagonist so in a resistance to logic (which we are allowed as readers of fiction) we may lament his coming back to his senses. On the other hand, isn't the fact that Sancho and Don Quijote have a dialogic relationship the most moving part of the novel? Their affection for each other is perhaps best illustrated by their complicity in Part II, 41 after Sancho returns from his famous "flight" ride on Clavileño (the "magic") horse provided by the Duke and Duchess, upon which he claims to have flown to heaven. And frolicked with the seven goats in the star cluster of Pleiades. In a reversal of roles, Sancho is now recounting fantastic visions and it is Don Quijote who doesn't believe his squire. This seems to be set up as a direct parallel to Don Quijote's descent to the Cave of Montesinos in Part II, 23 from which he emerges with tales of marvelous adventures which neither Sancho nor anyone else believes. When Sancho is finished recounting his forays through the heavens on the magic horse, Don Quijote presents him with a proposition:

Y llegándose don Quijote a Sancho al oído, le dijo: "Sancho, pues vos queréis que se os crea lo que habéis visto en el cielo, yo quiero que vos me creáis a mí lo que vi en la cueva de Montesinos, y no os digo más." (Don Quijote approached Sancho and whispered in his ear: "Sancho, since you want what you have seen in heaven to be believed, I want you to believe me about what I saw in the Cave of Montseinos, and let's leave it at that.")

Belief is thus a matter to be agreed upon, an "I'll believe you if you believe me". Don Quijote and Sancho's relationship thus evolves into a pact not unlike

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 103

that of the author and the reader. In both cases, what is true is not as important as what we are willing to accept—in a complicitous conspiracy—as true.

If Don Quijote and Sancho were impermeable to each other as companions, their relationship would be as dismal as that of Emma and Charles Bovary-- whose marriage illustrates the complete alienation of one individual from another as being inextricably linked to the chasm between fantasy and reality—even when they sleep in the same bed. It is only after Emma's death, at the very end of the novel, that Charles becomes "*Emmafied*":

Pour lui plaire, comme si elle vivait encore, il adopta ses prédilections, ses idées; il s'acheta des bottes vernies, il prit l'usage des cravates blanches. Il mettait du cosmétique à ses moustaches, il souscrivit comme elle des billets à ordre. *Elle le corrompait par delà le tombeau.* (In order to please her, as if she were still alive, he adopted her tastes and her ideas; he bought himself polished boots and took to wearing white ties. He waxed his moustache, and took out promissory notes, as she had. She was corrupting him from beyond the tomb.)

But in the case of their relationship, this belated change of perspective on the part of Charles is not a sign of progress, but one of decay. Emma has remained Emma to the end—even her suicide is the exit of a tragic romantic heroine. Except for the tender moment at her deathbed, there is no dialogue between husband and wife. Only the poisonous power of Emma's deathly monologue which haunts Charles and drags him to a similar state of dissipation and decadence.

DEATH

If we recall the inquisition of Don Quijote's library, the chivalric romance *Tirant lo Blanch* is saved because it is more realistic, or verisimilar, than others, and it doesn't exploit the cliff-hanger tendency of other romances. The hero of *Tirant lo Blanch*, along with being a knight and having many exciting adventures, eats, sleeps, and finally makes a will and dies in his bed. This is explicitly described at the beginning of *Don Quijote*, and a similar fate awaits Don Quijote himself, who after a series of adventures also makes a will, and dies in his bed. Thus Don Quijote's death follows the conventions of one of his model heroes, and of one of the greatest chivalric books. Likewise, Emma's death in *her* bed recalls not only the death of the disillusioned Alonso Quijano (who reclaims his real name and identity before dying), but also the death of Lucy of Lammermoor. This becomes obvious by comparing the language used to describe the dying heroines. Both die after dramatic events (Lucy covered with the blood of her murdered bridegroom, Emma having taken poison after the confirmation of her financial ruin, and Rodolphe's final rejection of her). Emma's death is uniquely prolonged and spectacular—especially in its mystical dimension-- however, the similarities are palpable.

Lucy of Lammermoor

...the unfortunate girl, seated, or rather couched,...her night clothes torn and dabbled with blood—her eyes glazed, and her features convulsed into a wild paroxysm of insanity...When she saw herself discovered, she gibbered, made mouths, and pointed at them with her bloody fingers, with the frantic gestures of an exulting demoniac....All night she remained delirious. On the morning, she fell into a state of absolute insensibility...although she awoke from her trance with some appearance of calmness...so soon as she put her hand to her neck, as if to search for the fatal blue ribbon, a tide of recollections seemed to rush upon her, which her mind and body were incapable of bearing. Convulsion followed convulsion, till they closed in death, without her being able to utter a word explanatory of the final scene.⁵⁹

Madame Bovary

Elle roulait sa tête avec un geste doux, plein d'angoisse...Puis elle se mit à geindre, faiblement d'abord. Un grand frisson lui secouait les épaules, et elle devenait plus pâle que le drap où s'enfonçaient ses doigts crispés...ses yeux agrandis regardaient vaguement autour d'elle...les convulsions la saisirent...Puis se symptômes s'arrêtèrent un moment; elle paraissait moins agitée...Emma ouvrait démesurément les paupières: et ses pauvres mains se traînent sur le draps...Pâle comme une statue, et les yeux rouges comme des charbons...Une convulsion la rabbatit sur le matelas...Elle n'existait plus.

(Her head rolled around in a soft, anguish filled gesture...Then she began to moan, at first only faintly. A great shudder shook her shoulders, and she became even paler than the sheet, which her fingers gripped tightly...her eyes wide as they looked around...she was taken by convulsions...Then her symptoms stopped for a moment; she seemed less agitated...Emma opened her eyelids inordinately: and her poor hands ran up and down the sheets...Pale as a statue, her eyes red as coals...A convulsion made her collapse back onto the mattress. She ceased to exist.)

As Don Quijote's death scene is much more complex and moving than Tirant

lo Blanch's, Emma's death scene is not *merely* Walter Scott, though Lucy's

death is embedded in it. Emma's death echos Don Quijote's in profound ways as both hero and heroine finally recognize their respective true identities.

Both protagonists die surrounded by the cast of characters that have accompanied them for most of the duration of their "adventures". There are important parallels in this supporting cast. In Emma's bedroom we find the priest Bournisien, the pharmacist/doctor Homais, the maid Felicité, and of course Charles who is beside himself with grief. To her husband, Emma finally says—in the first words of kindness she has expressed to him in the novel: "Ne pleure pas!...Bientôt je ne te tourmenterai plus!...Il le fallit, mon ami...tu es bon, toi!"⁶⁰ ("Don't cry!...Soon I will no longer torment you! ...It was meant to be, my friend...You, you are good.")

Don Quijote's bedroom is populated by the graduate Sansón Carrasco, his niece and housekeeper, the priest and barber/surgeon, and the devastated Sancho. As Emma speaks to Charles, Don Quijote addresses his final words of regret (so similar to Emma's) and affection to Sancho: "Perdóname, amigo, de la ocasión que te he dado de parecer loco como yo, haciéndote caer en el error en que yo he caído, de que hubo y hay caballeros andantes en el mundo."⁶¹ ("Forgive me, my friend, for making you seem as crazy as myself, for making you fall into the same trap I did of believing that there were and are knights errant in the world.")

⁵⁹ Scott, pp. 260-261

⁶⁰ MB. P. 392

⁶¹ DQ, P. II, p. 862

Before dying, Don Quijote declares his lucidity clearly: “Yo fui loco, y ya soy cuerdo. Fui Don Quijote de la Mancha, y soy agora, como he dicho, Alonso Quijano el bueno. Pueda con vuestas mercedes mi arrepentimiento y mi verdad volverme a la estimación que de mí se tenía” (“I was mad, now I am sane. I was Don Quijote de la Mancha, and I am now, as I have said, Alonso Quijano the Good. May my repentance and truth restore me to the esteem in which you held me.”)

There are two last, key scenes which are indispensable to illuminating the comparison between the two works. In the *Quijote*, when Don Quijote leaves the inn for the first time (Book I,IV) he hears from a distance, the faint cries of someone in distress. Though Don Quijote will do his noble duty as a knight and seek out the victim to offer his help, it must be remarked that he is delighted that this opportunity has presented itself: “Gracias doy al cielo por la merced que me hace, pues tan presto me pone ocasiones delante donde yo pueda cumplir con lo que debo a mi profesión y donde pueda coger el fruto de mis buenos deseos”.⁶² (“Thanks be to heaven for this favor, for so quickly offering me opportunities to fulfill the duties of my profession, and to reap the fruit of my ambition”)

He follows the voice and comes across Andrés, a young servant boy, being whipped by his master, a farmer. Don Quijote intervenes, and brandishing his sword, commands the farmer to stop whipping the boy, to untie

him, and to pay him the wages he owes him. The farmer obeys the first two commands, however, he says that he has no money on him and can only pay the boy back at the farm. After securing the farmer's promise to pay the boy and treat him well from now on, Don Quijote rides off triumphantly, thinking he has saved the boy. But in reality he has abandoned the boy to an even worse fate in the hands of an even more enraged farmer. Needless to say, as soon as the boy and his master are alone again, the farmer gives him so many lashes that he leaves the boy for dead.

The end result—which is very clear in this situation—is that Don Quijote's attempt to help a defenseless victim only aggravates the victim's fate. I believe that this is not merely Cervantes's critical portrait of the figure of the farmer, but more importantly of Don Quijote's misguided understanding of his mission. Don Quijote's readings of the chivalric romances are very much like fundamentalist readings of the bible in that every word is taken literally. Furthermore, the word knight (*caballero*) is hardly ever mentioned without the qualifying adjective christian (*cristiano*). Don Quijote sees himself as a *cristiano caballero* and because the two are so intertwined, Cervantes's critique of chivalry is, I think, really an indictment of the Catholic church. Like Don Quijote, the church apparently sets out to right wrongs, yet (also like Don Quijote) its real objective is only its own fame and glory. In the name of virtue, honor, charity and Christianity, the church burns books, burns Jews,

⁶² Don Quijote, P. I, p. 38

censors individual thought and action, and requires strict adherence to church dogma. Furthermore, the church, like the novels of chivalry asks its adherents to believe the impossible. The faithful, like the readers of the romances, were required to believe in things they had never seen with their own eyes—from the existence of God, to miracles, and so forth.

In the name of virtue, honor, charity and chivalry, Don Quijote fights windmills, attacks people arbitrarily, and demands that everyone swear—sight unseen-- that Dulcinea is the most beautiful woman in the world. Anyone who doesn't obey to this profession of faith in Dulcinea's existence and superior beauty risks fatal punishment. Cervantes seems to be saying that the church, like the institution of chivalry, is in practice at least, barbaric and out of touch with the lives of real people. Since the church was the defining, unifying, and omnipotent element of Spain in Cervantes's time, it is easy to understand why his attack was veiled as an attack on the chivalric romances. Instead of a sinister Catholic fanatic, *Don Quijote* offers us a foolish chivalric fanatic. We cannot disregard the brutality, cruelty, and ignorance which pervade—across class lines-- the *Quijote* and which seem perfectly at home in the Catholic world the novel represents. Don Quijote's actions towards Andrés show that the pursuit of glory and the strict adherence to convention help no one, but on the contrary, encourage more hypocrisy and brutality.

Don Quijote's death, from this perspective of a heterodox Cervantes, is interesting because though he receives the final sacraments, there is no mention

of his going to heaven. His death is presented as an absolutely final event, which he accepts lucidly. In his lucid state, he declares he is free from the “sombras caliginosas de la ignorancia” (dark shadows of ignorance”) of the chivalric romances, that he is now fully aware of their “disparates y embelecos” (nonsense and deceits), and that he only wishes he had life and time ahead of him to spend reading other books “que sean luz del alma” (that would enlighten his soul). Exoterically, Don Quijote in his lucidity is shunning dangerous and nonsensical chivalric romances and wishing he had time to read edifying works, probably of a Catholic bent. But should this be taken at face value? Weren’t there many works of Catholic doctrine that could be described—indeed more aptly than a book full of chivalric adventures—as being responsible for dark shadows of ignorance, and of being full of nonsense and deceit? In this case, the books that Don Quijote wishes he could read to “enlighten” the soul would not be works of Christian thought, but books of a secular nature. Of course the very idea that books of a secular nature could enlighten the soul would have been a heretical thought in Cervantes’s time. I believe that Cervantes makes it very clear in this last scene of the novel that if there is any value or purpose in life, it is to be found in this world—in a life of inquiry and understanding, and in the intellectual freedom of the individual. *Don Quijote* proves that as long as literature exists, freedom of expression and dissent are possible even in the most regimented society.

The episode in *Madame Bovary* which recalls Don Quijote's "effort" to help Andrés is the one in which Emma and Homais urge Charles to pursue fame and glory by performing a new club foot operation on the young servant boy from the Lion d'or, Hippolyte. This episode recalls the one with Andrés in the *Quijote* in several ways. First it is one of the most grotesque scenes in the novel. The physical descriptions used by Flaubert to describe the surgery and the ensuing gangrene Hippolyte's leg is afflicted with are an example of his ability to correlate moral and physical qualities in one description.

Furthermore, it is another attempt to "right wrongs" that only makes a bad situation infinitely worse. Charles completely bungles the operation—per Homais's instructions—to the point that Hippolyte's leg requires amputation. The poor boy's only potential source of consolation in the town is the priest, but Bournisien is as useless to Hippolyte as he had been to Emma: "Cependant la religion pas plus que la chirurgie ne paraissait le secourir, et l'invincible pourriture allait montant toujours des extrémités vers le ventre."⁶³ ("However, neither religion nor surgery could save him, and the invincible rotting spread throughout his body towards his stomach.")

Thus the poor Hippolyte is not helped in the least, but what Homais and Emma are truly disappointed about is that Charles has blown his chance to attract fame and glory—which he would have done if he had had cured Hippolyte and transformed him into the poster boy for Yonville L'abbaye,

center for club foot operations. When Homais first suggests the idea to Emma, the narrator describes the pharmacist's thoughts :“ Il avait lu dernièrement l'éloge d'une nouvelle méthode pour la cure des pieds bots; et comme il était partisan du progrès, il conçut cette idée patriotique que Yonville, pour se mettre au niveau, devait avoir des opérations....” (my underlining). (“He had recently read an article that praised a new method for curing club feet; and as a partisan of progress, he conceived the patriotic idea that Yonville, in order to be on the cutting edge, should lead the way in implementing these operations.”) He presents the idea to Emma, clearly playing on her vanity and knowing her powers to convince her husband, and promises that it would make Charles rich and an instant celebrity. It is ironic that what is done in the name of progress and patriotism in *Madame Bovary*, brings about such a similar situation to that which is done in the name of “chivalry” in the *Quijote*. Of course, the veil over the actions is that something charitable is being done for Hippolyte, but this is clearly not the true motivation.

If Cervantes indicts the blind adherence to “chivalry”(which is in fact, as I argue, the fanatic adherence to the Catholic church), Flaubert indicts the church as well, but perhaps more importantly modern notions of progress and scientific knowledge. Human beings, Flaubert seems to say, may have cloaked their base drives and selfish ambitions under the guise of a scientific understanding and the desire for progress for all, but don't be fooled. The

⁶³ *Madame Bovary*, p. 249

church in *Madame Bovary*, represented by the convent where Emma studies and the priest Bournisien, is also held in contempt by Flaubert, yet because it is outdated and ineffective, it seems less menacing and consequential than the world represented by a character such as Homais. In the name of reason, progress, and enlightenment, he climbs the social ladder rung by rung, with a jolly smile on his face and loudly and pedantically singing his own praises in the newspaper he writes for. Far from being the hero he pretends to be, he is in fact nothing more than a small time, small town pharmacist/journalist who practices medicine illegally, and covertly, on the side, thus parasitically ruining Charles's (and his predecessors and successors) possibilities of success as a local doctor. Homais's "journalism" is as fictitious—and more dangerous as its guise is fact—as a sentimental romance.

The famous last lines of *Madame Bovary* are neither about Emma nor Charles but about Homais: "Depuis la mort de Bovary, trois médecins se sont succédé à Yonville sans pouvoir y réussir, tant M. Homais les a tout de suite battus en brèche. Il fait une clientèle d'enfer; l'autorité le ménage et l'opinion publique le protège. Il vient de recevoir la croix d'honneur." ("Since Bovary's death, three doctors have tried to set up practice in Yonville—and Homais immediately ruined all of them. He is devilishly successful, as the authorities let him do as he pleases, and public opinion protects him. He has just been awarded the Legion of Honor.")

When Flaubert was taken to trial for *Madame Bovary*, it was for his immoral portrayal of an adulteress. The irony, of course, is that he wasn't accused of doing what he in fact did: of holding up a mirror that showed his countrymen what they were made of, and, that if the Homaises of the world could succeed, it was because there was a national conspiracy to ensure they did. Every contemporary cultural *idée reçue*—regarding progress, ambition, knowledge, science, love, morality, education, religion, spirituality, and so forth—is condemned in *Madame Bovary*, however, following Cervantes's subtle irony, Flaubert hides his condemnation within a mock sentimental tale of an adulterous woman.

Don Quijote and *Madame Bovary* can be read as condemnations of the intolerance and domination of public opinion in their respective eras. However, any social criticism in either novel is subservient to the main focus of both works: literature—how it should be written, and how it should be read. If the ideology and values of the Catholic church are held in ridicule in the *Quijote*—in the way “enlightened” ideas of progress are mocked in *Madame Bovary*-- it is because both cultural trends denigrate the value and status of narrative fiction.

CONCLUSION

For Flaubert, Cervantes created a bible on both writing and reading, and Flaubert was effectively “converted” to the religion of the modern prose novel through reading Cervantes, and through the process of writing *Madame Bovary*. To write *raisonnablement* was to Flaubert the most moral and noble—and challenging—vocation he could aspire to. After the trial of *Madame Bovary*, in which the novel was attacked primarily for its supposed “glorification” of immorality Flaubert wrote the following lines to a friend, Alfred Blanche:

On nous reproche des attaques aux bonnes mœurs et à la Religion...J’ai répondu que je croyais au contraire avoir écrit un livre moral et que j’étais prêt à le démontrer.⁶⁴
(We have been reproached for attacking good morals and Religion...I answered that on the contrary, I thought I had written a moral work and that I was prepared to prove it.)

Flaubert had his own moral system, and his own religion, which he always referred to as Art, with a capital « A ». As he was viewed as heretical by many of his contemporaries, he in turn viewed them mostly as heretics, for amongst them he found few—among them Louis Bouilhet and Baudelaire—who valued Art as he did. And, as chronology was irrelevant in the realm of literature, he included Cervantes amongst his kin. Cervantes had been the first to build a novelistic world around novels, and to conquer the challenges Flaubert would

⁶⁴ Correspondance, II. P. 661

later tackle. How could one write a great work of fiction in a time of censorship ? How could a great work reach a large audience without being a slave to popular literary conventions ? How could the importance of literature be conveyed to a society that viewed fiction merely as entertainment ? By what means could the reader be taught to read, and simultaneously be aligned—not ideologically, but in terms of sensibility—with the creative process of the writer ?

Don Quijote and *Madame Bovary* engage these questions, and while both are ostensibly about the dangers of fiction to the individual reader, aren't both, in fact, about the dangers of the individual reader to fiction ? In both novels books are burned, shunned, and ridiculed, on the one hand, or, if the readers are too enthusiastic, as in the case of Emma and Don Quijote, they are taken literally. The literal reading of books, as we have seen, leads nowhere. No matter how fervently the readers try to believe and to transform themselves through imitation, there is no possibility of transformation or conversion. The only conversion achieved by Emma and Don Quijote is in the sense of the Latin word *conversio*, which René Girard defines as "... turning around in a circle ; a full circular revolution that ultimately brings you back to your point of departure. »⁶⁵ This is precisely the process of *conversio* illustrated in the *Quijote*, and this is what the protagonist realizes, in his moment of lucidity,

⁶⁵ Girard, René. "Literature and Christianity: A Personal View". *Philosophy and Literature*. Volume 23, #1. April, 1999

only when it is too late, on his deathbed. Don Quijote and Emma's «mimetic adventures » are illustrations of this circularity, they want nothing more than to escape, and this desire only returns them home, to bed.

But if the protagonists illustrate the failed *conversio*, it is only to aid the authors in simultaneously illustrating the road towards the opposite : a true conversion, analogous to Christian conversion, yet wholly secular and within the realm of Art.

With the conviction of a convert and true believer, Flaubert spent his life urging others to read and to take literature seriously. He saw the trivialization of literature as the greatest danger to mankind. In an 1857 letter to a correspondent who shared his profound feelings for literature he offered detailed recommendations on how, and how not, to read :

Mais ne lisez pas, comme les enfants lisent, pour vous amuser, ni comme les ambitieux lisent, pour vous instruire. Non. Lisez *pour vivre*. Il s'agit *de travailler*, me comprenez-vous ?⁶⁶
But don't read, as children do, to entertain yourself ; nor as the ambitious do, to acquire knowledge. No. You must read in order to live. This involves hard work, do you understand ?

The quixotic novel claims that reading must have a correlation to writing, and if we struggle to read, it because the author struggled to write, something Cervantes reminds us of again and again. As he writes in the prologue to the *Quijote*, II : « ¿ Pensará vuestra merced ahora que es poco trabajo hacer un libro ? » (*Do you now think that writing a book is a small feat ?*). These

reminders are not self-congratulatory, they are necessary and serious attempts to prevent the reader from reading childishly, like Emma or Don Quijote.

Foreseeing the advent of a truly mass-circulation of books, *Don Quijote* conveys, through its main character, the distress, awe, and even madness that come with the awareness of existing amongst a continuous and crushing chain of literary models. While Cervantes may have viewed the past with a certain melancholy, he was not discouraged by the prospect of finding new ways to exploit his patrimony. On the contrary, he saw it as his obligation to create a work that explicitly engaged the dilemma of the new era which he illustrates through Don Quijote's quandary : are books eternally true, or are they anachronistic and worthless ?⁶⁷ The *quixotic* work « ...exhibits its borrowings openly, announcing that in a sense it owes everything and creates nothing new..(it is) a memoir and a tribute, an act of humility and a reminder of the historical situation of its birth in a period conscious of having nothing to say that has not been said before. »⁶⁸ Flaubert inherited these anxieties, and the encouragement, nevertheless to try—despite everything—to carve a little place for himself. His relationship to Cervantes, and his « mysterious » calling to write *quixotically* are evoked by the words of Pierre Menard, from Borges's story 'Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quijote » :

⁶⁶ Correspondance, II. P. 732

⁶⁷ Robert, Marthe. *The Old and the New*. Translated by Carol Cosman. Los Angeles, Berkeley, London: UCLA Press. 1977.

⁶⁸ Robert, Marthe. *The Old and the New*.

My general memory of *Don Quixote*, simplified by forgetfulness and indifference, is much the same as the imprecise, anterior language of a book not yet written. Once this image (which no one can deny me in good faith) has been postulated, my problems are undeniably considerably more difficult than those which Cervantes faced. My affable precursor did not refuse the collaboration of fate ; he went along composing his immortal work s little *à la diable*, swept along by the conventions of language and invention. I have contracted the mysterious duty of reconstructing literally his spontaneous work... To compose *Don Quixote* at the beginning of the seventeenth century was a reasonable, necessary, and perhaps inevitable undertaking ; at the beginning of the twentieth century it is almost impossible. It is not in vain that three hundred years have passed, charged with the most complex happenings—among them, to mention only one, that same *Don Quixote*.⁶⁹

Borges shows—perhaps most explicitly in this story—what he and so many writers after Flaubert have continued to acknowledge: in the over-saturated world of literary models, the *quixotic* work of prose can survive despite convention, and despite belatedness.

⁶⁹ Borges, Jorge Luis. *Ficciones*. Translated by Anthony Bonner. New York: Grove Press, 1962.

Bibliography

- Allen, John J. "Don Quixote and the Origins of the Novel" in *Cervantes and the Renaissance*. Easton, Pennsylvania: Juan de la Cuesta. 1980.
- Anon. *La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1980.
- Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. (Jebb, transl.) Cambridge 1909.
- Astrana Marín, Luis. *Vida ejemplar y heroica de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra*. 7 vols. Madrid: 1948-1958
- Auerbach, Erich.
 --*Mimesis*. Translated by Willard Trask. New York: Doubleday. 1957.
 --*Lenguaje literario y público en la baja latinidad y en la Edad Media*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1969.
- Avella-Arce, J.B. "Cervantes and the Renaissance" in *Cervantes and the Renaissance*. Easton, Pennsylvania: Juan de la Cuesta. 1980.
- Bagno, Vsevolod E. "El Quijote en los borradores de El Idiota de Dostoevski". *Anales Cervantinos* 32: 265-270 (1994)
- Barnes, Hazel E. *Sartre and Flaubert*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- Bataillon, Marcel. *Erasmus en Espagne*. Geneve: Droz, 1991.
- Behler, Diane. *The Theory of the Novel in Early German Romanticism*.
- Berger, John. *The Success and Failure of Picasso*. New York: Vintage, 1989
- Bernárdez, Asun. *Don Quijote, el lector por excelencia*. Madrid: Huerga y Fierro, 2000.
- Bernheimer, Charles. *Flaubert and Kafka: Studies in Psychopoetic Structure*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1982.

Bertrand, J.J. *Cervantes et le romantisme allemand*. Paris: F.Alcan, 1914.

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.

Brombert, Victor.

--*The Hidden Reader: Stendhal, Balzac, Hugo, Baudelaire, Flaubert*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.

--*The Novels of Flaubert: A Study of Themes and Techniques*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966

Bruneau, Jean. *Les Débuts Littéraires de Gustave Flaubert: 1831-1845*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1962.

Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of Renaissance Italy*. London: Penguin, 1990.

Cascardi, Anthony J. *The Bounds of Reason: Cervantes Dostoevsky, Flaubert*. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.

Caspi, Mishaël M., and Armistead, Samuel. Eds. *Jewish Culture in the Hispanic World*. Berkeley: Judah Magnes Museum, 1999.

Castro, Americo.

--"Apéndices" in Cervantes, Miguel de. *Don Quijote*. México: Edición Porrúa, 1960.

--*Cervantes y los casticismos españoles*. Madrid: Alfaguara, 1966.

--*Hacia Cervantes*. Madrid: Taurus, 1957.

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de.

--*Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Ed. Martin de Riquer. Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, 1983.

--*L'admirable Don Quichotte de la Manche*. Traduit par Damas/Hinard. Paris: Charpentier, 1847.

--*Le Don Quichotte en estampes ou les aventures du héros de la Manche et son écuyer Sancho Pansa représentées par 34 jolies gravures, avec un texte abrégé de Florian*. Paris, Eymety, Frugere, et Cie. 1828.

Close, Anthony.

--*The Romantic Approach to Don Quixote*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977.

--*Cervantes*. Alcalá de Henares: Centro de Estudios Cervantinos, 1995.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "The Education of Children" in *The Portable Coleridge*, ed. I.A. Richards. New York: Viking Press, 1950. P. 402.

Donato, Eugenio. *The Script of Decadence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Desmenil, René. *Flaubert, L'Homme et l'oeuvre*. Paris: Desclède Brouwer, 1932.

Drake, Dana B. and Finello, Dominick L. *Criticism on Don Quixote (1790-1893)*. Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta, 1987.

Du Camp, Maxim. *Souvenirs littéraires*. Paris: Hachette, 1906.

Dunlop. *History of Prose Fiction*. London: George Bell & Sons, 1888.

Eisenberg, Daniel. *Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age*. Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta. 1982

El Saffar, Ruth and Wilson, Diana de Armas. *Quixotic Desire: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Cervantes*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993.

Erasmus. *In Praise of Folly*. London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1937.

Felman, Shoshana. *Writing and Madness*. Translated by Martha Noel Evans, Brian Massumi, and the author. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

Ficowski, Jerzy. "Introduction" to *The Street of Crocodiles* by Bruno Schulz. New York: Viking Penguin, 1977.

Flaubert, Gustave.

-- *Correspondance*. (Bruneau, Jean: ed.)Paris: Gallimard. 1980

-- *Madame Bovary*. Translated by Paul de Man: New York: W.W. Norton, 1965)

-- *Madame Bovary*. Paris: Gallimard, 1961.

--*Oeuvres Complètes*. Paris: Gallimard, 1981-1988.

--*Cahier Intime de Jeunesse:Souvenirs, notes, et pensées intimes*. Paris: A-G Nizet, 1987.

Flores, Angel and Benardete, M.J. *Cervantes Across the Centuries*. New York: Dryden Press, 1947.

Forcione, Alban. *Cervantes, Aristotle, and the Persiles*. Princeton UP: Princeton, 1970.

Gans, Eric. *Madame Bovary: The End of Romance*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989.

Gilman, Stephen. *The Novel According to Cervantes*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 1989.

Girard, René. *Mensonge Romantique et Verité Romanesque*. Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1961.

Greer Johnson, Julie. *Satire in Colonial Spanish America*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

Hampton, Timothy. *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature*. Ithaca & London: Cornell UP, 1990.

Hathaway, Robert L. *Not Necessarily Cervantes*. Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 1995.

Hatzfeld, Helmut. *El Quijote como obra de arte del lenguaje*.

Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe and Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Literary Absolute*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1988.

Leclerc, Edmon. "L'un et l'autre". Musée des Familles. 1836-1837.

Levin, Harry.

--*The Gates of Horn*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.

--"The Female Quixote" in *Madame Bovary and the Critics: A Collection of Essays*. Ed, B.F. Bart. New York: New York University Press, 1966.

López Pinciano, Alonso. *Philosophia Antigua Poética*. 3 vols. Ed. Madrid, 1953.

Lukacs, Georg. *Theory of the Novel*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971.

Macphail, Eric. "Don Quijote and the Plot of History". *Comparative Literature*, V. 47, #4. Fall 1995.

Mann, Thomas. "Voyage with Don Quijote" in *Essays of Three Decades*. New York: Knopf, 1947.

Martinez Bonati, Felix. *Don Quixote and the Poetics of the Novel*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1992.

Menéndez Pelayo, M. "Interpretaciones del Quijote" in *Estudios de Crítica Literaria, Quinta Serie*. Madrid, 1908.

Nabokov, Vladimir. *Lectures on Don Quijote*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1983.

Ortega y Gasset, José. *Meditaciones del Quijote*. Madrid, 1914.

Proust, Marcel. *Remembrance of Things Past. Volume III*. Translated by Andreas Mayor. New York: Vintage, 1981.

Reed, Walter. *An Exemplary History of the Novel: The Quixotic vs. the Picaresque*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Reichelberg, Ruth. *Don Quichotte ou l'histoire d'un juif masqué*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989.

Riley, E.C.

-- *Cervantes's Theory of the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962.

-- *Introducción al Quijote*. Traducción de Enrique Torner Montoya. Barcelona. Editorial Crítica. 1990.

De Riquer, Martín.

-- *Aproximación al Quijote*. Barcelona: Teide, 1967

Robert, Marthe.

-- *The Old and the New*. Translated by Carol Cosman. Berkeley & Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 1977

-- *Roman des Origines et Origines du Roman*. Paris: Grassset, 1972.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *L'idiot de la famille*. Paris: Galimard, 1971.

Scott, Walter. *The Bride of Lamermoor*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995.

Steegmuller, Francis. *Flaubert and Madame Bovary*. New York: Farrar Strauss & Co., 1950

Tanner, Tony. *Adultery in the Novel*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.

Torrente Ballester, Gonzalo. *El Quijote como juego y otros ensayos críticos*. Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1984.

Turkevich, Ludmilla Buketoff. *Cervantes in Russia*. New York: Gordion Press, 1975.

Unamuno, Miguel de. *Ensayos*. Madrid: Aguilar, 1966.

Vargas Llosa, Mario. *The Perpetual Orgy*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 1987.

Wellek, René. *A History of Modern Criticism*. London. 1955.

Williamson, Edwin, ed. *Cervantes and the Modernists: A Question of Influence*. London-Madrid: Tamesis, 1994.