

# Nineteenth-Century French Studies

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This four-part volume centers on reading and philosophical reflection in *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, *Madame Bovary*, and *Salammô*. Four out of seven essays in the first part of this volume are devoted to analyses of Bouvard and Pécuchet's readings in Flaubert's last, eponymous, unfinished novel. Agnès Bouvier's essay, which shows how Flaubert read natural historian Pliny, stands out in the second part. The highlight of the third part—Flaubert's hitherto unpublished notes on the philosophy of Hegel and Spinoza preserved at the Bibliothèque municipale de Rouen—consists of the 126 pages of notes on thirty-two authors/commentators that he made from December 1878 to March 1879 in preparation for writing *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (225).

These unpublished notes reveal that Flaubert repeated and/or underlined key ideas under both Hegel and Spinoza. The notes form an autonomous little world and serve a dual purpose: not only do they go back to the source of the essays on *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, the encyclopaedic or philosophical novel for which they were intended, they also provide insight into the deep, understated philosophy of romantic novels such as *Madame Bovary* and *Salammô*.

Michael A. Soubbotnik's essay helps us understand the context in which Bouvard and Pécuchet become interested in studying philosophy. Stéphanie Dord-Crouslé examines the notes as well as the notes on notes that Flaubert made to write the chapter on literature in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Flaubert recopied authoritative definitions of Beauty from different philosophers, shortened them, used his own words to rephrase them, retaining only those parts which suggested abstract thought, and those which had a musical rhythm, for example, "recevoir une impression de plaisir ou de peine" (97). In the book, Bouvard and Pécuchet answer the question "What is Beauty?" with: "Pour Schelling c'est l'infini s'exprimant par le fini, pour Reid une qualité occulte, pour Jouffroy un fait indécomposable, pour De Maistre ce qui plaît à la vertu; pour le P. André, ce qui convient à la Raison." In her essay Florence Vatan wonders whether Bouvard and Pécuchet could be considered disciples of the nineteenth-century iconoclast French philosopher Hippolyte Taine, whose theory on the artistic quality of hallucination Flaubert read attentively (130). Taine discussed his theory with writers like Flaubert and Turgenev and in a letter to Turgenev, Taine described Bouvard and Pécuchet as two snails striving to climb to the top of Mount Blanc: at their first fall, one smiles; the second fall is intolerable (136). In *De L'Intelligence* (1870) Taine described his theory of intelligence as general anatomy, after a quantity of unusual dissections. In her essay Juliette Grange also demonstrates the irreconcilable duality that reigns over *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, arranging Bouvard's and Pécuchet's individual attributes into two columns: among other qualities, under Bouvard she notes materialism, beneath Pécuchet she mentions spiritualism (150). This is one of the reasons why the novel does not progress (153).

In the second part of the book, scholars study *Madame Bovary* and *Salammô* not as books of philosophy, but as representing certain philosophies of life. Kazuhiro Matsuzawa contrasts the opposite personalities of Emma and Charles, their different conceptions of love and happiness. In her interpretation of Flaubert's reading of miracles in Pliny, Bouvier draws attention to Hamilcar's treasures, an antique thesaurus, as well as masses of things, "choses mystérieuses, qui n'avaient pas de nom, et d'une incalculable valeur" (181). Like Pliny, Flaubert invites readers to

wonder at the miracles of nature and also apprehend nature as a miracle. The remaining three essays in the collection, those by Delphine Jayot, Taro Nakajima, and Gisèle Séginger, look at Flaubert's work from the viewpoints of philosophy and literature and they continue the dominant theme of reading and creating art.

Thought-provoking as well as offering valuable insight into the creative process through meticulous readings, this collection is a welcome addition to publications from France attempting to interpret Flaubert's artistic interest in philosophy.