

FLAUBERT'S *CORRESPONDENCE* AND THE TYPE OF AUCTORIAL BEHAVIOR THAT IT PROPOSES - SUMMARY -

Nowadays, it is very easy to notice that less and less people use letters as means of communication with close friends and relatives. Because of / thanks to the numerous technical discoveries, the letter was first replaced by the telephone and then, in the last few years, by various modern virtual devices, such as electronic mail and mobile phones with their SMS, which helps the sending and receiving of very short messages.

Under these circumstances, it is so much more surprising to discover Flaubert's *Correspondence*, which contains 4273 letters sent to 279 correspondents, letters included in the five volumes published by Gallimard and edited by Jean Bruneau. These are truly impressive numbers, but the content of all these letters, the sincerity shown by Flaubert when he writes about his intuitions, his most personal experiences or his theories concerning a writer's work, are even more impressive.

Written, very often, very late at night, after many hours of hard work, Flaubert's letters show quite a surprising spontaneity that has nothing in common with the extreme rigor shown by the author during the creation process. Moreover, as most of these letters are sent to close friends

and relatives, grammar and orthography rules are often neglected.

Even if it represents a true document that talks about 19th century France (topics vary from politics and religion, to habits and morals), Flaubert's *Correspondence* is first of all a true manual of literary theory and practice, a story of the very difficult way that leads to the appearance of the literary work. Flaubert's letter is thus annexed to his work, as it deals less with Flaubert the man, and much more with Flaubert the writer. It becomes a true mirror of Flaubert's creation, reflecting in the same time the writer's outlook on art and the appearance of this art. Flaubert's letter becomes a witness of the complicated process of instauration of this brilliant writer's work.

These are the reasons that made us want to start a systematic study on Flaubert's *Correspondence* from the point of view of the constitution, throughout the writer's activity, of a certain type of auctorial behavior. Given the fact that, very often, parts of this correspondence were taken out of context and, unfortunately, misinterpreted, the purpose of the current work, defended as a doctoral thesis, is to analyze the method that Flaubert uses at different moments in time, as it is presented in a large number of letters. This work tries to closely follow the development of the context of creation during four large periods of Flaubert's life, periods that correspond to the instauration of four of his most important works: "Madame Bovary", "Salammbô", "The Sentimental Education" and "Bouvard and Pécuchet". These periods are

marked by a large number of letters that represent a true history of Flaubert's literature about to be made.

The thesis, which begins with a brief introduction in which are presented the premises that stand at its basis, contains five chapters. The first chapter, entitled "Flaubert's *Correspondence* – a poietic document", emphasizes, with the support of numerous quotations, the most important concepts of Flaubertian poietics, which are to be found in the entire *Correspondence*. The latter remains a living proof of Flaubert's mechanism of creative thinking, seen during the instauration process of his works. The writer has the capacity to see himself writing, working, seeking the perfect word or the perfect phrase, without leaving any personal mark in the work about to be made. He has that poietic vision, that surprising capacity that allows him to analyze himself clearly and objectively.

The next four chapters contain, in their titles, the word "voyage". Flaubert repeated, all throughout his *Correspondence*, the idea that every book represents for its author a long and difficult voyage that changes him forever. This voyage requires a solid preparation, for it is never the same. These four chapters try to present and analyze these four "voyages" that led to the appearance of the above-mentioned works.

The second chapter, "The story of a revolutionary voyage", deals with the most important moments of the entire instauration process of "Madame Bovary", as it appears in the *Correspondence*. It is the chapter that covers the last part of

the writer's relationship with Louise Colet, during which the two exchanged a large number of profound, sincere and, sometimes, very touching letters. This chapter focuses on the writer's efforts to reach that ideal style that he continuously keeps in mind, and that he defines on several occasions. Thus he proposes a working method that helps him get, after years of exhausting work, with good times, but also with many profoundly pessimistic periods, to the final text.

The third chapter, "The story of a voyage in time", is dedicated to the analysis of the auctorial behavior that had as a result the novel "Salammbô". This chapter focuses on the specific character of the research activities did by Flaubert during the elaboration of this novel, as well as on the different stages of the text on its way to the final form, from the reverie stage and that of the dilated text, to the one of condensation and correction of the text.

The fourth chapter, "The story of a voyage in the past", analyzes the "voyage" that produced "The Sentimental Education". It focuses on the elements that made this voyage different from all the others: the maximum valorization of documentation and the so-called "work letters" sent by Flaubert to his correspondents in order to ask for their help (from simple advice to various information about different episodes in the novel).

The fifth chapter, "The story of an eternal voyage", follows the road of Flaubert's unfinished novel, "Bouvard and Pécuchet". It presents and analyzes the initial stage, that of the appearance of the "script", followed by the one of writing,

which overlaps with various research and preparation activities. The final part captures the sudden ending, in May 1880, of the writing process, caused by the writer's death.

The present work thus follows the long and difficult instauration process of Flaubert's work, a process that the writer is always well aware of, as we can see in his letters. The purpose of this ambitious and hopefully original approach is to contribute, in the name of a responsibility taken with endless enthusiasm, to a better knowledge of Flaubert the writer and his work, as well as to the recognition of his *Correspondence* as the true Flaubertian poietics.