

Madame Bovary: Representations of the Masculine by Mary Orr

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can never quite seem to summon the courage of her convictions to say so. 'What is the relevance of such modernist speculation to the writings of Sand who lived 150 years earlier?' (p. 81), she gloomily inquires, but answer comes there none.

There is a degree of carelessness evident in the proof-reading, specifically in respect of titles of texts (*Les Réveries d'un promeneur solitaire*, 'Henri' instead of *Henry Brulard*, 'Rudolfstadt' instead of *Rudolstadt*) and names of critics (Bozon-Scalzitti becomes 'Bozon-Scalzetti' throughout, and both Leslie Rabine and Avrom Fleishman are misspelt in the Bibliography).

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Madame Bovary: Representations of the Masculine. By MARY ORR. (Romanticism and After in France, 3) Bern: Peter Lang. 1999. 229 pp. £23.

In this book Mary Orr claims to 'demonstrate how *Madame Bovary* has much to say about contemporary preoccupations in gender theory, the crisis of masculinity in late-twentieth-century Western consumer society, and about the cult of youth and fear of ageing in an increasingly technologized medico-centric world' (p. 15). In fact, the main focus of her work lies elsewhere. Despite passing references to 'the ongoing problems men continue to face today', Orr's analysis is grounded in the models of behaviour set out in the *Code Napoléon* of 1804. Her central argument is that *Madame Bovary* can be read as a microcosm of the constructions of masculinity laid down by the *Code*, and in claiming that 'the novel prophetically heralds the crises male identity is currently confronting', she offers a suggestive and original reading of its male characters. She considers these under the broad categories of 'Fathers' and 'Sons'. The 'Fathers' (Rouault père, Bovary père, M. Roger, Bournisien, Canivet, Larivière, Guillaumin, Lheureux and Homais) are viewed as the embodiment of patriarchal values that are out of control, while the 'Sons' (Justin, Rodolphe, Léon and Charles) are seen as demonstrating how gender is socially constructed, and as passing implicit judgement on the 'Fathers'. The workings of social hierarchies of class, profession and sex contribute further to the complex tensions that are shown to emerge from a novel which, Orr suggests, stems from Flaubert's own struggle to move beyond his earlier literary failure. While the broad sweep of Orr's argument is convincing, some of her assertions are dubious. Is it not somewhat reductive to argue, for example, that 'if the aftermath of Emma's funeral is for anything it is for the elucidation of the woeful lack in Patriarchy's training of men to cope with bereavement and strong male emotional responses'? (p. 36). And does Orr further her case or our understanding of the novel by adding a footnote stating that 'the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, permitted "real men" to cry in public and acknowledge their emotions and grief'? One could quibble over many such details (and over the many misprints). Paradoxically, it is when the discussion spills out beyond its stated agenda that it is most successful. At its best, Orr's exuberant reading of *Madame Bovary* throws up a wealth of original ideas, from her analysis of the recurring references to boxes and secret containers, to her intriguing observation of how different scenes in the novel are linked by smell.

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