



Coubertin reader of Flaubert

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Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) and Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937) come from Normandy, “country which gave me birth”¹, “cradle of my family”². The first was the son of a doctor and bourgeois-man considered as the precursor of the modern novel. The second was an aristocrat, son of a painter of religious art and perceived like the renovator of the modern Olympic Games. After similar studies (arts baccalaureat, studies of law to university), Flaubert and Coubertin travel and discover the world: Europe, North Africa, Middle East for Flaubert; Europe, United States, Canada for Coubertin. Other countries were further added to the list. Swimming, rowing, fencing, riding, hunting, pedestrian activities were common passions here. The bicycle tempts Coubertin, the “vélocipède” transports Flaubert. Solitary, Flaubert will never marry, but will deal all his life with his niece Caroline an orphan, towards whom he will dedicate an indivisible affection. Coubertin married Marie Rothan in 1895; from this union were born two children, Jacques and Renee.

Who is signing in “La crise évitable” ?

In an article not signed published in the *Olympic Review* in March 1911 entitled “La crise évitable”³, a “well-read man” quotes Flaubert at length. Without revealing his identity nor the title of the “new manuscript” of Flaubert to which he refers and for which he proposes to help

¹ Gustave Flaubert à Camille Rogier, Naples, II mars 185[1], vol. I, p. 762, in : Flaubert, *Correspondance*, 4 vol., éd. Gallimard, *N.R.F.*, coll. “Bibl. de la Pléiade”, J. Bruneau, Paris, 1973, 1980, 1991, 1998.

² Coubertin, P. de, *Mémoires olympiques*, éd. Revue “EP.S.”, coll. “Archives et Mémoire de l’Éducation physique et du Sport”, Paris, 1996 (réimpr. de l’éd. B.I.P.S., Lausanne, 1931), IV, p. 44.

³ “La crise évitable”, *Revue Olympique*, 2^e série, n° 63, mars 1911, pp. 42-44. Coubertin, P. de, *Essais de psychologie sportive*, éd. J. Millon, coll. “Mémoires du corps”, Grenoble, 1992, pp. 148-152 [“articles of Coubertin published between 1906 and 1913 in the *Olympic Review* assembled by Roger Dépagniat, Payot ed., 1913”].

youth, this “well-read man” writes : “It is an unexpected pleasure for the well-read men to meet the publication of an unpublished manuscript signed by the great writer who was Gustave Flaubert”⁴.

If it appears difficult, in the first instance, to identify the text of Flaubert to which this mysterious reader refers, it is too easy to recognise, in the second instance, the identity of only the true “well-read man” of the *Olympic Review*: it is Coubertin himself, who likes to present himself on the literary stage in a masked way. Written by the baron but signed under the pseudonym of George Hohrod, *Le Roman d'un Rallié* [sic] is published by editor and manager of the *Olympic Review* (1901-1915) Albert Lanier in 1902. Lanier published *La Chronique de France* in five vol. “under the direction of Pierre de Coubertin” (1900-1904)⁵. Signing by the double pseudonym George Hohrod and Mr. Eschbach, the president of the C.I.O. Pierre de Coubertin earned a literary gold medal for the artistic contests of the Olympic Games of Stockholm (1912) with the bilingual poem German-French *Ode an den Sport* (*Ode au sport*, 1912), following the advisory Conference he had given on Arts, Letters and Sports at Comédie-Française in Paris in 1906.

A warning note of the *Olympic Review* which Coubertin is in charge, admittedly does not authorise anyone to slice on the signatories of the articles proposed by the *Review*. The authors

⁴ *Novembre. Fragments de style quelconque* [1842] in the Conard ed. (1910) from éd. from which Coubertin quotes probably young Flaubert. Come first out in extracts in *Trois contes* (éd. Quantin, 1885) and *Par les champs et par les grèves* (Charpentier, 1886), *Novembre* is published in its entirety in *Œuvres complètes* de Flaubert (vol. 12) in Conard ed. in 18 vol. (1909-1912) entitled *Œuvres de jeunesse inédites*, pp. 162-256, first authoritative edition, then in ed. Fasquelle (1914). For more details, cf. Flaubert, G., *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vol., éd. Gallimard, N.R.F., coll. “Bibl. de la Pléiade”, C. Gothot-Mersch and G. Sagnes, Paris, 2001, vol. 1, *Œuvres de jeunesse*, pp. 1493-1495 ; *Novembre*, pp. 757-831).

⁵ Coubertin, P. de, *La Chronique de France*, 5 vol., Imprimerie A. Lanier, Auxerre-Paris, 1900-1904. *Le Roman d'un Rallié* first published in five episodes in *La Nouvelle Revue* (15.02.1899-1.04.1899). Hohrod, Georges [Pierre de Coubertin], *Le Roman d'un Rallié* [sic], Impimeur-éditeur Albert Lanier, Auxerre, 1902.

of the *Review* to not decline their identities. To sign or not to is only one question of “detail”⁶, insists the reviewer. However the details of style, tone and form of “La crise évitable”, their putting into perspective with other texts of Coubertin, indicate a close relationship between the author of “La crise évitable” and Coubertin himself. Within the framework of the prevention by sport described in “La crise évitable” (1911) and *Ode au sport* (1912), Coubertin opposes the same adverb to the lubricity of passions which unchain youth, “healthily”, the last word of “La crise évitable” :

the sport will give to young Latin — as it gave to the young Anglo-Saxons — the receipt to become man healthily (“La crise évitable”)⁷

the human body [...] can become despicable or sublime according whether it is degraded by cheap passions or healthily cultivated by the effort. (*Ode au sport*, 2th stanza)⁸

Admired by Coubertin, Flaubert had taken leave of *Hérodias* (1878) on an adverb :

As it was very heavy [the head of saint John the Baptist], they carried it alternatively⁹

The report is the same in *Pédagogie sportive* (1919) which quotes *La crise évitable* (1911) in a note at the bottom of sporting prevention. Insisting on the concept of identification binding the

⁶ “It is not up to me to redraw here the detail of our works. The *Olympic Review* contains its summary in the one hundred and more numbers published since the day which it became monthly. Its articles, always anonymous, were widely used during years by many writers who drew from it informations and inspirations.” (Cf. N. Müller, G. Rioux, *Pierre de Coubertin. Textes choisis*, 3 vol., N. Müller, éd. Weidmann, Zürich, C. I.O., Lausanne, 1986, vol. II, p. 341).

⁷ “La crise évitable”, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁸ Coubertin, P. de, *Revue Olympique*, 2^e sér., n° 84, déc. 1912, p. 180 (N. Müller, G. Rioux, *Pierre de Coubertin. Textes choisis, op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 665).

⁹ Flaubert, G, *Œuvres*, 2 vol., éd. Gallimard, *N.R.F.*, coll. “Bibl. de la Pléiade”, A. Thibaudet et R. Dumesnil, Paris, 1951 et 1952, vol. 2, p. 678 ; éd. Éd. Maynial, Garnier frères, Paris, 1969, p. 203. Proust will attract readers attention to this innovative use of the adverb (Proust, M., “À propos du ‘style’ de Flaubert” [*La Nouvelle Revue Française*, 1^{er} janvier 1920], dans : *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, précédé de *Pastiches et mélanges*, et suivi de *Essais et articles*, éd. Gallimard, P. Clarac et Y. Sandre, coll. “Bibl. de la Pléiade”, Paris, 1971, pp. 586-600).

teenager and the adult, the author explains that sport impassions “healthily” the youth at the point to constitute “rational food of its imagination”¹⁰.

Whether it is in *La crise évitable* (1911) or in *Pédagogie sportive* (1919), it is always the “imagination” which is guilty. If for *Pédagogie sportive* (1919) sport allows imagination to “ignore” the awakening of senses or to remain “indifferent” to them, “*La crise évitable*” (1911) supports in a more radical way and claims that sport can “delay and even remove” the harmful work of imagination¹¹. Another sign of similarity between the author of “*La crise évitable*” and Coubertin would lie in the argument of the “three manners”¹², an argument which frequently returns in Coubertin’s works, of which “*La crise évitable*”, and in particular in the challenge of “erotic literature”, a pet hate of “*La crise évitable*”.

Lastly, who is the Norman “well-read man” who would not be pleased to discuss another Norman well-read man like Gustave Flaubert, best friend during childhood of the maternal uncle of Guy de Maupassant, third Norman introducer of rowing short stories in France from Étretat, a seaside resort whose maternal castle of Mirville of Coubertin is distant of only twenty

¹⁰ Coubertin, P. de, *Pédagogie sportive. Histoire des exercices sportifs, technique des exercices sportifs, action morale et sociale des exercices sportifs* (1919), éd. Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, préf. G. Rioux, Paris, 1972, III^e partie, “Action morale et sociale des exercices sportifs”, p. 132.

¹¹ “The biggest service which sport can bring to youth, it is to prevent the wandering of its *imagination* [sic] and to maintain it not in ignorance but in *indifference* [sic] towards what threatens to awaken in it a premature sensualism. We bring in wrongly here climatological or ethnic considerations the influence of which is small. The nature arranged wisely that the awakening of senses, in the Adonis [éphèbe], would be late but the nature is contradicted by **three manners** on this point by civilization, which tends at first to impose to the Adonis an existence too sedentary, then imposes him the redoubtable contact of a literature soaked with eroticism and finally does not supply his normal desire to affirm his further virility by imitating the adult whom he is in a hurry to join.” And Coubertin to send back here to “*La crise évitable*”: We send back the *Olympic Review*’s readers [...] of March 1911 (*La crise évitable*) » (emphasized by Coubertin, *ibid.*, p. 132).

¹² The young boy hurries towards virility : “How will he reach there? There are only **three manners**: by war, love and sport (“*La crise évitable*”, *op. cit.*, p. 43). “Annexation can be made only of **three manners**: by strength; by vote of the Canadian Parliament; by slow assimilation of both peoples. ” (*Universités transatlantiques*, Hachette, 1890, “Canada britannique et Canada français“, XV, p. 177). “How do we made charity in Paris? Of **three manners**: by administration, by works and by individual charity” (*La chronique de France*, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, VIII, “Paris (*suite*)”, p. 217, and *Pédagogie sportive* [1919], *op. cit.*, p. 132).

kilometers, if it is not the baron Pierre de Coubertin himself, last missing link of the sacro-holy Norman sporting saga ? ¹³

Where in his work Coubertin quotes Gustave Flaubert ?

It is not the first time that Coubertin quotes Flaubert in his work, but the first time that Flaubert is subject here of such a long attention on behalf of Coubertin. To discuss in an anonymous way with Flaubert, to offer an intense small body to body with the Barbarian of Croisset suffering of “muscular apathies” ¹⁴, it is not only, for Coubertin, with an aim of discussing the pertinence of a theory on education illustrated or not by a uncontested master of French literature which as child may have played the “bars and ball” at school. It is to move on the sporting field Flaubert art’s theory. Men of conviction, Flaubert and Coubertin post and defend the following theses during their existence: the theory of art in Flaubert, Olympic ideal, athletics and sport in Coubertin. What is one of the strengths of a text, according to the author of *Madame Bovary* (1857), is before all its sentimental brake, its scientific distance, its “Olympian” rigour ¹⁵ :

We must write more *coldly*. Let us be wary of this species of heating, which one calls the inspiration, and where it enters often more nervous emotion than muscular force ¹⁶

¹³ The maternal uncle of Guy de Maupassant, Alfred Le Poittevin, is one of the best childhood friends of Gustave Flaubert, it is even the “man that I most loved to the world” (Flaubert to M^{lle} Leroyer de Chantepie, [Croisset, 4 novembre 1857], vol. II, p. 774).

¹⁴ to Louise Colet, [Croisset,] nuit de samedi, I heure du matin. [3 juillet 1852], vol. II, p. 123.

¹⁵ to Louise Colet, [Croisset,] dimanche soir. [18 juillet 1852], vol. I, p. 134.

¹⁶ emphasized by Flaubert ; to Louise Colet, [Croisset,] nuit de dimanche, I h[eu]re et demie [27 février 1853], vol. II, p. 252.

The author, like the Creator in the universe, must be present everywhere, but “visible nowhere”. Especially, he must be “impassive”. Strong writing is writing which will first of all have known how to tame and educate its nerves :

The author, in his work, has to be as God in the universe, present everywhere, and visible nowhere. The art being a second nature, the creator of this nature has to act by similar processes: that we feel in all the atoms, in all the aspects, a hidden and infinite impassiveness.¹⁷

The same “impassiveness” characterises the educational sports speech of Coubertin :

There is at the sportsman a certain obligation of impassiveness which is strongly educational. A sportsman who lets show through the slightest contrariety seems a little bit shocking; a sportsman who lets show through the slightest suffering scandalizes. If the sport made him wide shoulders, it is also to carry the troubles and if it made him solid muscles, it is to make keep silent his nerves and him make a boss to him.¹⁸

What we do not see from Coubertin, what he is not still capable of demonstrating, is that the narrator of *Novembre* speaks effectively with the same language as his author in certain places. The narrator of *Novembre* and the lover and writer of Louise Colet like for example “excessive” fencing :

He had wanted to jump on bare swords and to fight excessively¹⁹

Three times a week only I made excessive weapons²⁰

Flaubert at 20 years old is exactly this impassive sportsman to whom Coubertin refers in his work, but without knowing that Flaubert is a sportsman. Dashing spontaneously in the sea in Biarritz in 1840, Flaubert is already the man of obstinate style and the firmness. “To squeeze

¹⁷ to Louise Colet, [Croisset,] jeudi, I h[eure] d’après-midi. [9 décembre 1852], vol. II, p. 204.

¹⁸ Coubertin, P. de, *Pédagogie sportive. Histoire des exercices [...]*, op. cit., p. 137.

¹⁹ *Novembre* [1842], OC, “Pléiade”, C. Gothot-Mersch, op. cit., vol. I, p. 825.

²⁰ to Louise Colet, [Croisset,] samedi soir, I h[eure] de nuit. [17-18 octobre 1846], vol. I, p. 392.

teeth”²¹ or to keep “one’s cool” as the swimmer guarantee not only nautical but scriptural success :

I put myself in the water rather vivaciously, keeping one’s cool as I swim every day, and so that, continuing to swim always in front of me in the direction I have been told [...] ²²

In *La Chronique de France* (1900-1904), where Coubertin quotes one of the first times *Madame Bovary* (1857), if not the first one, the invention of the “famous pharmacist Homais” is attributed to Balzac, and not to Flaubert :

Monastic centres as Solesmes, even deprived by famous pilgrimages, by factories of liqueurs or by farms have not less for the surrounding region a considerable importance; they contribute in different ways to its enrichment. For the labor population which is going to lose on the exchange, the satisfaction given to the voltairien ideas would be a rather inferior consolation. The famous pharmacist Homais immortalized by Balzac [*sic*] exists in France in more than a corner ; but if tomorrow we spoke of closing the basilica of Lourdes, all Homais of the place would not be the last ones to protest. ²³

The “patient archaeologist” Flaubert has exhumed from the sands of North Africa *Salammbô* (1862), Carthaginian “miracle” which contrasts with the “bad faith” of the Carthaginian taught the pupils of the IIIth Republic (1870-1940) :

Northern Africa or Berbérie, called so Berber tribes which were the first occupiers, belonged successively to Carthaginian, to Romans, to the Vandals, to Arabs and to Turks. Against these successive invaders, the Berbers (Libyans, Numides, Getules, Moors, etc., etc.), fought fruitlessly; they were pushed away towards the desert; only the kabyles and the Tuareg represent their defeated race today. Overcome also these Carthaginian whose name is familiar to the pupils, to the spirit of whom it evokes the bad traditional faith; but those at least left behind them marvels whom Flaubert

²¹ emphasized by Flaubert ; to Louise Colet, [Croisset], dimanche soir, I h[eure]. [18 décembre 1853], vol. II, p. 481.

²² *Voyage en Pyrénées et en Corse*, OC, op. cit., pp. 658-659. To his “literary conscience” Louis Bouilhet, the lavished advices are the same: "plane, saws, length yourself on the trying-plane 'as a swimmer' (Flaubert to Louis Bouilhet, [Croisset], [27 juin 1855], vol. II, p. 584).

²³ Coubertin, P. de, *La Chronique de France*, op. cit., vol. 2, 1901, “Résultats et Conséquences”, pp. 79-80.

had known how to guess by writing its famous novel *Salammbô* and whom patient archaeology makes us touch with the finger.²⁴

Of a function “more honorable, more higher, more aristocratic”

In reply to the mediocrity of Bouvard and Pécuchet which we remember in “the title of the book” (*Bouvard and Pécuchet*, 1880, unfinished), the third volume of *La Chronique de France* states the “domestic misfortunes” and other “bad investment” of the “small French employee” behind which the crushing defeat of Commanville is perceptible (the niece Caroline marries in second wedding E. Commanville). Adjusted for the needs of the comment in “more honorable, more higher, more aristocratic”, the olympic motto “Faster, Higher, Stronger” comes to “activate” the literary gloss of Coubertin tilted on Bouvard and Pécuchet ephemeral readers of the military gymnastics *Manuel* of Amoros. It is not here that *Bouvard and Pécuchet* illustrates life, but life which illustrates gloriously *Bouvard and Pécuchet* :

In a novel left unfinished and published like this after his death, Flaubert described the moral odyssey of two small Parisian employees on whom an inheritance had fallen unexpectedly. Bouvard and Pécuchet (that was their names and the title of the book) venture successively on agriculture, on science, on politics; nothing succeeds in them and especially nothing satisfies them; They keep at the bottom of the heart nostalgia for their [previous] office towards which they return at the end, happy to take back the only labour appropriate to satisfy their mediocrity. If the detail is sometimes a little exaggerated, the observation is fine and the thesis is just. The small French employee is encircled in a mould and we cannot turn it out to make of it something else. On the other hand, this idea that his function is more honorable, higher, more aristocratic than the others, activates him and supports him through the troubles and the embarrassment. Mostly, he has nothing to him; and even if his parents left him a little money either that he succeeded in realizing some savings on his slender budget, are enough domestic misfortunes or a bad investment so that these savings faint without return.²⁵

²⁴ *ibid.*, vol. 4, 1903, “Coup d’œil rétrospectif”, p. 115.

²⁵ *ibid.*, vol. 3, 1902, “Ceux qui peinent”, pp. 207-208.

In “L’évolution française sous la III^e République” (1896), the “big writer” is the one who succeeds in leaving behind him “something more durable than his papers” : it is the “language which he used”. Now Maupassant, “the most skillful of these writers who handles the language with most talent”, will not last because of his heroes “powerless who confront, sound, contemplate” themselves. Built around the figure of the “apostle” and the redemption, the indictment of the “pornographic idea” bursts in “The French evolution under the IIIth Republic” (1896) by appealing the explanatory of subterranean energies. Evil and perversion “rise” from the “circles” of hell. “Real” heroes and frank “bawdy story” do not exist anymore :

To the most skillful of these writers, the one who handles the language with most talent, Maupassant, we would look in vain for a general type susceptible to last after the fashion of its clothes will have passed. [...] But, nevertheless, the unhealthy literature does not die. It is not crushed. It draws its strength from the custom, this second nature. Instead of coming down of the top, it rises now from below where the circle of its believers have excessively increased. The pornographic idea maintains everywhere its rights. In the newspaper, politics and business restrict themselves to make space for it, and the most famous novelists think to be obliged to sacrifice to it for having the right to say then honest and serious things. Note that it has not anymore this bawdy story important to our ancestors and which was the expression of their joy to live and the frankness of their sensations. It is neither funny nor frank ! Formerly moreover, there were several sources of cheerfulness; today there is not more than that one. So the laughter has something nervous, affected ; it tires and disgusts. ²⁶

In “La crise évitable”, what shall be avoided ?

In “La crise évitable”, what shall we avoid ? The sexual depravation of the said youth “not sporty”, the Anglo-Saxon sporty youth being by definition virtuous. In the court of miracles, another country is called to the bar of moral recovery of a “sick” teenager which “gives up the bad pleasures; he goes back on the straight and narrow; the duty takes him back. His life clears up and settles. Who makes this miracle ? France. France cures him by the influence of its long

²⁶ Coubertin, P. de, “L’évolution française sous la III^e République”, *La Nouvelle Revue*, 2^e partie, 18^e année, vol. 99, 1^{er} mars 1896 (pp. 52-69), pp. 60-61.

centuries of virtue and honesty [...]”²⁷. In puberty and adolescence, the “sexual concerns” of the youth are “normal”, asserts “La crise évitable”. Few of “Latin, Greek, and Slavonic”, on the other hand, crossed a crisis so turbulent as that described by the young Flaubert in *Novembre* (1842), suggests the article. The “artificial work of the imagination”, relieved by the “pornography spread over walls, display in press and novel”, is the big culprit. How to succeed in neutralizing the “artificial work of the imagination” ? It is asserted by the “muscular activity steered and dominated by sporty emulation”, that offers a solid frame to the youth and protects it from any bad action. Assigning to sport a redeeming and curative function, Coubertin considers that physical and sports activities can “delay and even remove” the harmful work of imagination. Marking a tour-de-force and betraying the conservative ideas of the scripteur, the end of the article criticises the “monstrous campaign” to raise public awareness on “sex education” which is only “strengthening the pornography” :

That is why it is only just to say that for lack of the war, sport allows to avoid the redoubtable crisis to which is dedicated any not sporty youth. The monstrous campaign which continues in favour of the "sex education" [*sic*] will bring only a reinforcement to the pornography. Only the sport will give young Latins — as it gave it to young Anglo-Saxons — the recipe to become a man healthily.

28

In the attack against the pornography “diluted in the novel”, another well-read Norman is aimed : it is Guy de Maupassant, unreclaimable athlete of the IIIth Republic. The author of *Une partie de campagne* (1881) and *La Maison Tellier* (1881) thinks only of one thing, raise Maupassant’s readers. Tolstoï was desperate of it. For Freud, with whom Maupassant follows the lessons of the neurologist J.-M. Charcot in Salpêtrière (1885-1886) in Paris, the author of *Contes et*

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁸ “La crise évitable” (mars 1911), *op. cit.*, p. 44.

nouvelles is perverting girls. In the psychoanalytical language, sports activity will be interpreted as a substitute of “pleasure” whose running ends in “auto-eroticism” :

We know that the modern education makes big custom of sports to turn away the youth of sexual activity; it would be more appropriate to say that it replaces the specifically sexual pleasure for the one that provokes the movement and that it makes the sexual activity regress in one of its auto-erotic components.

Die moderne Kulturerziehung bedient sich bekanntlich des Sports im großen Umfang, um die Jugend von der Sexualbetätigung abzulenken; richtiger wäre es zu sagen, sie ersetzt ihr den Sexualgenuß durch die Bewegungslust und drängt die Sexualbetätigung auf eine ihrer autoerotischen Komponenten zurück.²⁹

In the way understood by the baron, finally, the aristocratic particle of the name of Guy de Maupassant, a patronymic addition granted “artificially” in 1846 by the civil court of Rouen during the marriage of Maupassant’s parents, is too notable.

How Coubertin quotes Flaubert in “La crise évitable” ?

In the 12th vol. of *Œuvres Complètes* of Flaubert published in 18 vol., by L. Conard before the First World War entitled *Œuvres de jeunesse inédites*, we find the not named “unpublished manuscript” *Novembre* (1842) quoted by “La crise évitable”³⁰. An autobiographical text, *Novembre*, is written by the law student (1841-1843) Gustave Flaubert. According to “La crise évitable”, the crisis faced by the narrator of *Novembre* is the crisis of the young person Flaubert himself; crisis which he knew how to fortunately succeed to become a "man" today. Censored so

²⁹ Freud, S., *Gesammelte werke*, chronologisch geordnet, fünfter band, “Werke aus den Jahren 1904-1905”, 18 vol., Imago Publishing Co., Ltd, London, 1942, S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt, fünfte Auflage, vol. 5, 1972, *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, II, “Die infantile Sexualität”, § “Quellen der infantilen Sexualität”, p. 104, note 1.

³⁰ cf. note 5.

and on six occasions by suspension points (“...” ; we shall note “[...]”), the quotation of *Novembre* of Flaubert in “La crise évitable” shows in some lines :

Right from High School, writes Flaubert, I was sad; I was bored, full of desires, I had burning aspiration towards a nonsensical and agitated existence; I dreamed about passions, I would have had all of them. Behind the twentieth year, there was for me a whole world of lights and perfumes [...], vaguely I coveted something magnificent that I would not have known how to formulate by no word, nor clarify in my thought under no shape, but the positive, ceaseless desire of which I had nevertheless." And further: " woman was for me an attractive mystery, which disturbed my child's poor head. In what I felt, when one of them came to fix her eyes on me, I already felt that there was something fatal in this moving glance, which melts the human wills, and I was charmed and frightened at the same time [...] I hurried very fast to do my homeworks, to be able to reach comfortably these beloved thoughts. Indeed, I beforehand promised it to me with all the charm of a real pleasure, I began by forcing myself to think of it, as a poet who wants to create something and to provoke inspiration [...] The day finally that I guessed everything, it stunned me at first with delights, as a supreme harmony, but soon I became quiet and lived from then on with more enjoyment, I felt a movement of pride to say to me that I was a man, a being organized to have one day a woman to me; word's life was known to me, it was almost to enter it and already to enjoy something of it [...] As for a mistress, it was for me a satanic being, whose magic of the only name threw me in long ecstasies: it was for their mistresses that kings ruined and won provinces; for them we wove the carpets of India, we turned the gold, we chiselled the marble, we moved the world [...]. In all this I dreamed alone, in the evening, when the wind whistled in corridors, or in recreations, while we played cards or ball [...] the human life rolled, for me, on two or three ideas, on two or three words, goshawk of whom(which) all the rest turned(shot) as satellites around their celestial body human life rolled, for me, on two or three ideas, on two or three words, goshawk of whom all the rest turned as satellites around their celestial body.³¹

Not censored, the original quotation of Flaubert covers several pages. Faithful to Flaubert's ternary style — “It was at Megara, a suburb of Carthage, in the gardens of Hamilcar” (*incipit* of *Salammbô*, text quoted from entrance by “La crise évitable”) — and on invitation of the principle of “three manners” proposed by “La crise évitable”, we shall retranscribe **IN BLUE** the text of *Novembre* of Flaubert retained by “La crise évitable”, **IN YELLOW** the articulatory sequences of “La crise évitable” and **IN PURPLE** the text of *Novembre* of Flaubert crossed under silence by “La crise évitable” (1911) :

Right from High School, écrit Flaubert, I was sad; I was bored, full of desires, I had burning aspiration towards a nonsensical and agitated existence; I dreamed about passions, I would

³¹ *La Revue Olympique* quoting *Novembre* [1842] of Flaubert in: “La crise évitable” (mars 1911), *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43. Cf. *Novembre* in ed. Conard (1910, pp. 164-172), *Novembre* in *Œuvres complètes*, C. Gothot-Mersch et Guy Sagnes (pp. 759-831), *op. cit.*, pp. 760-765 and *Novembre* in ed. Gallimard, C. Gothot-Mersch, 2001, pp. 117-125.

have have all of them. Behind the twentieth year, there was for me a whole world of lights and perfumes [...] Life appeared to me by far with magnificences and triumphant noises; as in fairy tales, it was galleries one after the other, where diamonds stream under the light of golden lustres, a magic name makes roll on their hinges the enchanted doors and, as we advance, the eye dives into magnificent perspectives the dazzle of which makes smile and close eyes.]

Vaguely I coveted something magnificent that I would not have known how to formulate by no word, nor clarify in my thought under no shape, but the positive, ceaseless desire of which I had nevertheless [I always liked the brilliant things. Child, I moved in the crowd, at the quacks' door, to see the red stripes of their domestics and the ribbons of the rein of their horses; I stayed for a long time in front of the tent of the tumblers, to look at their baggy pants and at their embroidered ruffles. Oh! As I loved especially the tightrope walker, with her long drop earrings which went and came around the head, Around the head, its big stony necklace which beat on its breast! With what a worried greediness I contemplated her(it), when she(it) dashed until the height of lamps suspended between trees, and when her(its) dress, lined with golden glitter, clicked by jumping and stuffed in the air(sight)! It is the first woman there that I loved. My spirit fretted by thinking of these thighs of strange, so well tight in pink pants, in these supple arms, surrounded with rings which they kinked on their back by overturning behind, when they touched up to ground with the feathers of their turban. The woman, whom I already tried to guess (it is not age where we think of it: child, we feel with a naive sensualism the throat of big girls who kiss us and who hold us in their arms; at the age of ten, we dream about love; at fifteen, it comes at you; at sixty, we still keep it, and if the deaths think of something in their grave, it is to gain underground the grave which is close, to lift the shroud of the died and get mix to her sleep) And further : "the woman was [so] for me an attractive mystery, which disturbed my child's poor head. In what I felt, when one of these came to fix her eyes on me, I already felt that there was something fatal in this moving glance, which melts the human wills, and I was charmed and frightened at the same time [...]

[To what dreamed I during the long evenings about studies, when I remained, the elbow pressed on my writing desk, to watch the drill of the oil lamp lengthening in the flame and every drop of oil to fall in the jar, while my companions made shout their feathers on the paper and while we heard, from time to time, the noise of a book which we went through or what we closed ?] I hurried very fast to do my homeworks, to be able to reach comfortable these beloved thoughts. Indeed, I beforehand promised it to me with all the charm of a real pleasure, I began by forcing myself to think of it, as a poet who wants to create something and to provoke inspiration [I entered most forward in my thought, I turned it over under all faces, I went up to the bottom, I returned and I began again; soon it was a wild race of imagination, a prodigious impetus outside reality, I made adventures, I arranged myself stories, I built palaces, I lodged as an emperor there, I dug all the mines of diamond and I threw them myself in buckets on the road which I owed.

And when the evening had come, when we were all laying down in our white beds, with our white curtains, and when the school teacher walked up and down alone in the dormitory, as I steeped myself even much more in me, hiding with delights in my breast this bird who beat wings and of which I felt the heat! It took always a long time before I felt asleep, I listened to the hours sounding, more they were long more I was happy; it seemed to me that they pushed me in the world by singing, and greeted every moment of my life by saying to me: To others! to others! to come! Goodbye! Goodbye! And when the last vibration had gone out, when my ear did not any more buzz to hear it, I said to myself: "See you tomorrow; the same hour will ring, but tomorrow it will be less one day, one day more there, towards this goal which shines, towards my future, towards this sun with which beams flood and which I shall touch with my hands", and I said to myself that it was very long to come, and I felt asleep almost crying.

Certain words overwhelmed me, that of *woman*, *mistress* especially [sic]; I looked for the explanation of the first one in books, in engravings, in paintings, from which I would have wanted to be able to extract hangings to discover something.] [...] The day finally that I

guessed everything, it stuns me at first with delights, as a supreme harmony, but soon I became quiet and lived from then on with more enjoyment, I felt a movement of pride to say to me that I was a man, a being organized to have one day a woman to me; word's life was known to me, it was almost to enter it and already to enjoy something of it [...] [My desire did not go farther, and I remained satisfied to know what I knew.] As for a *mistress* [sic], it was for me a satanic being, whose magic of the only name threw me in long ecstasies: it was for their mistresses that kings ruined and won provinces; for them we weaved the carpets of India, we turned the gold, we chiselled the marble, we moved the world [...] [a mistress has slaves, with ranges of feathers to hunt the midges, when she sleeps on satin sofas; elephants full of presents wait that she wakes up, litters carry her weakly at the edge of fountains, she sits on thrones, in a radiant and embalmed atmosphere, indeed far from the crowd, whom she is the aversion and the idol.

This mystery of the woman out of marriage, and more woman still because of it, irritated me and tempted me of the double bait of love and wealth. I liked nothing much as theater, I liked it until the buzz of intervals, until the corridors, which I crossed the heart moved finding a place. When the representation was already begun, I went upstairs by running, I heard the noise of instruments, voices, bravos, and when I entered, sat down, all the air was embalmed by a warm smell of well dressed woman, something which smelt the bouquet of violets, white gloves, embroidered handkerchief; galleries covered by the crowd, as so many crowns of flowers and diamonds, seemed to be held suspended to hear singing ; the actress alone was on the front of the stage, and her breast, where from came out hasty notes, bent and rose by pounding, the rhythm pushed her voice to the gallop and took her in a maddening whirlwind, roulades made wave the swollen neck, as that of the swan, under the weight of air kisses; she stretched out arms, shouted, cried, threw flashes of lighting, called something with an inconceivable love, and, when she resumed the motive, it seemed to me that she tore away my heart with the sound of her voice to mix it to her in a loving vibration.

We applauded her, we threw her flowers, and, in my transport, I savored on her head the worships of the crowd, the love of all these men and the desire of each of them. It is of this one that I would have wanted to be loved, loved by a voracious love and which frightens, a love of princess or actress, who fills us with pride and makes you in succession the equal of the rich and the powerful! How beautiful is the woman whom all applaud and whom all envy, the one who gives to the crowd, for the dreams of every night, the fever of the desire, the one who never appears that in torches, brilliant and sing-song, and walking in the ideal of a poet as in a life made for her! She has to have for the one that she likes another type of love, even more beautiful still than the one that she pours in streams on all the gaping hearts which drink it, sweeter singings, lower, more loving, more trembling notes! If I had been able to be near these lips where from they were coming out so pure, touch these gleaming hair which shone under pearls! But the banister of the theater seemed to me the barrier of illusion; beyond there was for me the universe of love and poetry, passions were there more beautiful and more sonorous, forests and palaces dissipated as some smoke there, sylphs lowered heavens, everything sang, everything loved.

It is] to all this I was thinking alone, in the evening, when the wind whistled in corridors, or in recreations, while we played bars or ball, [...] [and while I walked along the wall, walking on fallen lime trees leaves which I was amusing myself with by hearing the noise of my feet lifting them and pushed them.

I was soon taken by the desire to love, I wished the love with an infinite greed, I dreamed about its torments, I expected all the time a grief which had swamped me with enjoyment. Several times I believed to be there, I took in my thought the first come woman who had seemed to me beautiful, and I said to myself: "it is the one that I love", but the memory that I would have wanted to keep it turned pale and faded instead of increasing; I felt moreover, that I forced myself to love, that I played, towards my heart, a comedy which did not deceive it, and this fall gave me a long sadness ; I regretted almost loves which I had not had, and then I dreamed about others which I would have wanted to be able to fill my soul.

It was especially the day after ball or comedy, after a vacancy of two or three days, that I dreamed about a passion. I represented myself the one that I had chosen, such as I had seen her, in white dress, deprived in a waltz at rider's arms who supports her and who smiles to her, or resting on the velvet banister of a dressing room and showing quietly a royal profile; the noise of contredanses, the brightness of the lights resounded and dazzled me a while still, then everything melted in the dullness of a painful daydream. I so had one thousand small loves, which lasted eight days or one month and which I wished to prolong centuries; I do not know of what I made them consist, nor which was the purpose where these vague desires converged; it was, I believe, the need of a new feeling and line an aspiration towards something high the summit of which I did not see.

The puberty of heart precedes that of body; now I more needed to love that to have pleasure, more envy for love than for the sensual pleasure. I have even no more now idea of this love of the first adolescence, where the senses are nothing and where the infinite only fills; placed between childhood and youth, it is the transition and pass so fast as we forget it.

I had so much read in poets the word *love* [sic], and so often repeated it to me to charm me of its sweetness, and to every star which shone in a blue sky on a sweet night, and to every rustle of stream on the shore, to every sunbeam in the drops of the dew, I said to myself: "I love! Oh! I love!" and I was happy about it, I was proud of it, ready for the most beautiful dedications, and especially when a woman brushed against me in passing or faced me, I would have wanted to love her one thousand times more, to suffer even more, and that my small heartbeat could have break my breast.

There is an age, do you remember it yourselves, reader, where we smile vaguely, as if there were kisses in the air; we have the heart quite inflated by a nice-smelling breeze, the blood beats warmly in veins, it sparkles there, as the wine bubbling in the crystal cup. You wake up happier and richer than the previous day, more exciting, more touched; sweet fluids rise and come down in you and cross you divinely of their heady heat, trees twist the head under the wind in soft curvatures, leaves shiver and interact with each other, as if they spoke to each other, clouds slide and open the sky, where the moon smiles and mirrored itself on the top of the river. When you walk in the evening, inhaling the smell of cut hays, listening to the cuckoo in the woods, looking at the stars speeding, your heart, is not it, your heart is purer, more penetrated by air, by light and by azure than the peaceful horizon, where the earth touches the sky in a quiet kiss. Oh! like women's hair embalm ! like the skin of their hands is sweet, like their glances penetrate us!

But already they were not any more the first dazzles of childhood, agitants memories of the dreams of last night; I entered, on the contrary, in a real life where I had my place, in an immense harmony where my heart sang a hymn and vibrated splendidly; I tasted with enjoyment this charming blooming, and my rising senses added to my pride. Like the first created man, I woke up finally from a long sleep, and I saw by my side a similar being, but provided with differences which placed between us one vertiginous attraction, and at the same time I felt for this new form a new feeling of which my head was proud, whereas the sun shone purer, whereas flowers embalmed better that never, whereas the shadow was sweeter and more loving.

Simultaneously, I felt every day the development of my intelligence, it lived with my heart of a common life. I do not know if my ideas were feelings, because they had quite the heat of passions, the intimate enjoyment that I had in the depth of my being overflowed on the world and embalmed it for me of the surplus of my happiness, I was going to touch the knowledge of the supreme sensual delights and, like a man at the door of his mistress, I remained for a long time be languished deliberately, to savor a certain hope and say to myself : in a few moment, I will hold her in my arms, she will be mine, it is not a dream!

Strange contradiction! I escaped the society of women, and I felt in front of them a delicious pleasure; I claimed not to like them, whereas I lived in all of them and whereas I would have wanted to penetrate into the essence of each of them to mix myself with their

beauty. Their lips already invited me to other kisses that those of mothers, by thought I wrapped myself with their hair, and I took place between their bosoms to crush myself there under a divine breathlessness ; I would have wanted to be the necklace which kissed their neck, the staple which bit their shoulder, the garment which covered all the rest of their body. Beyond the garment, I saw nothing more, under it was an infinity of love, I got lost to think of it. These passions which I would have wanted to have, I studied them in books] [...] the human life rolled, for me, on two or three ideas, on two or three words, goshawk of whom(which) all the rest turned(shot) as satellites around their celestial body.³²

Wounding the sensibility and the aristocratic respectability of the baron, the censored parts of *Novembre* by “La crise évitable” are desires and erotic temptations of the narrator of *Novembre*, with the fantasies which accompany them, a clear sign of an unbridled imagination bound to the “first adolescence” and “puberty”.

The reading of *Novembre* by “La crise évitable” passes over the tightrope walker in silence, the “first ever loved woman”. One day, the calmed run-ups of *Novembre*’s narrator gave birth to a new man: it is Gustave Flaubert, who knew how to overtake the crisis. How this takes place the miracle transition between the narrator and his author in “La crise évitable” ? By the “telling” gerund which allows Coubertin to make the flexible young author Flaubert slide in the body of the narrator of *Novembre*, text in which one can “find very curious passages, in which Flaubert, telling its childhood, analyzes with a singular strength and a depth the crisis which made of him a man”³³.

Here, the direct speech of *Novembre* could have offend the baron. The narrator of *Novembre* would wish “to penetrate into the essence of women”. He takes “pleasure to contemplate the prostitutes”, of whom Marie, who knows “which flowers excite”. Laying down the Olympic’s motto “Citius, Altius, Fortius” (“faster, higher, stronger”) on the bed of her dreams, Marie

³² *ibid.*

³³ “La crise évitable”, *RO, op. cit.*, p. 42. The narrateur of *Novembre* compares himself to Adam : “As the first man creates, I woke up finally from a long sleep [...]” (*ibid.*, p. 766).

wishes “to be bitten with enjoyment” by a “bigger, nobler, stronger” man ³⁴. In the medical language, the “fetishist” component is not only the fact of the young Flaubert in *Novembre* or the narrator wishing to appropriate himself clothes and other coveted material objects (“necklace”, “glove”, “garment”), but also the texts of Flaubert’s maturity pursued by the public prosecutor's department for infringement on morality. The relation of Emma Bovary and her servant and “teenager's heart” Justin attests it (desired objects: “comb”, “hair”, “matches”, “camisole”, “sheets”). Before or after continues in Flaubert a certain constancy in the “sadists and masochists” behaviors ³⁵. Dominion and pleasure of submission underlie the furtive meeting of marquess of Crussène and Father Langeais of the Society of Jesus in *Le Roman d'un Rallié* (1902) :

She [the marquess] found him [Father Langeais] in the visiting room, a rather sad room which set in the daytime on the street of Sèvres through windows too much raised from ground level so that we were able to see in the fault what took place in the street. His black and thin tall figure got loose on the wall coated with clear color; he [Father Langeais] was sending away an exuberant woman who complained “to see him so little”. He left her by lifting in an automatic gesture his biretta and with the same gesture greeted Lady de Crussène. He had recognized her, but in the doubt she was called. “Lady marquess, he says simply, I am under your command”. He had an interesting face: wide forehead, a little bit striking cheekbones, straight and very fine nose, opened nostrils, the mouth squeezed with imperceptible lips, sharp chin; his glance, enough, pale, settled directly in you and pierced you. The word was of an extraordinary neatness. Sometimes, a half-smile passed on his face; his glance then fell and the smile seemed to end inside. All his person inhaled authority; we felt in him the servant of a redoubtable autocracy, but an excellent servant. The marquess of Crussène, in some precise words, from her impressive air of important lady, indicated him the object of her conversation that she wanted to have with him and at once, he knew what she hid him. His power of penetration was moreover coupled with a prodigious memory ³⁶

The various movements and recognition of the lecture of *Novembre* by “La crise évitable” can be perhaps comprehended better yet. In the initial rejoicing of reading, in the “unexpected

³⁴ *Novembre*, “Pléiade”, éd. C. G.-Mersch, *op. cit.*, p. 808. Director of École-Albert-le-Grand in Arcueil near Paris, Father Didon uses the formula during the prize-giving in 1891. At first, the motto is: “Citius, fortius, altius”, and not “Citius, altius, fortius”. This last version appears at the head of the 1st n° of July 1894 of *Bulletin du C.I.O.* (Cf. N. Müller, G. Rioux, *Pierre de Coubertin. Textes choisis*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 442). “La crise évitable” does not appear in *Pierre de Coubertin. Textes choisis*, of Müller and Rioux.

³⁵ Czyba, Lucette, *Mythes et idéologie de la femme dans les romans de Flaubert*, éd. Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1983.

³⁶ Hohrod, Georges [Pierre de Coubertin], *Le Roman d'un Rallié*, Impimeur-éditeur Albert Lanier, Auxerre, 1902, III, iii, pp. 289-291.

pleasure” discovery of the flaubertien’s text to which noone was obliged to follow, substituted itself now a parallel and increasing pleasure of another kind : the retranscription of the “pleasures” of *Novembre*’s narrator, delight without which “La crise évitable” ’s author does not go. To the first “real pleasure” declared by the narrator of *Novembre* made visible by “La crise évitable” which has for its object women in the state of “thoughts” and the word “woman” follows a second pleasure more direct, the “delicious pleasure” of the real company of women (“I felt in front of them a delicious pleasure” ³⁷). “Pleasure” made this time invisible by “La crise évitable”, pleasure on which we do not return. Not to approach the question of certain “pleasures”, is to want to underestimate their importance in education and quest of identity, is exactly the error which has been committed by the marquess de Crussène to her son and law student Étienne de Crussène built in *Le Roman d’un Rallié* (1902) in absence of “pleasures”: “the marquess [of Crussène] committed, in the education of her son, the major fault not thinking of the pleasures as she thought of the studies” ³⁸.

If they get closer one moment, Flaubert and Coubertin dissociate themselves in the use of the verb "crash" and "to crush" (“s’écraser” / “écraser”) in *Novembre* (1842) and “L’évolution française sous la IIIe République” (1896). In *Novembre*, “crash” is orientated to the licentious activity (“I took place between their bosoms to crush me under a divine breathlessness there”), while “to crush” ³⁹ in “L’évolution française sous la IIIe République” appoints the opposite movement: far from supporting an erotic desire, it expresses the will to annihilate and absolve the “unhealthy” literature, the redoubtable manager of which Maupassant is.

³⁷ *Novembre*, OC, C. Gothot-Mersch et Guy Sagnes (pp. 759-831), *op. cit.*, p. 765.

³⁸ Hohrod, Georges [Pierre de Coubertin], *Le Roman d’un Rallié*, *op. cit.*, I, iii, p. 46.

³⁹ “But, nevertheless, the unhealthy literature does not die. It is not crushed” (Coubertin, P. de, “L’évolution française sous la IIIe République”, *op. cit.*, p. 61).

Novembre (1842) of Flaubert et *Ode au sport* (1912) of Coubertin

The proximity of the dates of execution of “La crise évitable” (1911) and *Ode au sport* (1912) brings out a certain resemblance of thoughts and style between *Novembre*, text discussed by “La crise évitable”, and *Ode au sport*, a prize-winning text in the Olympic Games of Stockholm (1912).

Does *Novembre* “provokes an inspiration” ⁴⁰ in Coubertin ? According to the “inspired athlete” ⁴¹ of *Ode*, we could believe it. Both texts call gladly upon the gods (“ô my God” / “Ô Sport, pleasure of the Gods”) ⁴². Here and there, “you are” / “you are” are innumerable. If *Novembre* sings :

“you are sad !”
 “you are good looking”
 “you are then virgin”
 “you are so good looking !”
 “you are charming”
 “You are so young though !”
 “you are mine !”
 “You are shy”

Ode au sport answers straight away :

“You appeared”
 “You are the Beauty !”
 “You are the master”
 “You are the Justice !”
 “You are the Boldness !”

⁴⁰ “As a poet who wants to create something and to provoke inspiration [...]” (*Novembre, OC*, “Pléiade”, éd. C. G.-Mersch, *op. cit.*, p. 762). Cf. Lefkowitz, Mary R., “The Poet as Athlete” in : *First-person Fictions : Pindar’s poetic “I”*, éd. Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991, chap 7, pp. 161-168.

⁴¹ “And you / inspire to the athlete the desire to see increasing around him alert and strong sons [...]” (*Ode*, 7th stanza)

⁴² The first example is always of Flaubert.

“You are the Honor !”
 “You are the Enjoyment !”
 “You are the Fertility !”
 “You are the Progress !”
 “You are the Peace !”

Certain adjectives of *Ode* seem to form from the flaubertien substantive :

“puissance” [power] (*Novembre*) / “puissant” [powerful] (*Ode*)
 “infâmes” [vile] (*Novembre*) / “infamante” [libellous] (*Ode*)
 “aventures” [adventures] (*Novembre*) / “aventurier” [adventurer] (*Ode*)

Reversed in *Novembre*, “artificielles” (artificial) in *Ode* “artifice”. Verbs, words, adjectives and adverbs of *Novembre* and *Ode* seem to come from the same mould :

“tachetaient” [speckled with] (*Novembre*) / “tacheté” [speckled with] (*Ode*)
 “animer” [animate] (*Novembre*) / “anime” [animates] (*Ode*)
 “découvrir” [discover] (*Novembre*) / “découvre” [discovers] (*Ode*)
 “redressais” [redressed] (*Novembre*) / “redressant” [redressing] (*Ode*)
 “je ne veux pas te tromper” [I don’t want to betrayed you] (*Novembre*) / “tromper ses camarades” [betray his classmates] (*Ode*)
 “désintéressement” [selflessness] (*Novembre*) / “désintéressement” (*Ode*)
 “limpides” [limpid] (*Novembre*) / “limpide” (*Ode*)
 “épithètes” [epithet] (*Novembre*) / “épithète” (*Ode*)
 “absolue” [absolute] (*Novembre*) / “absolue” (*Ode*)
 “autrement” [differently] (*Novembre*) / “autrement” (*Ode*)

The “good-companionship” of school in *Novembre* answers the “good-companionship” of sport in *Ode*. In the “puberty of the heart [which] precedes that of the body” of *Novembre* (favourite subject of “La crise évitable”), corresponds the improvement of the man “in its body and in its soul” ⁴³ of *Ode*.

⁴³ *Ode*, 8th stanza.

Besides the lexical analogies, the motives are here the same: “top of mountains” to the right, “top of mountains” to the left. The nouns sometimes return to the same ideas: here “universal enjoyment”, there “universal youth”. The “degrading” lines of the courtesan in *Novembre* resound in the “gradation by the mean passions” of *Ode*. Here we declare: “it is beautiful to live”, there we speak “about the happiness of living”. Here, we have “pure lines” (*Novembre*), there a “necessary purity” (*Ode*).

In both texts, the human body is perceived as a “building” (“I was as these new buildings” / “this building which is the human body”). The same physiologist eruption characterizes both texts :

It is then that I felt well the devil of the flesh living in all the muscles of my body, running in all my blood ⁴⁴

The blood whipped me the face, my arteries drowned sorrows ⁴⁵

At your call the flesh is in feast and eyes / smile; the blood circulates plentiful and pressing through arteries. (*Ode au sport*, 6th stanza)

Certain expressions are similar: “at the bottom of himself” (*Novembre*) / “bottom of my heart” (*Ode*), “smile and to close eyes” / “is in feast and eyes smile”. But this muscular feast in Coubertin remains shy and discreet. Appearing to implore an external help, it does not cross the cape of the morality and rest in retreat :

Ô Sport, you are the Boldness! All the sense of the muscular effort amounts in brief: dare. What's the use muscles, what's the use feel agile and strong and to to cultivate its suppleness and its strength if it is not to dare? (*Ode*, 4th stanza)

⁴⁴ *Novembre*, “Pléiade”, éd. C. G.-Mersch, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 133.

At Flaubert, then Maupassant, the muscular feast is erotic and determinedly perverse:

She beat down on all my body and extended with an obscene, pale enjoyment there, shuddering, teeth were squeezed with a furious strength; I felt pulled as in a hurricane of love, sobs burst, and then pointed shouts ; my lip, wet of her saliva, sparkled and itched me; our muscles, twisted in the same knots, squeezed up and entered some the others, the sensual delight turned in raptures, the enjoyment in supplic.⁴⁶

Final remark

An unsuspected nearness binds Gustave Flaubert and Pierre de Coubertin native of Normandy. The reading of *Novembre* (1842) of the young Flaubert by the *Olympic Review* (1911), if it allowed to open a door through which its president invited us to pass, informs us however about the deep reasons which urge Coubertin to discuss so the young Flaubert in “La crise évitable” in 1911. Such an intimate ground on which advances Coubertin in so offhand, it does not risk to shy away under its feet?

The silence and the unspoken surrounding the article - refusal to reveal the title of the manuscript of Flaubert, fold behind a ghostly collective signature, negation of the right to have access to information and sensibilisation in the emancipation of the customs - do they not strengthen the incomprehension and the nebula by the interested parties, and first of all by the “the Young of the schools” [*sic*]⁴⁷ ?

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

⁴⁷ emphasized by Flaubert ; à E. et J. de Goncourt, [Croisset,] mardi [19 décembre 1865], vol. III, p. 474.

Indeed, how do we explain, on one hand, that the speech on the prostitution of Marie in *Novembre* was not the object of any objection by “La crise évitable” and that the sexual freedom outside *Novembre*, provokes a real tidal wave in “La crise évitable” ? Who is in crisis and why in “La crise évitable” ? What does the *Olympic Review* try to prove in 1911 with this long orientated quotation of the young Flaubert ? That the young bourgeois author of *Novembre* sends back to the well-to-do society its prejudices, received ideas, frustrations and other contradictory pulsions which it knows only too well and pretends to ignore ? That the young person Flaubert and the “man Flaubert” are examples for the youth? The “man Flaubert”, nevertheless, was he not pursued for insult in morality and in the good customs in 1857 with one Emma Bovary who ends among others with her parties of equitation in the forest in the arms of her lover Rodolphe Boulanger ?

Is it necessary to deduct from this that the young Flaubert is in opposition to the adult and is retained here by “La crise” only for strategic reasons and convenience? Which lesson, finally, do we have to retain : that sport can have an impact, an influence, a decisive “psychological” incidence on youth? Is it for the future president of the Sports Psychology and of Physiology Congress of 1913 a way to to prepare the ground, of arranging cohabitation between tradition and modernity, “physiological style” and “psychological style”, sport and literature constituting after all only the same facet? Is it a question of marking definitively his distances with regard to Maupassant, of settling its accounts through a third party?

As we see, “La crise évitable” leaves many unresolved questions to which it seems difficult to answer for the moment. These reflect, in the truth, the relation badly known by Flaubert and Coubertin who would ask to be clarified and deepened.

There are many complements that the work and the *Letters* of Flaubert can bring on the thesis of the moral and psychological incidence of sport on the youth generally, and on “La crise évitable” in particular. The article advances no sports proof on Flaubert and does not really show by which means or method especially Flaubert becomes morally or psychologically strong, with the character whose nerves were unstable and suffering. Fallen in disgrace in front of a non-conciliatory mother who forbids him any form of rowing in 1846 further to the double death of her husband Dr Flaubert and of her daughter Caroline in winter 1844, Gustave Flaubert, summoned to obey, suffering from an epilepsia, runs, and puts all “things in the attic, and there is no daytime when I want to take it back”⁴⁸. So, in good son of doctor, Flaubert invites defenders and theorists of the modern sports morality to reconsider their positions and hasty conclusions on the relations of sport to the person, relations which feel apparently reluctant to reveal their secrets, knowing in advance that “*the radical hardship of a thing creates its excess*”

⁴⁹.

Aurelio Berardi

⁴⁸ Flaubert to Louise Colet, [Croisset,] mercredi soir, 9 h[eures]. [30 septembre 1846], vol. I, p. 369.

⁴⁹ emphasized by Flaubert ; Flaubert to Louise Colet, [Croisset,] mardi soir. [4 avril 1854], vol. II, p 543.

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