

# Le romantisme corrigé: Emma Bovary and *Lucie de Lammermoor*

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In Chapter 14 of Book II of *Madame Bovary*, the pharmacist Homais suggests that in order to amuse Emma Charles should accompany her to Rouen to listen to the famous tenor Lagardy. This conversation takes place in the presence of the priest, M. Bournisien, who, when asked his opinion, declares that he considers music “moins dangereuse pour les mœurs que la littérature.”<sup>1</sup> Early in the novel the narrator has already shown Emma caught up in the passion of reading, especially in her youth when she devours romantic novels. This interest in literature is for her but an excuse to indulge in aimless wanderings of the mind and of the emotions.<sup>2</sup> Books represent to her ports of call on a long voyage which will gradually take her away from the realm of reality to the nebulous realm of fantasy. Since we know that she has already succumbed to the vice of literature, we might wish to agree with the cleric on the relative danger of this art form. His judgment regarding the lesser evil of music, however, is not altogether accurate, for as will be seen, music equals,<sup>3</sup> if not surpasses, literature as a potential temptation for a sensibility such as Emma’s.

There ensues a quasi-philosophical dialogue on the merits of literature and the theatre (a dialogue in which Charles’ only contribution is the dense phrase “sans doute”). When the pharmacist and the doctor are finally alone, Homais paints for Charles a tantalizing picture of what awaits the Bovarys at the opera:

Lagardy neo donnera qu’une seule représentation; il est engagé en Angleterre à des appointments considérables. C’est, à ce qu’on assure, un fameux lapin! il roule sur l’or! il mène avec lui trois maîtresses et son cuisinier! Tous ces grands artistes brûlent la chandelle par les deux bouts; il leur faut une existence dévergondée qui excite un peu l’imagination. Mais ils meurent à l’hôpital, parce qu’ils n’ont pas eu l’esprit, étant jeunes, de faire des économies. (II, 14, 271)

The tone of the discussion of this passage has been lowered from the quasi-philosophical to the sensational. Homais’ enthusiasm has less to do with the work of the artist than with the kind of life he leads. He has moved from the world of aesthetics and morality to that of titillating entertainment and scandal. As he sees it, the life of the artist is indeed extravagant. But there is a price to be paid for such squandering. Artists often end in utter financial misery. As Homais is a solid burgher, he is immune to the blandishments

of entertainment. The world of the artist can only provide him with a momentary source of amusement. Yet, in his own unlettered way, he has learned a valuable lesson. Each choice carries with it a unique responsibility. He, of course, chooses security.

In the case of Emma, though, the distinction is not clear. She cannot, or does not wish to, separate the world of the ideal from that of everyday existence. This ambivalence is played upon by the novelist as he limns the character of the heroine with various lights and shades from his limitless palette. During the composition, of the novel, Flaubert penned the following to Louise Colet in 1853:

Je voudrais écrire tout ce que je vois, non tel qu'il est, mais transfiguré.  
La narration exacte du fait réel le plus magnifique me serait impossible.  
Il me faudrait le broder encore.

He was well aware that the art of embellishment is central to the maturity of the novelist. He must, on the one hand, be scrupulous in the cataloguing of details; on the other hand, he must be equally sensitive to the need for transmuting these data into a creative entity. The combination of the two yields an ambiguity which potentially determines “the reader’s action and his final judgment.”<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter Flaubert is meticulously preparing for the scene in which Emma—in the company of Charles and later of Léon—leaves a performance of *Luice de Lammermoor* at a crucial point in the dramatic action of the opera. Anyone versed in the work and criticism of Flaubert knows that he could never be accused of *gaspillage*.<sup>6</sup> That he should deal with Emma’s responses to Donizetti’s opera is a sure sign that the performance is of vital importance not only to the character of Emma herself but also to the technique of the Olympian narrator who is a subtle presence in the novel.

This extensive scene represents a later stage in the erosion of Emma’s character or, more accurately in the erosion of her romantic sensibility, a stage in the impossibility of her ever attaining the ideal for which she has been searching in her reveries.<sup>7</sup> Like the wedding, the ball at the Vaubyessard and the agricultural fair, the episode of the operatic performance is one of the principal tableaux in the novel. Her marriage to Charles might be considered as an initiation into life, one that Emma immediately finds disappointing and unfulfilling. The ball rekindles her romantic notions temporarily held in check by the duties of marriage, notions which have lain dormant since childhood in the convent. The memory of pleasure at the Vaubyessard is sufficient to keep her alive until she meets Léon and until she has an affair with Rodolphe, one set against the bovine motif of the agricultural fair. The *Luice* episode is the climactic scene of her unsuccessful quest for the unattainable, her irreparable “dislocation.”<sup>8</sup> The world of music, particularly the exaggerated romanticism that is often associated with opera, provides the impetus for Emma to lose control of herself.<sup>9</sup> For her, art and life become totally confused: they now exist as mirror images.

Just as the soprano in *Luice* is about to launch into the “Mad Scene,” Emma suddenly loses interest and pleads physical discomfort. To her the style and acting of the singer seem overdone. Emma says, “elle crie trop fort.” The presence of Léon has distracted her from the wanderings caused by the music and her own restless imagination,

but the timing of Emma’s departure with the beginning of Lucie’s “scène de la folie” is a stroke of genius on the part of Flaubert. But putting side by side Lucie’s dementia, which has been brought on by her unswerving, faithful love for Edgar (she is forced against her will to marry Bucklaw), with Emma’s spiral-like, unrequited longings, the novelist has prepared a scenario which appears accidental but which, in fact, is controlled with masterly effect. Lucie goes mad in the world of art.<sup>10</sup> Emma, now confused by the mirror images, sees in Lucie’s condition a premonition (unconscious or subconscious) of what fate has store for her (her unnatural death will be suicide) if she gives herself up completely to the imagination.<sup>11</sup> The gradually increasing excitement of the singer as she becomes unbalanced in the mad scene, climaxed by a stratospheric note above the staff, parallels Emma’s own intense mental confusion. That Emma leaves at the beginning of the scene suggests that her “folie” is not fully realized. She is as yet unwilling to pay the price that Lucie has willingly paid, for Emma has not experienced that completeness of love which Lucie fleetingly attained. Emma sees in Lucie the danger of utter commitment and is thus caught in the dilemma of choosing between the life of the imagination and a bourgeois existence. The tensions caused by this dialectic of indecision are manipulated by the narrator with great dexterity. This ambiguity recalls Flaubert’s own words:

L’artiste doit être dans son oeuvre comme Dieu dans la Création,  
invisible et tout-puissant, qu’on le sente partout, mais qu’on ne le  
voie pas. (*Corr.*, IV, 164)

The introduction of the operatic scene in chapter 15 illustrates his aesthetic perfectly. Flaubert artfully makes use of music to limit, to correct Emma’s undisciplined comprehension of the world about her. Donizetti (and Scott) offers a method of testing Emma’s *romantisme déchainé* with a romanticism which is more disciplined, a quality which might well be described as a *romantisme corrigé*.

## II

In 1851, during the course of his voyage to the Middle East, Flaubert attended a performance of Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Constantinople.<sup>12</sup> This, of course, was the Italian version of the opera, the version in which the composer enlisted the aid of Salvatore Cammarano as librettist.<sup>13</sup> The opera was first given in Naples on 26 September 1835 and, according to the composer himself, enjoyed an immense success.<sup>14</sup> Soon after, the opera appeared in numerous European, North and South American countries; by 1845 it has reached even Constantinople. This is the version which Flaubert heard there six years later. There was, however, another *Lucia*, or rather *Lucie de Lammermoor*, which in its own way proved to be a great favorite.<sup>15</sup> It differed from the original in certain respects, and though Flaubert had both versions at his disposal he chose to employ the French version in *Madame Bovary*.

On 6 August 1839, Lucie made its debut in Paris at the Théâtre de la Renaissance. It seems that Donizetti’s original motive for a drastic revision was practical rather than aesthetic. Since Antenor Joly’s company at the Renaissance was limited both financially and artistically, the composer lent the theatre the sum of 5,000 francs; he engaged Alphonse Royer and Gustave Vaëz, two French librettists, to make important changes.

As a result, the opera goer conversant with the Italian *Lucia* will be somewhat surprised at the result. Lucia's lady-in-waiting, Alisa, is missing; some of her music is eliminated; her part in the famous sextet is replaced by a character named Gilbert. The first two scenes of Act One are combined; in the third act, Edgar comes to Lammermoor to challenge Henri (Enrico) to a duel; the role of Raimonde (Raimondo) is suitably abbreviated and adapted to the modest abilities of a minor singer on the roster; finally, the famous harp solo of the Fountain Scene is omitted.<sup>16</sup> Donizetti and his French colleagues then added new elements:

The recitative before *D'un amour qui brave* (*Cruda, funesta, smania*) is much extended, permitting a clearer exposition of the feud. Bringing on Arthur after Henri's cabaletta further serves to elucidate the action. The opening chorus is repeated before the departure of Henri and Arthur. In the printed French score there is no sign of *Regnava nel silenzio* and *Quando rapito in estasi*, not even in an appendix; instead Lucie sings the double aria from *Rosmunda d'Inghilterra*. Further changes include the rewriting of the recitative at the beginning of Act 2 up to Lucie's entrance. The rest of the act is the same except for changes before the sextet and for a very abbreviated stretta in the finale. Act 3 begins with the chorus in the wings singing one verse of *Entourons de nos vœux* (*D'immense jubilo*) before Edgar arrives to deliver his challenge. After he leaves, the chorus repeats this verse on stage. The Mad scene is unchanged, but the brief scene immediately following it is omitted. At the end of the Tomb Scene, Henri appears just after Edgar's suicide and expresses his remorse.

Although the French *Lucie* lacks the variety and spaciousness of the Italian original, it is not completely inferior. Particularly, the first scene in the French version explains the background to the plot more clearly than in the Italian.<sup>17</sup>

It is fortunate that Donizetti and his librettists were able, while honoring financial necessity, to more clearly define the dramatic situation.

According to the dictates of realism, it would be proper for Flaubert to use the French *Lucie* in his novel, for this is the version which circulated throughout the French provinces after its initial performances in Paris in 1839 (although the Italian *Lucia* had been heard in Paris as early as 1837). In addition, the French version would elicit a more direct response from Emma, for the background of the plot in the French version is more sharply etched. Lucie's romantic disposition and her steadfast, pure love for Edgar are emphasized. Because of her unwillingness to compromise her fidelity, she becomes deranged; she retains, nevertheless, her strong sense of responsibility. This is in ironic contrast to Emma's own predicament as she witnesses the performances.

### III

Emma and Charles arrive unfashionably early for *Lucie de Lammermoor* ("devant les portes du théâtre, qui étaient encore fermées"). Emma has ample time to

savor the excitement of the crowd and to bask in the knowledge that she and Charles are in the best seats. She is so awed by the surroundings that she experiences a "battement de coeur," which heightens her emotions and prepares her to participate vicariously and *dangerously* in the lives of the characters on the stage.

As the opera begins and Emma listens to the music, she is immediately transported to scenes of her childhood. She moves effortlessly from Donizetti to Scott to her own feelings:

Elle se retrouvait dans les lectures de sa jeunesse en plein Walter Scott. Il lui semblait entendre, à travers le brouillard, le son des cornemuses 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 insaisissables pensées qui lui revenaient se dispersaient aussitôt sous les rafales de la musique. (II, 15, 274)

The opera becomes a device for Emma to recall the delights of her childhood when she could satisfy the whims of romantic youth. It will be remembered that as early as Chapter 5 of Part I, immediately after her marriage to Charles, Emma finds herself brutally disappointed by her expectations and the actual experience.

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, songea-t-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. (I, 5, 69)

Already, as a newly-married woman, Emma is incapable of distinguishing between the exigencies of everyday life and the excitement of life as it is found in works of art, especially in literature. Even earlier in the novel the narrator embroiders her childhood and the experiences she relished at an early age:

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 sentimental qu'artiste, cherchant des émotions et non des paysages. (i, 6, 71)

At the age of thirteen Emma Rouault begins the inevitable journey that is to remove her completely from reality. Furthermore, her attraction to Sir Walter Scott, the literary source of Donizetti's opera, is purely an extension of her own voluptuous fantasy:<sup>18</sup>

Avec Walter Scott, plus tard, elle s'éprit de choses historiques, rêva bahuts, salle des gardes et ménestrels. 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. (I, 6, 72)

When Lucie first appears on the stage, her longings immediately become Emma's:

Lucie entama d'un air grave sa cavatine en sol majeur; elle se plaighait d'amour, elle demandait des ailes. Emma, de même, aurait voulu, fuyant la vie, s'envoler dans une étreinte. Tout à coup, Edgar Lagardy parut. (II, 15, 275)

Yet the actions of the operatic heroine are of minor consequence when the tenor makes his initial appearance.

The music is momentarily forgotten as the narrator describes in minute detail the tenor, a description which would be in keeping with Emma's romantic nature. It is also a corroboration of Homais's sketch of the artist in the previous chapter and substantiates the romantic temperament in an exaggerated form.<sup>19</sup>

Il avait une de ces pâleurs splendides qui donnent quelque chose de la majesté des marbres aux races ardentes du Midi. Sa taille vigoureuse était prise dans un pourpoint de couleur brune; un petit poignard ciselé lui battait sur la cuise gauche, et il roulait des regards langoureusement en découvrant ses dents blanches. On disait qu'une princesse polonaise, l'écoutant un soir chanter sur la plage de Biarritz, où il radoubaient des chaloupes, en était devenue amoureuse. Elle s'était ruinée à cause de lui. Il l'avait plantée là pour d'autres femmes, et cette célébrité sentimentale ne laissait pas que de servir à sa réputation artistique. Le cabotin diplomate avait même soin de faire toujours glisser dans les réclames une phrase poétique sur la fascination de sa personne et la sensibilité de son âme. Un bel organe, un imperturbable aplomb, plus de tempérament que d'intelligence et plus d'emphase que de lyrisme, achevaient de rehausser cette admirable nature de charlatan, où il y avait du coiffeur et du toréador. (II, 15, 275)

The singer recalls certain characteristics of none other than Rodolphe Boulanger, Emma's lover, whom the narrator has already described as

de tempérament brutal et d'intelligence perspicace, ayant d'ailleurs beaucoup fréquenté les femmes et s'y connaissant bien. Celle-là lui avait paru jolie: il y rêvait donc, et à son mari.

Je le crois très bête. Elle en est fatiguée sans doute. Il porte des ongles sales et une barbe de trois jours. Thandis queil trotte à ses malades, elle reste à ravauder des chaussettes. Et on s'ennuie! en voudrait habiter la ville, danser la polka tous les soirs! Pauvre petite femme! Ça baille après l'amour, comme une carpe après l'eau sur une table de cuisine. Avec trois mots de galanterie, cela vous adorerait, j'en suis sûr! Ce serait tendre! Charmant!.... Oui, mais comment s'en débarrasser ensuite? (II, 7, 175)

Having seen Emma briefly, Rodolphe loses no time in setting up the strategy of the chase, the seduction, and the inevitable abandonment. But Emma is as unwilling to recognize this heartless, realistic side of his nature as she is unwilling to give up her romantic illusions.

The appearance of Edgar Lagardy unlocks Emma's memory; he and Rodolphe are almost indistinguishable:

Dès la première scène, il enthousiasma. Il pressait Lucie dans ses bras, il la quittait, il semblait désespéré; il avait des éclats de colère, puis des râles élogiaques d'une douceur infinie, et les notes s'échappaient de son cou nu, pleines de sanglots et de baisers. (I, 15, 275)

Emma becomes more and more involved in the dramatic situations:

Emma se penchait pour le voir, égratignant avec ses ongles le velours de sa loge. Elle s'emplissait le coeur de ses lamentations mélodieuses qui se traînaient à l'accompagnement des contrebasses, comme des cris de naufrages dans le tumulte d'une tempête. Elle reconnaissait tous les enivrements et les angoisses dont elle avait manqué mourir. La voix de la chanteuse ne lui semblait être que le retentissement de la conscience, et cette illusion qui la charmait, quelque chose même de sa vie. Mais personne sur la terre ne l'avait aimée d'un pareil amour. Il ne pleurait pas comme Edgar, le dernier soir, au clair de lune lorsqu'ils se disaient: 'A demain; à demain!... La salle craquait sous les bravos; on recommença la strette entière; les amoureux parlaient des fleurs de leur tombe, de serment, d'exil, de fatalité, d'espérance, et quand ils poussèrent l'adieu final, Emma jeta un cri aigu, qui se confondit avec la vibration des derniers accords. (II, 15, 276-77)

The *dramma per musica* has so transported her that her memory of past events gradually blurs. When she contrasts the parting of the operatic lovers with her own adieu to Rodolphe, she is inaccurate in her recall. It is Emma who repeats the phrase "à demain." Rodolphe is conspicuously mute.<sup>20</sup> No longer capable of making an objective statement about the past, she relinquishes her ability to judge and gradually confounds Edgar with Rodolphe. As a result, the performance becomes a contest of wills as to which of the two charlatans, Edgar or Rodolphe, is uppermost in her mind. Her physical discomfiture, which manifests itself in her scratching the material of the loge with her fingernails, terminates in a shrill cry which is mingled with the last notes of the scene.

Charles, who is in the company of Emma, and who has followed the story as well as he could for one not acquainted with Scott or Donizetti or the Librettists, asks questions of his wife when he does not comprehend the plot. Though Emma goes to some pains to explain the background of the opera—Flaubert even quotes directly a phrase from the text "J'aime Lucie et je m'en crois aimée" (the sort of phrase that would appeal to Charles, for it expresses his own love for Emma)—Charles does not understand what it is all about.<sup>21</sup>

Il avouit, du reste, ne pas comprendre l'histoire—a cause de la musique—qui nuisait beaucoup aux paroles. (II, 15, 276)

Yet in making this observation Charles has unwittingly touched upon one of the key ideas in the novel, the distinction between understanding and feeling, between reason and the emotions. Charles tried to be reasonable:

—C'est que j'aime, reprit-il en se penchant sur son épaule, à me rendre compte, tu sais bien. (II, 15, 276)

His lack of knowledge regarding the plot is a direct parallel to his own existence and is reflected by his being unaware of Emma's love affairs. He simply does not know what is going on, either on the stage or in real life.

There ensues on the stage the scene in which Lucie is about to marry Arthur Bucklaw because she believes Edgar to have been faithless (though, in truth, he has remained faithful):

Lucie s'avancait, à demi soutenue par ses femmes, une couronne d'oranger dans les cheveux, et plus pâle que le satin blanc de sa robe. Emma rêvait au jour de son mariage; et elle se revoyait là-bas, au milieu des blés, sur le petit sentier, quand on marchait vers l'église. Pourquoi donc n'avait-elle pas, comme celle-là, résisté, supplié? Elle était joyeuse, au contraire, sans s'apercevoir, de l'abîme où elle se précipitait... Ah!, si, dans la fraîcheur de sa beauté, avant les souillures du mariage et la désillusion de l'adultère, elle avait pu placer sa vie sur quelque grand cœur solide, alors, la vertu, la tendresse, les voluptés et le devoir se confondant, jamais elle ne serait descendue d'une félicité si haute. Mais ce bonheur-la, sans doute, était un monsonge imaginé pour le désespoir de tout désir. 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 de velours, un homme apparut en manteau noir. (II, 15, 276-77)

Lucie's torments impel Emma to once more go back in time to a world before the shabby institutions of marriage and adultery, a world in which she could enjoy an idealistic union. In such a place, love and virtue and passion and responsibility would be indistinguishable. As she tries to fortify herself against the attraction of the performance and as she attempts to assert a certain amount of objectivity, the magnetic Edgar reappears to mesmerize her:

Il devait avoir, pensait-elle, un intarissable amour, pour en déverser sur la foule à si larges effluves. Toutes ses velléités 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, et qu'elle aurait pu mener, cependant, si le hasard l'avait voulu. Ils se seraient connus, il se seraient aimés! Avec lui, par tout les royaumes

de l'Europe, elle aurait voyagé de capitale en capitale, partageant ses fatigues et son orgueil, ramassant les fleurs qu'on lui jetait, brochant elle-même ses costumes; puis, chaque soir, au fond d'une loge, derrière la grille à treillis d'or, elle eût recueilli, béante, les expansions de cette qui n'aurait chanté que pour elle seule; de la scène, tout en jouant, il l'aurait regardée. 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! à toi à toi! toutes mes ardeurs et tous mes rêves! (II, 15, 277-78)

Emma is fascinated by the splendor of this man who would take her away to see the world (as Rodolphe would not do) and who would remain with her in an everlasting union. Suddenly, she even believes that Edgar Lagardy looks up at her; she wishes to be carried into the kingdom of ardor and of dreams.<sup>22</sup> Her reveries are interrupted when the curtain is abruptly lowered at the end of the scene. This gesture marks the end of the act in *Lucie*; it further signifies the impossibility of Emma ever realizing her wish.

Léon appears during the intermission, met by Charles and escorted to the loge that the Bovarys occupy, and then presented to Emma, who, by his very presence vacillates between remembrance and the present. She gives Léon her hand,

sans doute obéissant à l'attraction d'une volonté plus forte. Elle ne l'avait pas sentie depuis ce soir de printemps où il pleuvait sur les feuilles vertes, quand ils se dirent adieu, debout au bord de la fenêtre. Mais, vite, se rappelant à la convenance de la situation, elle secoua dans un effort cette torpeur de ses souvenirs et se mit à balbutier des phrases rapides. (II, 15, 279)

As in the case of Edgar, Emma is flustered by the presence of a personality stronger than hers. As the third act of *Lucie* commences, the music and the drama recede into the distance,

comme si les instruments fussent devenus moins sonores et les personnages plus reculés: elle se rappelait les parties de cartes chez le pharmacien et la promenade chez la nourrice, les lectures sous la tonnelle, less tête-à-tête au coin du feu, tout ce pauvre amour si clame et si long, si discret, si tendre, et qu'elle avait oublié cependant. Pourquoi donc revenait-il? Quelle combinaison d'aventures le remplaçait dans sa vie? Il se tenait derrière elle, s'appuyant de l'épaule contre la cloison; et, de temps à autre, elle se sentait frissonner sous le souffle tiède de ses narines qui lui descendait dans la chevelure. (II, 15, 279-80)

The opera becomes more and more vague as Emma's mind wanders back to her idyll with Léon. His immediate presence has awakened her to the past.

He suggests to Emma and Charles that they leave the opera in order to take

some refreshment, but the husband of Emma, obviously engrossed in the performance, wishes to linger a little longer.

—Ah! pas encore! rests! dit Bovary. Elle a les cheveux dénoués cela promet d'être tragique. (II, 15, 280)

With evident gusto Charles has been enjoying himself sufficiently to see the sequel to this stage drama. His delight at the prospect of something tragic is spontaneous ("la franchise"), but this anticipation of Lucie's "Scène de la folie" is not shared by his wife:

—Elle cris trop fort, dit-elle en se tournant vers Charles, qui écoutait. (II, 15, 280)

The opera has so disturbed her that she can no longer abide the consequences of the implied suggestions of the plot.<sup>23</sup> Lucie goes mad; this potential dagger of unrequited love frightens Emma. If she were to follow the convention of the imagination as it is depicted on the stage, she would be headed for possible doom. One must also pay a price in the rarefied atmosphere of the ideal, Emma, sparked by the sensual presence of Léon, conveniently forgets her artistic responsibility.

As the Bovarys and Léon are enjoying a sherbet, the spectators who have remained until the end repeat the strains of Edgar's "O bel ange, ma Lucie!" As they leave, Léon tells the company that Lagardy is nothing like the other famous tenors of his day. Charles, who does not wish Emma to miss the last act, impulsively suggests that she stay another day in Rouen. Just as suddenly, Léon changes his tactics:

Et, changeant de manoeuvre devant cette occasion inattendue qui s'offrait à son espoir, le jeune homme entama l'éloge de Lagardy dans le morceau final, C'était que chose de superbe, de sublime! Alors Charles insista... (II, 15, 281)

Charles, the frank, open man, has inadvertently furthered the plot in which Emma and Léon will engage in an adulterous affair. From this moment on, Emma is so saturated with dreams that she shuttles back from the world of the imagination to the world of unpleasant existence without quite knowing which possesses the greater reality. Donizetti and Scott trigger her emotional "dislocation." The tenor, she thought, even went so far as to look at her directly. But the sequence is interrupted. The presence of Léon is the result of her wish-fulfillment. For want of better substitute, he will appear to Emma as the ideal, a mistake which will terminate in Emma's losing complete control of herself. Like the operatic heroines, she will die a lingering, agonizing death.<sup>24</sup>

En effet, elle regarda tout autour d'elle, lentement, comme quelqu'un qui se réveille d'un songe, puis, d'une voix distincts, elle demanda son miroir, et elle resta dessus quelque temps; jusqu'au moment où de grosses larmes lui décollèrent des yeux. Alors elle se renversa la tête en poussant un soupir et recombait sur l'oreiller... Emma se releva comme un cadavre que l'on galvanise, les cheveux dénoués, la prunelle fixe, béants... Une convulsion la rabattit sur le matelas. Tous s'approchèrent. Elle n'existait plus. (III, 8, 385-86)

The final tableau—worthy of a Massenet or a Verdi or a Puccini—contains all the ingredients associated with the operatic repertory.

Though pain and suffering prevent Emma from appreciating the dramatic effect of the final hours of her life, she has died in the manner of the literary and musical heroines. Immediately before expiring, Emma sits up. "les cheveux dénoués," which again recalls what Charles had noticed during the presentation of *Lucie* at the Rouen opera:

—Elle a les cheveux dénoués: cela promet d'être tragique.

This *coup de théâtre* is very much to the point and in keeping with operatic Emma that Flaubert so carefully depicts in Chapter 15 of Book II. When she takes poison, Emma at last realizes the responsibility of her existence in the same way that Lucie goes mad when she is forced to marry Arthur Bucklaw. At the time of the "Mad Scene" Emma was yet unwilling to come to terms with her life. However, while listening to the raucous singing of the blind man, she sees everything clearly in an instant. The imagination, contrary to what she had earlier thought, makes certain demands, has its own law. Her subsequent death fuses the mirror images of the real and the ideal.

Through the use of the hidden personality of the narrator, Flaubert objectifies Emma's impossible craving, gives her wish boundaries and limits.<sup>25</sup> He imparts to the traditional aura of romanticism a corrective which places sentimental longing into a more universal framework. In addition to enhancing the character of the protagonist, the novelist intensifies the layer of experience to produce an ambiguity of the highest artistic order.

### Notes & Reference

<sup>1</sup> Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, ed. Maurice Nadeau (Lausanne: Editions Rencontre, 1964), p. 269. All subsequent references to the text will be to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> cf. P.M. Wetherill, *Flaubert et la création littéraire* (Paris: Librairie Nizer, 1964), p. 235: "L'attitude d'esprit d'Emma est conditionnée par ses mauvaises lectures—tout son drame en découle."

<sup>3</sup> See Charles Carlut, *La correspondance de Flaubert: étude et répertoire critique* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1968), especially, pp. 269-70, for keys to music in Flaubert's writings.

<sup>4</sup> Gustave Flaubert, *Correspondance*, III, ed. Louis Conard (Paris: Conard, 1926-1933), 320. Subsequent reference to *Correspondance* will be to this edition.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin F. Bart, "Art, Energy and Aesthetic Distance," in *Madame Bovary and the Critics*, ed. Benjamin F. Bart (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1966), p.85. All subsequent references to this book will be designated *Critics*.

<sup>6</sup> cf. Wetherill, p. 98. See also Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary: ébauches et fragments inédits*. ed. Gabrielle Leleu (Paris: Conard. 1936)

<sup>7</sup> See Victor Brombert, *The Novels of Flaubert: A Study of Themes and Techniques* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), p. 55: "The chapter on Emma's education is revealing, not merely because it proposes a parable of the entire novel, but because the progression of images corresponds to a pattern repeated throughout the book: from ennui to expectation, to escape, to confusion, back to ennui and to a yearning for nothingness."

<sup>8</sup> cf. Benjamin F. Bart, *Flaubert* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1967), p. 204 and p. 300.

<sup>9</sup> cf. Gary Schmidgall, *Literature as Opera* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press), p. 113: “The heart of bel canto opera lies in this almost orgasmic pleasure ... in the powerful airborne melody climaxing somewhere above the staff.”

<sup>10</sup> cf. Schmidgall, p.117. Donizetti’s *Lucia* is considered as an archetypal example of unrequited love in the bel canto repertory.

<sup>11</sup> cf. Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 155: “Furthermore, during scenes of ‘*delirio*’ or ‘*sogno*’ or ‘*sonnambulismo*’ a demented or dreaming character often recalled previous music. The right tune might restore him (her, usually) to sanity. But since the person may be supposed actually to ‘hear things’, this usage should also be considered literal—the literal representation of an abnormal state of mind.” cf. Harry Levin, “The Female Quixote,” in *Critics*, p. III.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Bart. *Flaubert*, p. 204.

<sup>13</sup> The Italian and English texts of the opera will be found in Gaetano Donizetti, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, trans. Ellen H. Bleiler (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1972)—hereafter referred to as Bleiler.

<sup>14</sup> Bleiler, p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> The text of the French version with an English translation can be found in Gaetano Donizetti, *Lucie de Lammermoor* (Napoléonville: Jean Schweitzer, 1861).

<sup>16</sup> See William Ashbrook, *Donizetti* (London; Cassell, 1965), p. 424. cf. Bleiler, p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> Ashbrook, pp. 424-25.

<sup>18</sup> For the differences between Flaubert’s *Emma* and Scott’s *Lucy*, see *The Bride of Lammermoor* (London: The Hawarden Press, 1893), p. 39, for Scott’s description of the heroine: “Left to the impulse of her own taste and feelings, Lucy, Ashton was peculiarly accessible to those of a romantic cast. Her secret delight was in the old legendary tales of ardent devotion and unalterable affection, chequered as they so often are with strange adventures and supernatural horrors. This was her favoured fairy realm, and here she erected her aerial palaces. But it was only in secret that she laboured at this delusive, thought delightful architecture.” See Schmidgall, pp. 133-147, for an analysis of the influence of Sir Walter Scott on Gaetano Donizetti.

<sup>19</sup> See Margaret Tillet. “On reading *Madame Bovary*,” in *Critics*, p. 3: “Another of the worst tendencies of the Romantic disposition—the tendency to self-dramatization—is very marked in her.”

<sup>20</sup> II, 13, 249.

<sup>21</sup> See Brombert, p. 42.

<sup>22</sup> See John C. Lapp, “Art and Hallucination in Flaubert,” in *Critics*, p. 181.

<sup>23</sup> See Jean-Pierre Richard, *Bittérature et sensations* (Paris: Editions du Seuil), p. 202.

<sup>24</sup> See Alexandre Dumas, *La Dame aux camélias*—written in 1848—(Paris: Editions Athena, 1948), p. 271, for a parallel between *Emma*’s death and that of Marguerite Gautier, the literary source for Verdi’s *La Traviata*.

<sup>25</sup> cf. Victor Brombert, *Flaubert par lui-même* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971), pp. 114-15.

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