



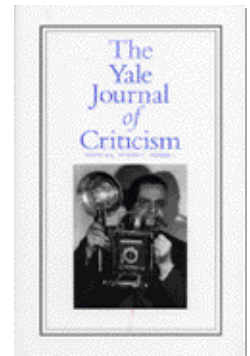
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French Cultural Imperialism and the Aesthetics of Extinction

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Just before recounting the ancient history and his present tour of Carthage in *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, Chateaubriand ruminates upon the indefatigable French national character that “ne peut s’effacer” [cannot wear off].¹ Significantly, this observation conjures up memories of his visit sixteen years earlier (in 1791) to the American frontier and his first sight of a compatriot among the Indians. This moment occurs, he tells us, when his guide leads him to a forest within Iroquois territory where he encounters

... une vingtaine de Sauvages, hommes et femmes, barbouillés comme des sorciers, le corps demi-nu, les oreilles découpées, des plumes de corbeau sur la tête, et des anneaux passés dans les narines. Un petit Français poudré et frisé comme autrefois, habit vert pomme, veste de droguet, jabot et manchette de mousseline, raclait un violon de poche, et faisait danser *Madelon Friquet* à ces Iroquois. M. Violet (c’était son nom). . . . tenant son petit violon entre son menton et sa poitrine, accordait l’instrument fatal; il criait en iroquois: *A vos places!* Et toute la troupe sautait comme une bande de démons. (398–99)

... some twenty savages, men and women, painted like sorcerers, their bodies half-naked, ears slit, crow feathers on their heads, rings through their nostrils. A small Frenchman with powdered and curled hair as in bygone days, wearing an apple-green coat with a drugged vest, muslin jabot and cuffs, was scraping at his pocket violin and making these Iroquois dance “Madelon Friquet.” Monsieur Violet (such was his name). . . . holding his little violin between chin and chest, tuned the fatal instrument, and cried out in Iroquois: To your places! And the entire troop bounded forward like a pack of demons.

M. Violet, Chateaubriand explains, is “le nouvel Orphée” [a new Orpheus] whose resolve it was to teach “les beaux-arts aux Américains,” to carry “la civilisation jusque chez les hordes errantes du Nouveau-Monde” [civilization even unto the errant hordes of the New World].

At first glance, this may seem a rather commonplace colonial account of civilizing the natives. What is strange about it, however, is that M. Violet’s cultural offering is archaic, trivial, and steeped in almost comic inconsequentiality. “Ces messieurs Sauvages et ces dames Sauvageesses,” as he calls them, are indelibly marked not for regeneration but extinction and damnation: “demons” of the underworld, their

bodies are fragmented and perforated, “half-naked” and replete with slits and holes. They are, furthermore, instructed not by a beacon of a grand and ascending nation but by a throwback, a lowly vestige of an empire in retreat. Having served as a scullion under General Rochambeau during the American Revolution, M. Violet stayed on after the departure of the French army and is now dressed in antiquated, pseudo-courtlly attire to teach “les sauvages” to dance to a ditty.²

Yet Chateaubriand deliberately transposes these ironies. In another account of the same scene in his *Mémoires*, he writes that he was “cruellement humilié” [cruelly humiliated] by this experience. The source of his antipathy, however, is not the apparent debasement or inanity of “la mission civilisatrice,” but the unavailability of Rousseau’s “noble sauvage” untainted by civilization.³ In contrast, in the *Itinéraire* he offers M. Violet’s project as an example of the tenacity of the French “génie” that persists despite and by virtue of the material loss of empire: “voilà ce que c’est que le génie des peuples” [this is what comes of a people’s genius]. Chateaubriand quite seriously links the French cultural project, of which he considers his own work exemplary, to that of M. Violet: “nous dansâmes donc aussi sur les débris de Carthage” [so we too danced over the ruins of Carthage] (399). Indeed Chateaubriand likewise fancies himself something of a relic. He remarks, in the preface to *Itinéraire*, that he is “peut-être le dernier Français sorti de [son] pays pour voyager en Terre-Sainte” [perhaps the last Frenchman who left his country to travel the Holy Land], in “un siècle antireligieux” [an anti-religious age] that has all but forgotten Jerusalem and “[le] berceau de la religion” [the cradle of religion] (53, 35).

His enterprise is finally not one of restoration. His sole purpose, he insists, is to “chercher des images” [search for images] (41), to fashion an “itinerant” aesthetic of loss. Here and throughout his works, this aesthetic is linked to a French imperial enterprise that is always already materially dispossessed. In the conclusion of his *Mémoires*, Chateaubriand implies that the pathos he invokes in his lengthy lament of empire is the very source of poetry: “. . . les vraies larmes sont celles que fait couler une belle poésie et dans lesquelles se mêle autant d’admiration que de douleur” [true tears are those that are made to flow by a beautiful poem, and in which are mingled as much admiration as sorrow] (6:317). In other words, “France outre-mer” [France overseas] (as empire was—and is still—called) and *Mémoires d’outre-tombe* [*Memoirs beyond the grave*] (the full title of his self-proclaimed masterpiece, which he wished to be published posthumously) are both conceived as cultural projections “beyond” the limitations and debacles of material history.⁴ He at once dramatically announces the doom of French empire, and asks: “l’ouvrage inspiré par mes cendres et destiné à mes cendres subsistera-t-il après moi?” [A work that is inspired by my ashes and destined to my ashes, will it survive me?] (333).

It is by now a commonplace that during its heyday French imperialism was upheld as an opportunity for cultural rejuvenation. Chateaubriand anticipates this theme in his summary of the differences between the competing European empires: “nos marins disent que, dans les colonies nouvelles, les Espagnols commencent par bâtir une église, les Anglais une taverne, et les Français un fort; et j’ajoute une salle de bal” [our marines say that in the new colonies the Spanish begin by building a church, the English a tavern, and the French a fort; and to this I add a ballroom].⁵ As in his depiction of M. Violet and “les sauvages,” aesthetic function here is thoroughly paradoxical. The ballroom is not a stage upon which the natives are civilized, or where French culture undergoes a straightforward process of revitalization. Rather, the ephemeral forms of dance and music underscore a persistent theme of evanescence; indeed, Chateaubriand’s image of dancing upon the ruins of Carthage colorfully epitomizes an aesthetic that is paradoxically nourished by irrevocable loss. Like the comic triviality of M. Violon’s dance lessons, it is not the content, form, or even feasibility of the project but the *gesture itself* that signals an indomitable French “génie” [genius].

Flaubert inherits Chateaubriand’s fascination with Carthage. For him, Carthage is an ideal space upon which history and material culture are stripped down: what remains is an aesthetic capacity that, like M. Violet’s demonstration of the French “génie,” exemplifies both the essence and the after-life of French imperialism. Critics have often noted the negative and negating vein at the heart of Flaubert’s enterprise.⁶ It sustains, we are told, an opposition between life and art, between “realist” novels with French settings like *Madame Bovary* and *L’Éducation sentimentale* and otherworldly “romantic” narratives set in the Orient such as *Salammô* and *La Tentation de saint Antoine*. Indeed Flaubert himself encouraged such oppositions: much to the bafflement of his critics, he considered *Saint Antoine* to be his life’s work, and upheld *Salammô* as an antidote to *Madame Bovary*—one more amenable, he insisted, to his artistic ideals. Underlying these oppositions is a fundamental tenet of the “oriental renaissance”: the Orient functions as an aesthetic alternative whereby the perceived brilliant colors and violent contrarities of the Orient supplant flat, gray, bourgeois France.⁷

And yet this economy of presence or vitality (the Orient) and lack or decline (France) is destabilized by the ways in which French colonial space is in fact imagined as both: a negative realm through which French culture survives—and indeed thrives on—the debacles of empire. In contrast to British imperialism, conceived of by the British primarily in economic and administrative terms, French imperialism conceived of its chief offerings as language and culture. This unique form of cultural imperialism, its special emphasis on the genius and

immutability of French culture and language, gives rise to a strong cultural-aesthetic tradition of extinction and denial. It is through this tradition that French imperialism's principal bequests to civilization are upheld and sustained.

To illustrate this relationship between the aesthetics of extinction and French imperial ideology, in what follows I will discuss the writings of Chateaubriand and Flaubert's *Salammbô* within the context of French colonial North Africa, and link their concepts of the aesthetic to the meanings of Carthage. In Flaubert, critical discussions of these two questions (the nature of his aesthetic and his use of such netherlands of the Orient as Carthage), while thus far kept distinct, are nevertheless marked by overlapping themes of loss, ruin, decline, and anteriority. Critics traditionally link Flaubert's move to take readers into remote regions of place and time to the Romantic obsession with ruins and interest in classicism or, more often, to his profound disaffection with bourgeois France and the (effete) aesthetic terrain it affords. His concept of the aesthetic, informally expressed in the *Correspondance*,⁸ is associated with *l'art pour l'art* and fin-de-siècle decadence. This aesthetic of extinction and, by implication, these movements themselves—which gained unmatched popularity and intensity in France during its colonial ascent—are integral to French imperialism's peculiar doctrine of loss and inconsequence.

I. Carthage and the Inconsequence of French Imperialism

Les cendres de Didon et les ruines de Carthage entendaient le son d'un violon français.

The ashes of Dido and the ruins of Carthage heard the sound of a French violin.

—Chateaubriand⁹

Carthage n'était pas morte encore.

Carthage was still not dead.

—Dessort¹⁰

Most *Salammbô* criticism ignores the work's setting. Studies that do attempt to explain Flaubert's perplexing move to resurrect Carthage (or its counterpart, the fourth-century Alexandria of *Saint Antoine*) usually offer allegorical readings. The brutality of the Carthaginians and the Mercenaries, the futility of their contest, the corruption of their world and the matching "decadence" of Flaubert's style are designed, we are told, to comment on class conflict or materialism in nineteenth-century France, or to present an alternative to its "bourgeois" poetic conventions.¹¹ Ironically, such readings lead us swiftly out of ancient Carthage, where Flaubert went to such pains to enclose and detain us. These explanations are decidedly insufficient; the world of *Salammbô*, coupled with the high eccentricity of Flaubert's undertak-

ing, somehow exceeds the requirements of allegory. Most important, such approaches leave us in the dark as to the meaning of the enormous poetic ambition that Flaubert brings to his “Carthaginian” project, as he called it—an ambition he does not ascribe to *Madame Bovary*, and which is surpassed only by that which he brings to *Saint Antoine*.

The world of Carthage, then and now, is central to Flaubert’s enterprise as he conceived of it. To write *Salammbô*, Flaubert claims to have read over a hundred books on Carthage.¹² Indeed, he is justified in his claim to know as much as anyone in France about Carthage. He would contest assumptions behind facile allegorical readings of the novel, and insists that he studies “. . . un civilization qui n’a rien d’analogue avec la nôtre” [a civilization that has nothing in common with our own].¹³ In his reply to Sainte-Beuve, he writes, “L’âme humaine n’est point partout la même. . . . La moindre vue sur le monde est là pour prouver le contraire” [The human soul is not in the least the same everywhere. . . . The most cursory look over the world is enough to prove the opposite].¹⁴ Flaubert at once defends the veracity of his representation of Carthage on historical terms, and undermines such positivism: “Je crois avoir fait quelque chose qui ressemble Carthage. Mais là n’est pas la question. Je me moque de l’archéologie!” [I believe I’ve created something that resembles Carthage. But this is not the issue. I mock archeology!]. Rather, he argues that he uses a specific historical context to achieve aesthetic harmony and unity: he suggests, in other words, that he somehow grounds an aesthetic in the literal Carthage.¹⁵

The task that I propose of remaining in Carthage is beset by interesting ironies. We must think, for instance, of its status as exemplar of a grand empire utterly obliterated, within the context of Flaubert’s visit to Tunis in 1858—a visit he considered essential to his literary project. This context is itself dissipated by the predominantly French colonial convention, from which Flaubert does not deviate, of describing Tunisia in particular as a desolate, insignificant place, at once disinherited from its grand Phoenician ancestry and (presumably) a physical testament to its fate.¹⁶ Indeed, the imagery of evanescence and death is conspicuous from the outset of Flaubert’s visit: surrounded by a tenacious haze and Arab pilgrims who “ressemblent à des cadavres dans leurs linceuls” [resemble corpses in their shrouds], he travels on a steamship from Marseille to Tunis.¹⁷ And yet remarkably, this visit to the land of oblivion is deemed prophetic. Upon his return, he dramatically announces that he got it all wrong, that what he had thus far written is worthless and must be “demolished” entirely: “Je t’apprendrai que *Carthage* est complètement à refaire, ou plutôt à faire. *Je démolis tout*. C’était absurde! impossible! faux!” [I must tell you that *Carthage* is to be entirely remade, or rather made. I demolish all. It was

absurd! Impossible! False!].¹⁸ What did he see in Tunisia in the wake of Ahmad Bey, and what did he understand from this visit that was so fundamental to (what we assumed was) an incontestably dry-as-bone, bookish project?

To answer such questions requires placing *Salammbô* in its colonial context, as Flaubert plainly did. Entirely ignored in the criticism is the obvious fact that his aesthetic project of raising ancient Carthage—and the pun here is intended—also raises the specter of a fallen empire, one uncomfortably germane to a French imperial consciousness now post-America and (still) surpassed by Britain. Surely Sainte-Beuve's cranky exclamation, in his famous review of *Salammbô*, is less an expression of incomprehension than one of annoyance with Flaubert's unspoken comparison: "Que me fait, à moi, le duel de Tunis et de Carthage? Parlez-moi du duel de Carthage et de Rome, à la bonne heure!" [What is it to me, the duel between Tunis and Carthage? Tell me of the duel between Carthage and Rome, gladly!].¹⁹ Flaubert of course not only "raises" (constructs and elevates) but also "razes" Carthage by portraying the destruction of what is already dead, immobile, and petrified.²⁰ In *Salammbô*, as I will later discuss in more detail, defeat and loss are suspended and aestheticized.

Flaubert wrests from Carthage a doubleness and ambiguity that is at the heart of its broader cultural meanings. On a basic level, it was common for European and American imperial powers of the nineteenth century to compare themselves to the great empires of the past: Napoleonic France typically fancied a kinship to Rome, and England was often compared to Carthage (as a dire warning). No comparison with an empire past is ever transparent. The example of Rome, despite its significance as the founding and abiding civilization of the West, is always ambiguous. Indeed, such comparisons betray the same anxiety of power as do comparisons to Carthage. Even America, typically presented as the culminating stage of a civilization that started with Rome, is also the self-proclaimed "nation of futurity" (a term that befittingly denotes a kind of abstract quality of "futureness" as opposed to the historical future)—an insistence calculated to distance the legacy of Rome and its fall.

Delenda est Carthago: Carthage is a particularly captivating symbol in Western imperial traditions. Its significance is not universal. In the Arab-Islamic tradition, for example, Carthage has never been invoked as a fateful warning, nor is it a conspicuous example of any kind. Yet it could have been, considering its North African location and Eastern Mediterranean roots. Indeed, Carthage might have articulated similar anxieties of power for the Islamic Empire, and European colonialism, one could imagine, might have been interpreted as a series of incursions of the self-proclaimed descendants of the Romans into the same region.²¹

In Western traditions, in contrast, the evocation of Carthage, with both its positive and negative meanings (a grand commercial empire, a devastated empire), implicitly brings its civilization at least partly within a Western sphere.²² However, the identity of Carthage is never explicitly defined: from encyclopedia entries to histories, the Phoenician culture that spawned Carthage is presented as neither exclusively Oriental nor Western.²³ In all accounts we are told that the lack of records and the obscurity of the early sources make it difficult to characterize. Phoenician civilization is often described as composite, with Egyptian, Mycenaean, and Greek influences, which enable it to “mediate” between East and West.²⁴ Many ancient civilizations are presented as in some sense hybrid, yet this does not normally prevent assimilation.²⁵ It is not inevitable that Carthage should remain culturally undetermined: indeed, as this same historian points out, the history of Carthage is largely locked in the closed corpus of classical sources, and its single most significant legacy is the Punic language, which survived into Latin and Greek.²⁶

Most often, Carthage is presented as having no legacy at all, or one limited to influence in the ancient world. The theme of arrested development—a staple of Orientalist discourse—dominates the historiography of Carthage, and it is never clear whether this apparent deficiency is presented as the cause or effect of its destruction.²⁷ As one historian remarks, “the civilization of Carthage must . . . be numbered with those, chiefly in the early history of the near East, which have left neither descendants . . . nor a literature or religion of formative influence.”²⁸ Warmington judges Carthaginian civilization, despite “a substantial coloring of Hellenism,” to be “curiously archaic” and “unable to develop in new directions as did its Greek and Roman counterparts.” The implicit reason for this failure is not the military defeat of Carthage, but rather its adherence to a certain Near Eastern predicament. And yet Carthage is here and everywhere incompletely Orientalized.

Typically, its status falls somewhere between a defeated Oriental rival and a would-be Rome. Indeed, this same historian imagines in the next paragraph how different “the history of Western Europe would have been . . . if Rome had been defeated by Hannibal.” What he has to say about this possibility betrays the ironic force of the doubleness at the heart of all representations of Carthage. As such, it is worth quoting at length:

. . . it is clear there would have been no Carthaginian Empire of anything like the extent or quality of the Roman; we could not substitute a Carthaginian reference in Gibbon’s ingenious fancy of the consequences of a victory of another Semitic power in the west, the Arabs: “Perhaps the interpretation of the Koran would now be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pulpits might demonstrate to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Mohammed.” . . . The Phoenician settlement in

North Africa was part of a movement which brought the western Mediterranean, till then inhabited by backward tribes of infinite variety, within the sphere of the more advanced civilizations of the Aegean and Levantine coasts. The geographical conditions which made this area part of the Mediterranean rather than the African world were emphasized. All except one of the invaders who in later times dominated its coast came by sea—Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Turks, Spaniards, and French. Only the Arabs came by land, a triumph of man over geographical circumstances, and imposed the dominant culture on an area which yet is associated with the West by so many historical events.

Here the civilization of Carthage is at once Western (a culture that leans toward the Mediterranean and away from Africa, a culture that civilized the western Mediterranean but that is nonetheless inferior to Rome) and “Semitic” like the Arabs. Yet Warmington clearly brackets the latter comparison. Note his remarkable assertion that the Arabs demonstrated “a triumph of man over geographical circumstances” because their invasion “by land” somehow defied both the natural (aquatic!) geography of Carthage (which was respected, presumably, by the “Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Turks, Spaniards, and French” who invaded by sea), as well as the “many historical events” that “yet” link Carthage to the West.

Carthage is here ascribed a (literal) fluid geography, the better to shorten its distance from Europe. The implicit acquisitiveness of this description is common in Western imperial discourse on North Africa. And yet, as we have seen, this kind of discourse overlaps with portrayals of a “Western” Carthage. What is common to all representations of Carthage in the Western traditions is an ascribed cultural ambiguity, but the nature and uses of this ambiguity vary. Most notably, the French tradition projects onto Carthage a complex pathos that further hinders it from assuming a predictable role as colonial space. The special significance of Carthage to France is evident from the early and assiduous archeological and scholarly attention: Chateaubriand’s archaeological map was published in 1833 (a map of which Flaubert made use), followed by the establishment in 1837 of the Society for the Exploration of Carthage. The prominent historians and archeologists are mostly French.²⁹ More significant is the role of Carthage as a French cultural symbol. This is evident in the Cathedral erected by Cardinal Lavigerie, the 1842 dedication of the Saint-Louis chapel, and the Eucharist congress held in 1930 in Carthage, which served as a confirmation of the triumph of French colonization in Africa. The special meaning of Carthage is also evidenced by the long roster of French literary personalities, including Volney, Dumas, and Guy de Maupassant, who traveled to Carthage to pay homage at the tomb of Saint-Louis.³⁰

The account of Carthage in *La Grande encyclopédie* of 1886,³¹ written during the ascent of French imperialism in the region, bears gen-

eral similarities to Warmington's rhetoric. Topographical descriptions exhibit a decidedly appropriative bent: Carthage is located in proximity to Paris: "Carthage était située par 37° lat. N. et 8° long. E. de Paris. . ." [Carthage was located at 37° latitude and 8° longitude E. of Paris] (597). Also included are numerous enthusiastic references to Carthage's locale: "Comme port de la Méditerranée et comme centre du commerce de L'Afrique avec L'Europe et L'Asie, Carthage n'était pas moins admirablement située" [As a Mediterranean port and as a center of commerce from Africa to Europe and Asia, Carthage could not have been more favorably located] (599). And as in Warmington, there is an analogy with the Arabs, only here it is reversed: they are presented as counterparts to the Romans and not the Carthaginians. Hence the implicit counterpart to France is Carthage, whose fate is recounted with a marked sympathy: this alliance underscores the particular significance of Carthage in the French tradition. Carthage is described as a Phoenician "colonie" on the African coast, whose famous date of devastation is pushed forward by eight centuries: it is said to have been "renversée une première fois par les Romains en 146 avant notre ère et enfin définitivement détruite par les Arabes en 698 ap. J.-C." [overturned the first time by the Romans in 146 B.C. and finally definitively destroyed by the Arabs in 698 A.D.]!

What is significant here is not the blame imputed to the Arabs, but the exact form that it takes, and how this form exemplifies the special meaning of Carthage in the French imperial tradition. The nature of the Arab destruction is broadly cultural-aesthetic. French occupation (a latter-day "colonie" on the North African coast) is positioned throughout the article as a stay against a long history of spoliation by the Arabs who, we are told, both traffic in debris (by carrying off pieces of the Carthaginian ruins) and seem to appreciate it (like the "gigantesques débris de blocage appelés Dermesh par les Arabes" [the gigantic scraps of debris the Arabs call Dermesh]) (604; 597). Imperial preservationism—the heroic task of defending the worth of art and cultural remains against the ravages of benighted savages—is certainly not new, nor is it specifically French. What is distinctive here is that this enterprise, like Chateaubriand's errand into the Orient, is paradoxically *not* one of restoration. Indeed, the *Encyclopédie* article ends the historical section with a declaration that nothing remains to be preserved: "enfin, à l'époque de la croisade de Saint-Louis, en 1270, on ne signale sur l'emplacement de Carthage qu'une bourgade sans importance" [finally, by the time of the Crusades of Saint-Louis in 1270, nothing could be found in the location of Carthage but a town of no importance] (604).

Hence Carthage is at once a French memorial and monument, a symbol of greatness lost and yet sustained. The reference to Saint-Louis recalls Chateaubriand's invocation of him in *Itinéraire*: a more es-

timable example than M. Violet, “Saint-Louis seul eût été respecté en sa qualité de Français” [Saint-Louis alone had retained his French character] (398). This essential Frenchness, Chateaubriand implies, is manifest not through restoration or preservation; rather, it is sustained, paradoxically, on a plain of defeat and utter loss, “sur les ruines de Carthage” [upon the ruins of Carthage], where “[Saint-Louis] avait tant souffert” [where Saint-Louis had so suffered] (434). As in the *Encyclopédie*, Saint-Louis is positioned as the unrivaled hero of Chateaubriand’s Carthage. The story of Saint-Louis’s failed attempt to repossess “la patrie d’Annibal” [Hannibal’s fatherland],³² and to halt Prince Omar’s ostensible affronts to Christianity, is here fashioned as a retake of Rome’s defeat of Carthage. Yet the French army’s failure is all but lifted out of the realm of human volition. Saint-Louis’s troops are conquered by natural forces, as “le soleil de l’Afrique dévorait des hommes accoutumés à vivre sous un ciel plus doux” [the African sun devoured men accustomed to living under a more gentle sky], and by a “kansim [*sic*]” (*khamasin*), or wind-propelled sand, artificially produced by “les Maures” [the Moors]. This caused such devastation, Chateaubriand tells us, that corpses had to be pitched into holes.³³

Defeat and loss are further elevated from history through aestheticization. Saint-Louis expires on a bed of ashes, but his face retains “toutes les couleurs de la vie, et ses lèvres même étaient vermeilles” [all the colors of life, and even his lips were vermilion]. Saint-Louis’ death, narrated in loving detail, takes the shape of a final “tableau” that passes before Chateaubriand’s memory—one he believes Socrates would have admired (434; 439). Yet this tableau depicts not afterlife *despite* loss but afterlife *in* and *by virtue* of loss and defeat. For Chateaubriand (as in the *Encyclopédie*) Saint-Louis’ death signals complete termination: the end of the history of Carthage, of Chateaubriand’s narrative and his (and France’s) venture in Africa.

La mort de Louis, si touchante, si vertueuse, si tranquille, par où se termine l’histoire de Carthage, semble être un sacrifice de paix offert en expiation des fureurs, des passions et des crimes dont cette ville infortunée fut, si longtemps le théâtre. Je n’ai plus rien à dire aux lecteurs; il est temps qu’ils rentrent avec moi dans notre commune patrie. (440-41)

[The death of Louis, so touching, so virtuous, so peaceful, whereby the history of Carthage comes to an end, seems to be a sacrifice of peace offered in expiation of the fury, passions, and crimes for which this unfortunate city was for so long the theater. I have nothing more to say to my readers; it is time to return with me to our common fatherland.]

I will return to this passage later. For now it is sufficient to note that out of the “affreuse douleur” [dreadful grief], tears, sighs, and suffering that Chateaubriand tirelessly invokes to portray the defeated French Christians on the “débris de Carthage” [ruins of Carthage], what remains is Saint-Louis’ “vigueur de l’âme” [vigor of soul].

Chateaubriand anticipates the French colonial tradition of grounding a pathos in North Africa, whereupon passion, agony, and loss are displaced and appropriated, swollen to cosmic dimensions.³⁴ Flaubert's entry in *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* is thus brilliantly double-edged: "colonies (nos): s'attrister quand on en parle" [colonies (our): to become sad when one speaks of them].³⁵ In passing I will also link to this colonial pathos his expression of an "immense sadness" in writing *Salammbô*,³⁶ as well as the recurrence of weeping within the novel that is disquieting not only because of the imminent doom of all, but because of an immediate plasticity and vacuity. In this tradition we must also include the French historiography of Carthage. Its fall in particular is narrated with keen sympathy as in, for example, Stéphane Gsell's eminent and massive *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*.³⁷ One account in particular can be cited for its extravagant empathy: the historian Picard, squarely within the tradition of Chateaubriand, vividly conflates Carthaginian loss and ruin to the immortal creative energy of its "âme" [soul]. On the one hand, Picard seems to espouse the doctrine of arrested development: he antedates the descent of Carthage by confirming "la stérilité de l'art punique" and a "religion inhumaine." Yet on the other, he begs the reader to look more closely at "les richesses ramenées de Ras Shamra" [the treasures brought back from Ras Shamra] in the Louvre to observe "l'étonnante vitalité" [surprising vitality] of the Carthaginians. He suggests that literary interest in Carthage (and he gives the example of Flaubert) is ultimately based upon essences both mysterious and immaterial: "l'imagination créatrice," "l'angoisse," "la passion," and "l'indomitable énergie de la race [punique]" [the creative imagination, anguish, passion, and indomitable vigour of the (Punic) race].³⁸

The argument of all these accounts is based on a paradox: failure and loss, exemplified by (an implicitly colonial) Carthage, are inconsequential in the face of an enduring French "âme" or "génie." At the same time, defeat and loss are reified as the basic conditions (or even prerequisites) of this "génie." This paradox is sustained in the broader discourse of French colonialism. Perhaps the earliest and most consequential expression of this central tenet of French imperial ideology can be found in General Bugeaud's address before the French Parliament in 1840. He vehemently rejects the idea of "l'occupation restreinte" [limited occupation] and instead makes a sustained case for destroying Abdel-Kader,³⁹ driving the Arabs into the desert so that "le terrain serait plus libre pour la colonisation européenne" [the territory would be more free for European colonization], and the wholesale conquest of Algeria: "*Il faut donc que le pays soit conquis*" [the country must therefore be conquered]. What is astonishing about his absolutist recommendation is that it is based on disavowal, an unrepentant conviction that "oui, à [son] avis, la posses-

sion d'Alger est une faute" [yes, in his view, the possession of Algiers is a mistake].⁴⁰ Bugeaud believed that only by "la domination absolue" of Algeria could this failure metamorphose into heroism: "je pense que les grandes nations, comme les grands hommes, doivent faire les fautes avec grandeur . . . il faut que vous fassiez [cette faute] grandement, car c'est le seul moyen d'en obtenir quelque fruit" [I believe that great nations, like great men, must commit errors with grandeur . . . you must carry out this error with grandeur, for it is the only way to gain some fruit from it]. Like the majestic failures of Chateaubriand and his Saint-Louis, Bugeaud's concept of heroism *depends* on failure and annihilation. Yet here it is hardly displaced, and the significant target is Arab cultural identity: "il faut que la nationalité arabe soit renversée" [the Arab nationality must be destroyed]. His explicit argument is that the sole "fruit" to be had from the otherwise useless "possession d'Alger" is "[la] grandeur" (2:135-37).

The dominant claim of the historiography of French nineteenth-century colonialism is that empire is a failure, inconsequential and marginal. The legend of its adventitious beginnings—how the Dey of Algiers struck the French consul in the face with a fan and thus precipitated the coastal invasion of Algeria in 1830—is never completely contravened. Substituted for this story are causes internal (to divert attention away from military defeat in Europe) or derivative (the rivalry with England), none of which undermines the basic themes of fortuity, incoherence, and marginality. Perhaps most telling is the relative lack of French scholarship on colonialism. The historians argue that French imperialism lacked sufficient economic basis and benefit; territorial expansion was largely unofficial, the province of dilettantes and marginal groups; there was no coherent colonial policy and properly no "colonial consciousness" until the 1870s or even the 1940s; the legacy and loss of empire had no enduring impact on France, and so on.⁴¹ Be that as it may (it is not my purpose here to challenge the validity of individual arguments), what most plainly contradicts the claim of inconsequence and marginality is of course the unmatched ferocity (imbued with a startling pathos) by which France held on to its colonial possessions—Algeria above all.⁴²

The discourse on French colonialism reads as a litany of denial. And this denial is not post-colonial. As the anecdote goes, the new French minister of the colonies in 1905, Etienne Clemental, while poring over a vast map of France's territorial possessions, exclaims: "Les colonies . . . je ne savais pas qu'il y en eût tant!" [The colonies . . . I didn't know there were so many of them!].⁴³ In the preface to perhaps the earliest study of French imperialism in Africa, *La France en Afrique* (1846),⁴⁴ J. Lingay states: "Ceci n'est pas un livre, c'est un Mémoire, c'est une Note" [this is not a book, it is a memory, a note], thus suggesting, at this early date, both the evanescence ("un Mémoire") and

marginality (“une Note”) of French colonialism. The paradox of French empire—its (putatively) negligible loss coupled with a deep-seated cultural resonance—is implicit in the intriguing link he makes to the ancient world of Carthage. In the opening of his book, Lingay casually expresses a desire to start with 1830 and forgo the past (“la guerre aura bientôt fait son temps en Algérie. C’est le tour de la paix productive, c’est-à-dire de la colonisation” [the war will soon have had its time in Algeria. Then will come the time of productive peace, which is to say colonization]). And yet instead he is transported by memory back to ancient North Africa: “. . . quelques souvenirs sont éveillés par des rapprochements de faits, par des ressemblances de personnes” [some memories were awakened by the correspondence of events, by resemblances between people]. He asks, somewhat enigmatically, as if to liken French colonization to Jugurtha’s doomed project of building another empire in the wake of Carthage: “A qui de nous, depuis années, ne s’est point rappelé Jugurtha?” [Which of us, since years past, can still recall Jugurtha?] (vj; vij).⁴⁵

Nor is this denial the exclusive province of imperial apologists. Like Lingay and Chateaubriand (in the “dernier tableau” of his memory), the recent revisionist *Histoire de la France coloniale: des origines à 1914* associates French colonialism with the volatility of memory: “La France coloniale a été jusqu’ici oubliée, ou maintenue à l’écart par un travail volontaire de mémoire” [Colonial France was until now forgotten, or pushed to the background by the willful work of memory] (7). The authors commence their study with the problematic of how a nation that is neither maritime nor emigrant could be imperial at all, let alone sustain five uninterrupted centuries of France “outre-mer” [overseas]. And with regard to French colonialism in Africa, they reaffirm its status as a “marginal” phenomenon. Indeed, the ubiquitous question “y a-t’il une France coloniale?” [is there a colonial France?] ironically finds a place in this massive study (317). Even Jacques Berque, despite his penetrating critique of French colonialism, stresses a kind of continuity and undermines a sharp divide that would, for one thing, demarcate an explicit French colonial period. He contends, for example, that decolonization will not end Latin influence in North Africa, that neither the French nor the Algerians can or should consider decolonization as the “defeat” of France (451–65).

The theme of the inconsequence of empire that coexists with an abiding colonial pathos finds fertile ground in the symbol of Carthage. To understand the cultural and aesthetic importance of Carthage as the land of extinction, a negative realm that paradoxically sustains an essential Frenchness, it would be useful to refigure this denial in positive terms. So conceived, the underlying tenet of French imperialism would be autonomy: the autonomy of France from its own empire; the autonomy of *L’Algérie française* from historic Algeria;

the autonomy of the French “*génie*” from the circumstances of material history and the ravages of imperial defeat and loss. Perhaps the most important is French autonomy from geographic contingency. One might conjecture that France can question the existence of an empire past because its primary emphasis and importance is cultural. In other words, if the fundamental conviction of French imperialism concerns the endurance of the French “*génie*” then in this sense empire persists—or never was.

Thus it is fitting that the unequaled prominence in France of aestheticism, or the doctrine of the autonomy of the Beautiful, precisely coincides with the very height of imperial expansion. Aestheticism is usually restricted to the movements of *l’art pour l’art* and fin-de-siècle decadence. However, that the literary output of these movements is saturated in orientalism and exoticism plainly suggests a broader connection with empire. Eugène Fromentin, who was greatly influenced by Gautier, directly makes this connection in *Pléiade*: “après le voyage scientifique, politique, et militaire” comes “le voyage de l’art pour l’art!” [after scientific, political, and military voyage comes the voyage for art for art’s sake!].⁴⁶ One reason why aestheticism gained currency particularly in France lies in the points of convergence between aestheticism and French imperial ideology. Shared by both is the principle of autonomy from the material world: in aestheticism, the separation of the Beautiful from the realm of use, corporeality, and worldliness; in French imperialism, the independence of culture from geography and the course of history.⁴⁷

Underlying both aestheticism and French imperial ideology is an essential negation. Much like the symbol of Carthage, this negation is paradoxical, sustained by the dream of unmediated creativity that in the French imaginary ever coexists with the themes of futility, loss, and death.⁴⁸ The discourses on Carthage, imperialism, and aestheticism converge in the work of Flaubert. To demonstrate the broader conjunction between aestheticism and colonialism, I will discuss Flaubert’s theoretical pronouncements on beauty and artistic creativity (as well as those of several of his contemporaries). In the final section, I will turn to *Salammô* to illustrate how his recreation of the world of Carthage exemplifies the extremity of colonial aestheticism.

II. *The Aesthetics of Extinction*

Je suis belle, ô mortels! comme un rêve de pierre
I am beautiful, o mortals! Like a dream of stone

—Baudelaire⁴⁹

We recall that Chateaubriand presents the death of Saint-Louis in Carthage as “un sacrifice de paix offert en expiation des fureurs, des

passions et des crimes dont cette ville infortunée fut, si longtemps le théâtre” [a sacrifice of peace offered in expiation of the fury, passions, and crimes for which this unfortunate city was for so long the theater]. This “expiation” is described as a kind of sexual climax in which an implicitly carnal fury is spent, at which point a quiescent and vacant Carthage can metamorphose into France (“il est temps qu’ils [les lecteurs] rentrent avec moi dans notre commune patrie” [it is time for my readers to return with me to our common fatherland]). This moment of Carthaginian apocalypse crystallizes and completes for Chateaubriand both his “images” (his declared purpose in the Orient, we recall, is to “chercher des images” [search for images]) as well as his words (“je n’ai plus rien à dire” [I have nothing more to say]). Thus for Chateaubriand, it is upon the volatile terrain of Carthage that the aesthetic transcends the corporeal and the worldly. Even at this early date (1811), aesthetic autonomy, or the separation of beauty and use, depends on the colonial dreams of cultural transposition and annihilation.

In the preface to *Mademoiselle du Maupin* (the central pronouncement of *l’art pour l’art*), Gautier imagines Paris reduced to “un linceul de cendre et un tombeau de lave” [a casket of ashes and a tomb of lava] by a volcanic eruption in Montmartre.⁵⁰ He wryly demands “quel monument,” in excavations a thousand years thence, “. . . serait resté debout pour témoigner de la splendeur de la grande enterrée, Notre-Dame la gothique?” [what monument would remain standing as testimony to the splendor of the great burial, the gothic Notre-Dame?]. In response he declares that future antiquaries would surely think that “Paris ne fût qu’un campement de Barbares” [Paris was nothing but an encampment of barbarians], were it not for artifacts either borrowed from antiquity, like the classical or Renaissance statues in the Louvre, or stolen, like the Egyptian obelisk in the Place de la Concorde (50–51). What would more likely be unearthed, he imagines with contempt, are typical French household furniture and utensils, useful objects that double as aesthetic ones: “nos misérables meubles de bois plaqué, à tous ces pauvres coffres si nus, si laids, si mesquins que l’on appelle commodes ou secrétaires, tous ces utensiles informes et fragiles. . .” [our miserable plated wood furnishings, all the meager chests, so empty, so ugly, so mean that we call them commodes or secretaries, and all the formless and fragile utensils]. In such an event, he hopes instead for total annihilation, “que le temps en aurait assez pitié en détruire jusqu’au moindre vestige” [that time will be merciful enough and destroy even unto the last vestige] (51).

Gautier’s concept of the utilitarian is closely associated with the body: “l’endroit le plus utile d’une maison, ce sont les latrines” [the most useful place in a house is the lavatory] (45). This association is also evident in his ironic conception of poetic tropes as unsuitable

pieces of clothing: “on ne se fait pas un bonnet de coton d’une métonymie, on ne chausse pas une comparaison en guise de pantoufle; on ne se peut servir d’une antithèse pour parapluie . . . on ne saurait se plaquer sur le ventre quelques rimes bariolées en manière de gilet. . .” [One cannot make a cotton bonnet from a metonymy; one cannot wear an analogy as a slipper; one cannot use an antithesis as umbrella; . . . one cannot wear about one’s waist colorful rhymes in the manner of a vest] (43). In contrast to the world of the contemptible ordinary, his examples of beautiful, agreeably useless objects are mostly exotic or oriental, like the “vase chinois, semé de dragons et de mandarins” [the Chinese vase embellished with dragons and mandarins], the “panier de Tokay” [the basket from Tokay], or the gold ring for which he is willing to sell his “culotte” (45–46).⁵¹ Likewise, Gautier compares the critic, who must write about what he cannot produce, to a eunuch in a sumptuous harem: “. . . dans les profondeurs les plus secrètes de l’Oda; il mène les sultanes au bain; il voit luire sous l’eau d’argent des grands réservoirs ces beaux corps tout ruisselants de perles et plus polis que des agates; les beautés les plus cachées lui apparaissent sans voiles” [. . . in the most secret recesses of Oda, he leads the sultans to the baths; he sees, glistening under the silver waters of the great pools, beautiful bodies streaming with pearls and more polished than agates; the most concealed beauties appear to him unveiled] (35). The poet’s aesthetic virility is a counterpart of the Sultan’s carnal surfeit. For Gautier, the (orientalized) Beautiful is clearly a substitution for both carnality and Frenchness: “je renoncerais très joyeusement à mes droits de Français et de citoyen pour voir un tableau authentique de Raphaël, ou une belle femme nue” [I would gladly renounce my rights as a French citizen for an authentic painting of Raphael, or a beautiful female nude] (45–46).

One eminent admirer of Gautier, Baudelaire, similarly defines the aesthetic in terms of cultural renunciation. In his critical writings on the “Exposition Universelle” of 1855 (“De l’idée moderne du progrès appliquée aux beaux-arts” [On the modern idea of progress as applied to the fine arts] and “Déplacement de la vitalité” [The displacement of vitality]),⁵² he portrays the Beautiful as an incorporeal, culturally transferable essence. This transference is possible, he suggests, in certain conditions of cultural abandonment, relinquishment, and symbolic annihilation. Significantly, he offers as an example of “la beauté universelle” [the universal Beautiful] a “produit chinois, produit étrange, bizarre, contourné dans sa forme, intense par sa couleur, et quelquefois délicat jusqu’à l’évanouissement” [a Chinese object, strange, bizarre, tortuous in form, intense in color, and at times delicate to the point of evanescence]. This evanescence is double-edged: it facilitates the detachment of Chinese art from its cultural context and specificity, as well as the process by which the spectator, by the

“grâce divine de cosmopolitisme” [divine grace of cosmopolitanism], undergoes a “transformation” whereby he can “participer au milieu qui a donné naissance à cette floraison insolite” [participate among those who gave birth to this strange flowering] (211).

To attain the Beautiful (and “le beau,” Baudelaire reminds us, “est toujours bizarre” [the beautiful . . . is always bizarre] [215]), one must either be a traveler to “une contrée lointaine” [a far-away land] or a kind of solitary pioneer, “au milieu des vertigineuses prairies, sans autre compagnon que leur fusil, contemplant, disséquant, écrivant” [thinking, dissecting, and writing in the midst of virgin prairies, with no company save a gun] (211). The analogy of a frontiersman thinking, dissecting, and writing is indicative of the active, autonomous (and implicitly aggressive) role the aesthete assumes.⁵³ Baudelaire explains that following “les étonnement du débarquement” [the arrival shock] in a distant land, “un homme du monde, un intelligent” [a man of the world, of intelligence] would experience a “sympathie . . . si pénétrante” [profound sense of affinity]. And this affinity creates in him “un monde nouveau d’idées, monde qui fera partie intégrante de lui-même, et qui l’accompagnera, sous la forme de souvenirs, jusqu’à la mort” [a new world of ideas, a world that will become an integral part of himself, and that will accompany him, in the form of memories, unto death] (212). For, Baudelaire observes, “la vitalité se déplace, elle va visiter d’autres territoires et d’autres races” [vitality travels, it will visit other territories and races]. And yet “La beauté universelle” [the universal Beautiful], to which Baudelaire refers abstractly as “la vitalité” and “[des] idées,” requires the medium of French creativity: “la France, il est vrai, par sa situation centrale dans le monde civilisé, semble être appelée à recueillir toutes les notions et toutes les poésies environnantes, et à les rendre aux autres peuples merveilleusement ouvrières et façonnées” [It is true that France, by virtue of its central position in the civilized world, seems to be called upon to take in all surrounding ideas and poetry, and return them to other peoples marvelously cut and carved] (220). The imperial role of French culture and creative energy (held in the abstract form of “souvenirs” [memories]) clearly takes precedence over the physical contingencies of geography and “autres races.”

Like Chateaubriand’s last memory (the “tableau” of Saint-Louis expiring in Carthage), and like Lingay’s 1846 reference to *France en Afrique du Nord* as “un Memoire,” for Baudelaire the Beautiful lingers in exotic lands in “la forme de souvenirs” and other airy substances such as smells, perfumes, and “la vapeur d’une étuve aromatisée” [the vapor of an aromatic steamroom] (212). Revitalization is achieved through grafting the foreign onto the native: “toute cette vitalité inconnue sera ajoutée à sa vitalité propre” [all this foreign vitality will be added to his own] (213). Yet this “vitalité inconnue” is in-

extricably fluid, like smells that are new yet somehow familiar, “ces odeurs qui ne sont plus celles du boudoir maternel” [the scents that are no longer those of the mother’s boudoir] (212). Like Chateaubriand’s Carthage or Gautier’s vision of Paris in ashes, cultural “déplacement” in Baudelaire depends on a kind of symbolic renunciation or even annihilation. For each the scope of consumption is indeterminate. After having attained “la beauté universelle,” Baudelaire’s foreign traveler will finally wish “qu’il brûle ce qu’il avait adoré, et qu’il adore ce qu’il avait brûlé” [that he burns what he had adored, and he adores what he had burned] (213). “*Qu’il adore ce qu’il avait brûlé*”: it is hardly clear what survives to be admired. For one cannot expect, Baudelaire tells us, to inherit the cultural legacies of other races intact; rather, “il arrive souvent . . . que, tout étant perdu, tout est à refaire” [it often comes to pass that all is lost, all must be redone]. In keeping with the colonial tradition of lament, he leaves the status of France somewhat ambiguous: “Dieu dépouille les nations quelquefois pour un temps, quelquefois pour toujours. . . . Nous vivons dans un siècle où il faut répéter certaines banalités, dans un siècle orgueilleux qui se croit au-dessus des mésaventures de la Grèce et de Rome” [God dispossesses nations sometimes for a time, and sometimes forever. . . . We live in an age in which it is necessary to repeat certain banalities, in an arrogant age that considers itself to be above the misadventures of Greece and Rome] (221).

It is within this tradition of colonial aestheticism that we must locate Flaubert’s separation between artistic creativity and carnality, and the association of both with the Orient; his idealization of celibacy and dreams of anteriority (as Baudelaire puts it, “l’artiste ne relève que de lui-même . . . il meurt sans enfants” [the artist is concerned with nothing but himself . . . he dies childless] [219]); his visions of cultural transposition and declarations of the doom of the “Latin” race. I will not rehearse individually the numerous examples of these ideas throughout Flaubert’s writings;⁵⁴ rather, the point is how they are all interrelated, part of the long and diverse tradition of colonial aestheticism illustrated thus far. On a theoretical level, Flaubert’s aestheticism, as it is expressed intermittently throughout his correspondence, is not especially original, nor does it deviate markedly from the pronouncements of Gautier or Baudelaire. Significantly, however, Flaubert refrained from composing a formal manifesto of his theories of the aesthetic; instead, he wished to live by them. Aestheticism was clearly for him “une manière spéciale de vivre” [a special way of living]—the very phrase he uses to characterize the process of writing *Salammô*. More than any other, this project exemplifies both the nature and function of Flaubert’s aestheticism.

In the letter in which this phrase appears, Flaubert goes on to describe this “manière . . . de vivre”: “à propos d’un mot ou d’une idée,

je fais des recherches, je me livre à des divagations, j'entre dans des rêveries infinies; et puis, notre âge est si lamentable, que je me plonge avec délices dans l'antiquité. Cela me déçasse des temps modernes" [Regarding a word or idea, I conduct research, I indulge in ravings, I enter into infinite dreams; and then again, our age is so lamentable that I plunge with delight into antiquity].⁵⁵ The process he describes has two notable features: first, it is entirely conceptual and abstract, unimpeded by physical reality; it begins with language ("un mot"), and persists only in the imagination ("dans des rêveries infinies"). Second, this process is conceived in terms of colonial pathos, belatedness, cultural transposition, and annihilation. To escape "notre âge lamentable," he "abandons himself to" or "indulges in" ("[il se] livre à") certain "divagations." The sexual import of this phrase is suggested by "délices" and the double sense of "divagations," which means "wanderings" but also "ravings" (comparable to those of Chateaubriand in his New World isolation). This abandonment he achieves by a kind of three-fold act of suicide: he "buries" himself ("[il se] plonge"), defects to an already extinct Carthage, thus purging himself ("[il se] déçasse") of modernity.

Like Gautier and Baudelaire, Flaubert defines the Beautiful in terms of cultural transposition and annihilation. For him, aesthetic production and oriental travel are analogous acts of suicide. Oriental travel is the supreme expression of the futility, *ennui*, and exhaustion of which Flaubert incessantly complains in writing *Salammbô*. In despair, he exclaims to Ernest Feydeau, "si je n'avais pas ma mère, je partirais maintenant pour la Chine" [If I didn't have my mother, I would leave at once for China] (4:348); to Madame de Chantepie he expresses a wish to die in the Orient—"J'ai l'idée que je retournerai plus tard en Orient, que j'y resterai et que j'y mourrai. J'ai d'ailleurs, à Beyrouth, une maison toute prête à me recevoir" [I have the idea that I will return at a later date to the Orient, that I will stay there and that I will die there. I have elsewhere, in Beirut, a house ready to receive me] (4:242); to Louise Colet he writes of fleeing to live "en Chine ou chez les sauvages" [in China or with the savages] or of becoming a "renégat à Smyrne" [a renegade in Smyrna], after which "... l'on n'entendra plus parler de [moi]" [I will never be heard spoken of again] (1:221, 226). Thus for Flaubert annihilation and aesthetic vitality are interdependent, analogous to Chateaubriand's voyage of loss to "chercher des images" [search for images] and the discourse of French imperialism. And for each, Carthage symbolizes the unregenerate terrain of French cultural "vitalité."

Significantly, whereas Flaubert conceives of his voyage to the Orient in 1848-49 as a substitution for writing, he portrays his 1858 trip to Tunisia as a continuum of his literary enterprise. This shift indicates a change not in his perception of the Orient but in the aesthetic use

he makes of it. In the correspondence of the former, he clearly imagines the worldliness of Oriental existence—its noisy, manifold, and colorful presence as well as his energetic carnality and (literally) expanding corporeality—as the source of artistic impotence.⁵⁶ Yet according to Maxime Du Camp, who accompanied him, Flaubert's ideal mode of Oriental travel would exclude such corporeal activity; he would rather, Du Camp contends, rest immobile on a sofa and be carried from one ruin to another. In Flaubert's representation of the latter trip, he stresses the vacuity of Tunisia, the colorless hues of death (black, white, gray, red) that were to dominate *Salammbô*, his sexual abstinence and sense of isolation.⁵⁷ And to all of this he attributes his buoyant mood: for him, aesthetic creativity can only be staged upon an Orient of eternal extinction.⁵⁸

Like the importance Chateaubriand assigns to not the substance but the *gesture* of M. Violon amongst the Iroquois, or of Saint-Louis in Carthage, Flaubert portrays the writing of *Salammbô* in particular as an impossibly arduous, solitary, and heroic deed of profound inconsequence.⁵⁹ As he suggests in his reply to Sainte-Beuve, Flaubert believes that his example will not be reproduced (“mon exemple sera peu suivi” [my example will scarcely be followed]);⁶⁰ likewise, he predicts that it will lack a readership—“Car où trouver des gens qui s'intéressent à tout cela?” [For where to find people who interest themselves in all this?].⁶¹ Everywhere he insists that he writes “à me plaire” [to please myself] or only for himself: “Autant rester au coin de son feu, à faire de l'Art pour soi tout seul, comme on joue aux quilles. L'Art, au bout du compte, n'est peut-être pas plus sérieux que le jeu de quilles” [It would be as well to stay in the corner of one's fireplace, to create art for oneself alone, as one plays at skittles. Art, in the final analysis, is perhaps not any more serious than a game of skittles] (2:443; 329). Indeed it is not that art takes precedence over life—as the long-standing accusation against him goes—but that both are upheld equally as inconsequential.

At the heart of his vision of heroic futility is the aestheticist principle of the disconnectedness, the celibacy, or—to put it positively—the autonomy of both the writer and his product. And like Gautier's vision of Paris in cinders or the conflagration of the Beautiful in Baudelaire, Flaubert describes aesthetic autonomy in terms of bloodletting. So intimately does he link writing, dying, and killing that he often describes the battles of *Salammbô*, in his rare flourishes of open enthusiasm, as transpiring through his body: “le siège de Carthage . . . m'a achevé, les machines de guerre me scient le dos! Je sue du sang, je pisse de l'eau bouillante, je chie de catapultes et je rote des balles de frondeurs. . .” [the siege of Carthage has finished me, the instruments of warfare saw my back! I sweat blood, I piss boiling water, I shit catapults, and I belch bullets of rebellion] (4:449). By writing, he not only

suffers death (“*Carthage* aura ma fin” [Carthage will be my end] [4:447]), but commands it: “Je suis en plein dans une bataille d’éléphants et . . . je tue les hommes comme les mouches. Je verse le sang à flots” [I am right in the middle of a battle of elephants . . . I kill men like flies. I pour out torrents of blood] (4:333). Elsewhere Flaubert writes: “il est beau d’être un grand écrivain, de tenir les hommes dans la poêle à frire de sa phrase et de les y faire sauter comme des marrons” [it is beautiful to be a writer, to hold men in the frying pan of a phrase and make them jump like chestnuts] (2:329). And from Tunis he writes to his niece about hunting certain native birds: “rien n’est plus joli que de les voir s’envoler au soleil quand on tire un coup de fusil sur eux” [nothing is more lovely than to see them take off towards the sun when one fires a shot at them] (4:262).

The purpose of annihilation is aesthetic autonomy. For Flaubert, to separate beauty and use is to yoke the aesthetic not merely to the non-utilitarian, but to the majestically futile, and to establish an extraordinarily fertile reciprocity between vitality and loss. In this way, his aestheticism falls squarely within the French imperial discourse of denial and inconsequence. Broadly conceived, we can thus link his desire to compose *negation*—what he imagines as “un livre sur rien” [a book on nothing]—to colonial aestheticism and to the French imperial idiom. He believes that in the future art will grow more disembodied and expansive, and thus conform to his ideal: “Je crois que l’avenir de l’Art est dans ces voies. Je le vois, à mesure qu’il grandit, s’éthérisant tant qu’il peut. . .” [I think the future of Art is on the right path. I see it in terms of the degree to which it expands, it becomes ethereal in the process] (2:345). In response to one of Colet’s accusations of anti-patriotism, Flaubert defines “la patrie” in the same “ethereal,” yet here explicitly imperial terms. Note in particular the convergence of negation and expansion:

. . . est-ce qu’au fond nous ne nous sentons pas aussi bien Chinois ou Anglais que Français? N’est-ce pas à l’étranger que vont tous nos rêves? Enfants, nous désirons vivre dans les pays des perroquets et des dattes confites; nous nous élevons avec Byron ou Virgile, nous convoitons l’Orient dans nos jours de pluie, ou bien nous désirons aller faire fortune aux Indes, ou exploiter la canne à sucre en Amérique. La Patrie, c’est la terre, c’est l’Univers, ce sont les étoiles, c’est l’air, c’est la pensée elle-même, c’est-à-dire l’infini dans notre poitrine. Mais les querelles de peuple à peuple . . . m’intéressent peu et ne m’amusent que lorsque ça fait de grands tableaux avec des fonds rouges. (1:418)

[. . . is it that fundamentally we do not feel Chinese or English as easily as we do French? Yet is it not to foreign lands that our dreams go? As children, we desire to live in the lands of parrots and candied dates; we are raised with Byron and Virgil; we covet the Orient in our rainy days, or we long to make our fortune in India, or exploit sugar cane in America. The fatherland, it is the earth, the universe, it is the stars, the air, it is thought itself, which is to say the infinite in our bosom. But as to quar-

rels between one people and another . . . these interest me less and amuse me only when they form grand tableaux with red backdrops.]

Here Flaubert equates beauty with a decidedly orientalized “patrie” that, like “l’Art . . . qui grandit, s’éthérisant tant qu’il peut” [art that expands, and becomes ethereal in the process], gradually sheds its specificity and perimeters.

Flaubert’s ideal of stylistic minimalism and method of pruning excess and lyrical indulgences are intrinsic to his colonial aestheticism. Like the “grands tableaux” that evolve from war (“les querelles de peuple à peuple” [the quarrels between one people and another]), he writes of the interdependence of great style and barbarism. In another vision of future art, he imagines that in “l’avenir de la société” [the future of society], all will be regulated and uniform, and that “l’humanité ne fera plus de barbarismes dans son thème insipide; mais quel foutu style, quelle absence de tournure, de rythme et d’élan!” [humanity will generate no more barbarisms in its insipid theme; but what dreadful style, what absence of turn of phrase, rhythm, and spirit] (2:218–19). And like Chateaubriand, Gautier, and Baudelaire, for Flaubert aesthetic creativity is a process of stripping down. Like all of them, he conceives of this process in the inextricably related terms of failure, impotence, annihilation, oriental travel, and (erotic) cultural transposition:

J’arrange les barques en tartanes. Je déshabille les matelots qui passent pour en faire des sauvages marchant tout nu sur des plages vermeilles. Je pense à l’Inde, à la Chine, à mon conte oriental . . . J’éprouve le besoin d’épopées gigantesques . . . Mais la vie est si courte! Il me prend envie de me casser la gueule quand je songe que je n’écrirais comme je veux. . . . Toute cette force que l’on se sent et qui vous étouffe, il faudrait mourir avec elle et sans l’avoir fait déborder! C’est comme les envie de foutre. On soulève en idée tous les cotillons qui passent. Mais dès le cinquième coup, tout sperme manque, alors le sang vient au gland, mais la concupiscence reste au cœur.⁶²

I arrange the tartans. I undress the sailors that pass to make them savages walking totally naked on the vermilion beaches. I think of India, of China, of my oriental tale. . . . I test the need for vast epics. . . . Yet life is so short! It makes me feel like breaking my neck when I imagine not writing as I wish. . . . All this strength that one feels, and gets smothered, one will have to die with it and without having made it overflow. . . . It is like the desire to fuck. One raises in the imagination all the passing petticoats. But by the fifth time, all sperm is lacking, then blood comes to one’s prick, but desire remains in the heart.

Far from commonplace Romantic posturing (of the suffering and melancholic artist), Flaubert depicts, within an implicitly colonial context, an aesthetic ideal of extinction not as an end or predicament but as a means, a sustained process, and a “manière de vivre” [way of living].⁶³ Aesthetic creativity is here represented as an abstract yet sustained process of *imagining* extinction.

III. Raising Carthage

—L'Art, comme le Dieu des Juifs, se repait d'holocaustes
Art, like the God of the Jews, feasts on holocausts

—Flaubert⁶⁴

In *La Tentation de saint Antoine* [*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*], Flaubert believed he had realized his vision of the Beautiful and the ideal novel: an ethereality held together “par la force interne de son style” [by the inner force of its style].⁶⁵ Before his friends Maxime Du Camp and Louis Bouilhet bluntly advised him to discard his attempt, he read a passage aloud to the Goncourt brothers and, sensing their coolness, exclaimed in dismay that it was beautiful. In response to his apparent failure, he conceived of *Salammbô* as a preamble, a needed course of preparation for rewriting *Saint Antoine*. There is, however, a notable difference between the two novels: whereas the former is predominately description, the latter represents, in dramatic form, “l’an-goisie” [the anguish], hallucinations, and temptations of Saint Anthony in fourth-century Alexandria.⁶⁶ Unlike Flaubert’s teeming Carthage, all representations of violence, carnality, and “bric-a-brac” in *Saint Antoine* take the form of hallucinations. The “actual” setting is the even vacuity of the desert, which lacks, aside from a few references to the Nile, geographic specificity. Otherwise, there is hardly a sense of physicality: only Saint Anthony standing in the desert exchanging words and monologues with the spirits that loom before him.

Yet these differences concern method: both novels are imaginative meditations on colonial aesthetics, on the abiding rift between beauty and use, the aesthetic and the worldly. Despite Flaubert’s desire to compose “un livre sur rien” [a book on nothing], to create an “ethereal” aesthetic, to portray “[un] souvenir de rien du tout” [a memory of nothing at all] (1:254), in his novels he explores the rift between the corporeal and the spiritual as a problematic. In *Salammbô* in particular, the assiduous aestheticization of the torture of Mâtho underscores the dependence of the aesthetic on annihilation, and the failure inherent in this dependence. In its negation of the corporeal, the aesthetic necessarily participates in and is shaped by what Flaubert calls “holocausts.” As such, great art can only be the embodiment of monumental failure. (Flaubert would surely have regarded as praise Henry James’s judgment that *Salammbô* is a “ponderous failure.”)⁶⁷ Flaubert seeks to represent, in the horrific image of Mâtho entirely skinned, at once the *negative* dependence of the Beautiful on the corporeal, and the *impossibility* of this dependence. For one can never break through to the other side: no matter how many layers are peeled away, as it were, the “ethereal,” autonomous Beautiful can never be reached.

In a letter to Chantepie, written while composing *Salammbô*, Flaubert muses on the ambiguities of the spiritual and the corporeal:

Je suis convaincu que les appétits matériels les plus furieux se forment *insciemment* par des élans d'idéalisme, de même que les extravagances charnelles les plus immondes sont engendrées par le désir pur de l'impossible, l'aspiration éthérée de la souveraine joie. Et d'ailleurs je ne sais (et personne ne sait) ce que veulent dire ces deux mots: âme et corps, où l'une finit, où l'autre commence. (4:313-314)⁶⁸

I am convinced that the most violent primal appetites unwittingly express themselves through flights of idealism, in the same way that the vilest carnal extravagances are generated by a pure desire for the unattainable, the ethereal aspiration of sovereign joy. And beyond this I do not know (no one knows) what is meant by the two words: soul and body, where one ends and the other begins.

For Flaubert, the dependence of the ideal or spiritual on the abject physical is not merely inescapable, but inescapably unworkable. He stresses in particular the futility of the desire for the Beautiful, which is here "l'aspiration éthérée de la souveraine joie" [the ethereal aspiration of sovereign joy]. Towards the end of his letter, he expresses hope that current scientific research might yield a greater understanding of "le matérialisme et le spiritualisme": "Ce sera l'unique gloire du XIX^e siècle que d'avoir commencé ces études. Le *sens historique* est tout nouveau dans ce monde. On va se mettre à étudier les idées comme des faits, et à disséquer les croyances comme des organismes [*sic*]" [It will be the one glory of the nineteenth century to have started these studies. Historical sense is totally new in this age. Ideas will begin to be studied like facts, and beliefs will be dissected like organisms] (4:314). Yet his hope in the possibilities of "l'anatomie du cœur humain" [the anatomy of the human heart] concerns not science but aesthetic possibility. He creates in *Salammbô*—presumably on the cutting edge of nineteenth-century thought—literalized representations of the "anatomized" Beautiful upon a colonial stage of failure and futility.

The final ritual killing of Mâtho is an unmistakable representation of how "l'aspiration éthérée de la souveraine joie" [the ethereal aspiration of sovereign joy] is expressed through "les extravagances charnelles les plus immondes" [the most vile carnal extravagances]. On the day of *Salammbô* and Narr'Havas' wedding ceremony—the highlight of which is the killing of Mâtho—"Carthage était en joie—une joie profonde, universelle, démesurée, frénétique. . ." [Carthage was full of joy—profound, universal, boundless, and frenzied joy].⁶⁹

Like Gautier's image of Paris in ashes and like the conflagration, in Baudelaire, of cultural legacies both borrowed and native, the process of killing radically exceeds the confines of Mâtho's body. To begin with, he is killed in the imagination many times before the actual event. Although he is not expected to appear until the end of the day, the Carthaginians repeatedly imagine that they see him beforehand. In seeming anticipation of ultimate annihilation, the inhabitants, some

“pâles comme s’ils avaient attendu leur propre exécution” [pale as if they had been waiting their own execution], would empty the streets in pursuit of Mâtho (305). We are offered a list of the extravagant methods of torture not chosen, as if what transpires is not enough: “on avait proposé d’abord de l’écorcher vif, de lui couler du plomb dans les entrailles, de le faire mourir de faim; on l’attacherait contre un arbre, et un singe, derrière lui, le frapperait sur la tête avec une pierre” [it had first been proposed to flay him alive, to pour lead in his entrails, to starve him to death, or to tie him to a tree, and a monkey, behind him, would hit him on the head with a stone], and so on (304).

These methods were not chosen, however, because they are exclusionary. When Flaubert writes that the Carthaginians instead chose “un genre de mort où la ville entière participât” [a kind of death in which the entire city could partake], he means it literally: “Toutes les mains, toutes les armes, toutes les choses carthaginoises, et jusqu’aux dalles des rues et aux flots du golfe pussent le déchirer, l’écraser, l’anéantir” [All hands, all weapons, all things Carthaginian, from the paving stones of the streets to the waves of the gulf, can tear, trample and annihilate him] (305). This mass participation of animate and inanimate Carthage (the two are consistently portrayed as inextricable) is literally consumptive. This is foreshadowed by the slaves’ first meal of the day: they give a toast in Mâtho’s name and consume “des morceaux de viande crue” [pieces of raw meat]—what he later becomes—in a kind of cannibal ritual that foreshadows how his body will meld with their own (304). When, upon Mâtho’s death, one of the priests of Moloch cuts out his heart and offers it to the sun (on a spoon), the sun’s “rayons arrivaient comme de longues flèches sur le cœur tout rouge. L’astre s’enfonçait dans la mer à mesure que les battements diminuaient; à la dernière palpitation, il disparut” [rays reached like long arrows into a deep red heart. The star sunk into the sea in rhythm with the diminishing beats; at the final palpitation, it disappeared] (311). Thus the sun itself kills and is killed. The sexual analogy is hard to miss (the penetration of the “longues flèches” [long arrows], the gradual lessening of “palpitation[s]”). Indeed, the levels of consumption and annihilation are seemingly endless. And this is not mere figurative speech: Flaubert is insistent on the fluidity (as it were) of this event.

The final scene of *Salammbô* is less a depiction of the vengeful torture and killing of Mâtho than a vision of total annihilation. It is an act that exceeds the bounds of human volition, and in which the cosmic order itself participates. Indeed, Mâtho’s journey, from the prison to the square of Khamon where he encounters Salammbô, is presented as a parable of creation and apocalypse. His emergence from “ce trou noir” [this black hole] of “la porte du cachot” [the dungeon door] resembles a monstrous birth: he is entirely naked, dazed by the

light, “courbé en deux, avec l’air effaré des bêtes fauves quand on les rend libres tout à coup” [doubled over, with the startled look of wild beasts when they are suddenly let loose]. And this messiah of death excites both fury and lament: the Carthaginians are overtaken with an ambivalent “désir de le connaître complètement, envie mêlée de remords. . .” [desire to know him completely, a desire mixed with remorse]. This ambivalence centers on Mâtho’s body: “le corps de cette victime était pour eux une chose . . . presque religieuse” [the body of this victim was for them something . . . almost religious] (308).

The final apocalypse is preceded, paradoxically, by increased corporeality, a downward pull that affects the whole of Carthage. Mâtho is chained, like “des Dieux-Patæques” [the Pataeci gods], who have “un triple rand de chaînes en bronze, fixées au nombril” [a triple row of bronze chains fixed to their navels] (308). The motifs of petrification and monumentality that dominate throughout the novel here intensify. Everything and everyone is overloaded with ornament, like the “trois longues tables” [three long tables] in the temple of Khamon that are weighed down by “de gigantesques orfèvreries” [gigantic silver plates]; Salammbô rests her “anneaux trop lourds” [too heavy rings] on the heads of “deux enfants nègres” [two negro children] who kneel at her feet (304, 306). Like the countless battles that transpire in what seems like slow motion throughout the narrative, the procession is marked by immobility: “l’architecture se peuplait de statues humaines—immobiles comme des statues de pierre” [the architecture was peopled with human statues—motionless, like those of stone] (306). And yet corporeal density in *Salammbô*, particularly in its most weighty, suffocating form, intimates evanescence.

We are prepared for the final, effortless consumption of this dense, corporeal Carthage by Flaubert’s descriptions throughout the novel. These descriptions resist visualization. This is not due to undifferentiated detail, as many critics have suggested, but because the detail that Flaubert amasses before us is, paradoxically, *opaquely* translucent.⁷⁰ Indeed, this carefully constructed quality might explain his vehement resistance to including pictorial illustrations in the novel’s printed form. What is most remarkable about the intricate descriptions of architecture, bodies, clothing, or the panoramas of Carthage, is how they suggest evanescence—a murky hallucinatory world much like that of Saint Anthony’s imagination. One example is the scene of Hamilcar’s return when, following a defeat in Sicily and facing an ascendant Mercenary revolt, he retreats to the gods in a womb-like temple, “une petite chambre ovale” [a small oval chamber] at the top of his house (106). The more his gaze narrows and sharpens to the ornate detail of the interior temple, the more he beholds the mysterious, dark infinitudes of the planetary universe.

Like the birth analogy of Mâtho at the mouth of the dungeon, Flaubert sustains a world on the threshold of incipience and doom. Hamilcar's coiled, fetal position in the temple interior is replicated thricefold. Each of these "embryos" is at once opaque and translucent:

De minces rondelles noires encastrées dans la muraille et transparentes comme du verre, l'éclairaient doucement. Entre les rangs de ces disques égaux, des trous étaient creusés pareils à ceux des urnes dans les columbariums. Il contenait chacun une pierre ronde, obscure, et qui paraissait très lourde. . . . Du sable marin . . . blanchissait un peu les pierres rondes posées dans les niches. (126)

The thin black disks embedded in the wall and transparent like glass, lit it up softly. Between the rows of these even disks, niches were dug out like urns in a columbarium. Each niche contained a round, obscure stone that appeared to be very heavy. . . . Sea sand . . . partly whitened the round stones put in the niches.

The discs encrusted in the wall are both black and "transparentes comme du verre" [transparent like glass]; between them, the obscure round stones in each niche have been partly blanched by sand; and the sun is set in a negative hemisphere, "les mornes espaces des créations futures" [the mournful spaces of future creations]. Like Plato's shadows, material objects are distorted and vague, perceived through reflections of reflections: "le jour extérieur frappait contre les feuilles de laitier noir. Des arborescences, des monticules, des tourbillons, de vagues animaux se dessinaient dans leur épaisseur diaphane" [the daylight from outside hit against the leaves of the black lattice. The arborescences, hillocks, eddies, obscure animals were sketched in their diaphanous thickness] (126–27, emphasis added). And like his intimations of "les mornes espaces des créations futures" [the mournful spaces of future creations], when he climbs the tower to behold Carthage, it hollows out as it fills in before him: "la ville descendait en se creusant par une courbe longue . . ." [the city descended in a long hollow curve]. On this precipice, Hamilcar cries: "Ah! si Hannon n'était pas arrivé trop tard le matin des îles Ægates? Ses yeux plongèrent dans l'extrême horizon, et il tendit du côté de Rome ses deux bras frémissants" [Ah! If only Hanno did not arrive too late this morning at the Aegates Isles! His eyes lowered to the extremity of the horizon, and towards Rome, he stretched forth his two trembling arms] (127).

This expression of colonial pathos—of Hamilcar mourning his defeated plan to erect "une autre Carthage" [an other Carthage] in Sicily and his prescience of future defeat by Rome—takes place simultaneously in the context of the "oriental" ornamental and in a negative, abstract realm (126). Likewise, the vision of doom at the end of the novel is saturated with such pathos. For what is extraordinary about Flaubert's final narrative of apocalypse, of all-pervasive, unspeakably

repellent brutality, is that it is a story of unrequited passion. Its apogee occurs at the moment in which Mâtho finally encounters Salammbô, after having run (in perhaps the only instance of pure kinetic movement in the final chapter) across “la rue de Boudès, la rue de Soëpo, traversa le Marché-aux-Herbes et arriva sur la place de Khamon” [Boudes street, Soëpo street, across the herb market and reached the square of Khamon]. This encounter precisely coincides with cosmic annihilation when, for the first time, the dense materiality of Carthage vanishes. For Salammbô, “. . . toutes les choses extérieures s’effaçant, elle n’avait aperçu que Mâtho. Un silence s’était fait dans son âme—un de ces abîmes où le monde entier disparaît” [all exterior things vanished, and she saw nothing but Matho. A silence settled in her soul—one such abyss in which the entire world disappeared]. And the world vanishes “. . . sous la pression d’une pensée unique, d’un souvenir, d’un regard” [under the pressure of a single thought, a memory, a look]. Likewise, Mâtho loses his “appearance humaine” [human appearance], as well as his corporeality: he is reduced to “. . . une longue forme complètement rouge . . . tout[e] dénudé[e] . . . [et] de ses orbites sortaient deux flammes. . .” [a long form entirely red . . . completely skinned, . . . with two flames emanating from his eye sockets]. Remarkably, “cet homme, qui marchait vers elle, l’attirait” [this man, who walked towards her, attracted her]. And it is during this process of annihilation, the negation of space and time, that she longs for him, and suddenly becomes aware of “tout ce qu’il avait souffert pour elle. Bien qu’il agonisât, elle le revoyait dans sa tente, à genoux, lui entourant la taille de ses bras, balbutiant des paroles douces; elle avait soif de les sentir encore, de les entendre; elle ne voulait pas qu’il mourût!” [all that he had suffered for her. Even as he was dying, she saw him again in her tent, on his knees, his arms around her waist, muttering soft words; she was thirsty to feel them again, to hear them; she did not want him to die!] (310).

At the moment of Mâtho’s death tremor, when she is about to cry out, the world of Carthage reemerges. As in the tradition of colonial pathos, her cry is displaced, blown up to gush forth as a ubiquitous, cosmic “cri” [cry] of annihilation and “joie titanique” [titanic joy]: “le golfe jusqu’à la lagune et de l’isthme jusqu’au phare, dans toutes les rues, sur toutes les maisons et sur tous les temples, ce fut un seul cri . . . les édifices tremblaient; Carthage était comme convulsée dans le spasme d’une joie titanique et d’un espoir sans bornes” [from the gulf to the lagoon and the isthmus to the lighthouse, in all the streets, on all the houses and temple pinnacles, came a single cry . . . the buildings trembled; Carthage was convulsed as if in a spasm of titanic joy and measureless hope]. The convergence of joy and death, the sexual images of trembling, convulsions, and spasms, take one last turn before the close of the novel. At the moment when Narr’Havas grabs

Salammbô's waist "en signe de possession" [in a sign of possession], takes up a golden cup and drinks—in the midst of this universal, exhilarating annihilation—"au génie de Carthage" [to the genius of Carthage], Salammbô dies, already dead—"blême, raidie, les lèvres ouvertes" [pale, stiff, her lips parted] (311). This final image recalls Mâtho's mouth that "restait grande ouverte" [remained wide open]—in harmony, it would seem, with his state of physical annihilation (310). The gaping mouths suggest both an abyss and unappeased desire—the predicament of incorporeality.

Flaubert's Carthage, like that of French imperialism, symbolizes the negative, unregenerate realm in which the French cultural "génie" persists. Perhaps the starkest expression of the colonial aesthetic is the entirely flayed Mâtho who *still* walks ("le misérable marchait toujours!" [the wretch was still walking!]). Indeed, he darkly personifies the link between annihilation and cultural vitality. Yet by representing annihilation as a sustained *process*, Flaubert stages the impossibility of the autonomy of the Beautiful. The persistent sexual analogies, and the final image of the gaping mouths (of Mâtho and Salammbô), suggest an unrequitable desire for the corporeal. Salammbô's transgression is presumably that she touches Tanit's mantle. The final line of the novel reads: "Ainsi mourut la fille d'Hamilcar pour avoir touché au manteau de Tanit" [and so died the daughter of Hamilcar, for having touched the mantle of Tanit] (311). And yet her dream of "touching" (Mâtho or Tanit) is never realized: the ethereal mantle stands as a metonymy of the deity; as such, it is doubly intangible.

The failure either to attain or to be stripped of the corporeal (as it were) is central to Flaubert's conception of his aesthetic project. Through the colonial symbol of Carthage, he represents the inability to create "un livre sur rien" [a book on nothing], to achieve absolute aesthetic autonomy, and to own the power of words that would refer to no world. Thus, in *Salammbô*, Flaubert thematizes his fundamental distrust in language: paradoxically, aesthetic creativity derives from the failure of language. As in the discourses of Carthage and French imperialism, cultural vitality—for Flaubert, the possibilities of language itself—hinges on failure and loss.

Notes

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- 1 François-René de Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1968), 398. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.
- 2 Jean Baptiste Rochambeau (1725–1807) was a French marshal sent to aid General Washington in the American Revolution. He joined forces with Washington and defeated Cornwallis in the Yorktown Campaign, which ended the war.

- 3 In this version, Chateaubriand claims to narrate the story of his first sight, not of a Frenchman among “les sauvages,” but of “les sauvages” themselves. The circumstance of this meeting Chateaubriand describes as a moment of New World isolation frenzy. After noting that “ici plus de chemins, plus de villes, plus de monarchie, plus de république, plus de présidents, plus de rois, plus d’hommes” [here there are no roads, no cities, no monarchies, no republics, no presidents, no kings, no men], he indulges in “des actes de volonté qui faisaient enrager [son] guide, lequel, dans son âme, [se] croyait fou” [willful acts that enraged his guide, who secretly believed him to be mad]. Thus Chateaubriand’s “introduction à la vie sauvage” [introduction to savage life] interrupts his experience of immersion in what he believes to be the conditions of natural man (*Mémoires d’outre-tombe*, ed. Pierre Moreau [Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères, 1948], 2:290–91; subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text). In the *Itinéraire* version, the Frenchman and “les sauvages” are not set in opposition to one another but are presented in an ambiguous continuum.
- 4 In *Mémoires*, Chateaubriand catalogues his practical failures to restore French imperial glory, from his aborted plan to discover the North–West passage and secure a new French possession in North America, to his attempt to help restore the fugitive Louis XVI to the throne. He offers his literary oeuvre as a counterpart to the imperial and missionary enterprises: upon having to abandon his North American projects, he explains that “un mauvais génie m’arracha le bâton et l’épée, et me mit la plume à la main” [a bad spirit snatched away my staff and sword, and placed a pen in my hand] (2:326). Indeed, he has an extraordinarily keen imperial consciousness. References to the successes of the British empire, the ascendancy of America, the loss of French possessions in the New World, persist throughout his writings. He persistently imagines writing from a position of (inspiring) defeat. In the preface, he asserts, “j’ai toujours supposé que j’écrivais assis dans mon cercueil” [I always imagined that I wrote seated in my coffin]. Like Flaubert’s anti-life pose, Chateaubriand writes that “la vie me sied mal” [life suits me poorly] and fancies he speaks with “cette voix lointaine que sort de la tombe” [that faraway voice that emanates from the grave] (2:5).
- 5 *Itinéraire*, 398.
- 6 See Edward Said, who observes that for French writers such as Chateaubriand and Nerval, the Orient is a land of loss, ruins, and memory. However, he does not view this realm as such as the source of aesthetic vitality. When Said writes, for example, that for Flaubert the Orient is a “roomy place full of aesthetic possibility,” Said refers to an Orient that is “eminently corporeal” and detailed; he also contends that Flaubert’s aesthetic task is to “bring [the Orient] to life” (*Orientalism* [1978; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1979], 169–88). In what follows, I show how Chateaubriand and Flaubert, rather than envisioning a “restorative” role in the Orient (as Said suggests [171, 185]), paradoxically ground aesthetic vitality within an Orient of ruin and extinction.
- 7 See Said, *Orientalism (passim)* and Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (1950; reprint, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
- 8 Gustave Flaubert, *Œuvres complètes de Gustave Flaubert: Correspondance*, 9 vols. (Paris: Louis Conard, 1926).
- 9 *Itinéraire*, 398.
- 10 C.-H. Roger Dessort, *Histoire de la ville de Tunis* (Alger, 1926), 11.
- 11 For example, Anne Green explains the relevance of Carthage by drawing parallels with France on the eve of the 1848 revolution, and by also linking Carthaginian and French “decadence” (*Flaubert and the Historical Novel: Salammbô Reassessed* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], chap. 4); Richard Berrong contends that Flaubert stages in Carthage the creation of a new language (“Salammbô: A Myth of the Origins of Language,” *Modern Language Studies* 15:4 [1985]: 261–69); and Eugenio Donato argues that Flaubert uses antiquity to demonstrate the impossibility of unmediated representation (“Flaubert and the Question of History,” in *Critical Essays on Gustave Flaubert*, ed. Lawrence Porter [Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986], 90–91 and *passim*). Lisa Lowe maintains that Carthage represents the Orient (“The Orient as Woman in Flaubert’s *Salammbô* and *Voyage en Orient*,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 23:1 [1986]: 46) and elsewhere that Carthage represents France (“Nationalism and Exoticism: Nineteenth-Century Others in Flaubert’s

- Salammbo and *L'Éducation sentimentale*," in *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism*, ed. Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991], 224). Lowe argues that the brutality in the novel serves to displace onto ancient North Africa the violence against the rioting masses in 1848 as well as the colonial violence perpetrated by the French in the region. Yet as I will illustrate in what follows, the status of Carthage is ambiguous, not completely Oriental or Western. The relevance of the colonial context is more complex than a simple matter of displacement; it relates to Flaubert's aestheticism, and the broader aesthetics of extinction in the French imperial tradition.
- 12 *Œuvres complètes de Gustave Flaubert: Correspondance*, 4:208.
 - 13 *Ibid.*, 4:240-41.
 - 14 Gustave Flaubert, *Œuvres complètes de Gustave Flaubert*, 16 vols. (Paris: Club de l'Honnête homme, 1971-75), 2:449. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, 2:449
 - 16 Chateaubriand writes: "avant de parler de Carthage, qui est ici le seul objet intéressant, il faut commencer par nous débarrasser de Tunis" [before speaking about Carthage, which is the only object of interest, we must begin by ridding ourselves of Tunis] (*Itinéraire*, 400). Alexandre Dumas writes of Carthage, "ce n'est pas la sterilité, c'est le despotisme qui rend la terre inféconde" [it is not sterility, but despotism that makes the earth infertile] (*Le Vélocé: ou Tanger, Alger et Tunis*, 2 vols. [Paris: Alexandre Cadot, 1848], 78). Carthage is perpetually severed from Tunisia. The French explorer H. Duveyrier remarks in his 1881 account of Tunis, "Nulle part on ne retrouve de descendants directs ni des Carthaginois ni de Romains. . ." [Nowhere can there be found direct descendants of either the Carthaginians or the Romans. . .] (*La Tunisie* [Paris: Hachette, 1881], 16). More recently, a historian queries, "What is the importance to modern Tunisia of a settlement so ancient. . .?" (Wilfrid Knapp, *Tunisia* [New York: Walker, 1970], 19). In his revisionist history, Abdallah Laouri argues that the tradition of portraying Tunis as a blank, a transitional region, a "no idea-producing area," makes it quite impossible to start his book with a topographical description (*The History of the Maghreb: An Interpretive Essay*, trans. Ralph Manheim [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977], 23; 7).
 - 17 *Correspondance*, 4:256; 246. This volatility continues after his arrival in Tunisia. In his *Notes de voyage*, Flaubert describes it as washed-out and vague; he notes a persistent fogginess around Carthage, and the surrounding mountains are invisible (Gustave Flaubert, *Œuvres complètes: Notes de voyages* [Paris: Louis Conard, Libraire-Éditeur, 1902], 2:319, 330). The landscape is in darkness, and the predominant colors suggest death and hell: black, white, gray, and red. Upon his return, he exclaims: "Mon voyage est considérablement reculé, oublié; tout est confus dans ma tête. . ." [My trip is considerably distant, forgotten; it is all confused in my head] (347).
 - 18 *Correspondance*, 4:266.
 - 19 *Œuvres complètes* (Club de l'Honnête homme), 2:437.
 - 20 Also starting with Sainte-Beuve, critics have pointed out these inanimate qualities (*ibid.*, 13:419). Most notably, Victor Brombert elaborates on this basic observation (*The Novels of Flaubert: A Study of Themes and Techniques* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966], chap. 3). This petrification, however, has not been connected to Flaubert's aestheticism and the broader cultural meanings of Carthage.
 - 21 Whereas, to my knowledge, Carthage is not cited in the Arab-Islamic world as a fateful "example," the greatness of the Phoenician empire has occasionally been claimed in the context of nationalism. For example, the founder and head of the Syrian Nationalist Party (until his death in 1949), Antun Sa`adah, argues that the Phoenicians must be identified as ancient Syrians by virtue of occupying the same soil. By stressing Carthage as the first empire built on trade, he offers an implicit comparison with the European method of conquest. See *Nushu' al-Umam [The Rise of Nations]* (Damascus, 1951), 179-83. (I thank Wasif Abboushi for this reference.)

There is a growing awareness of the colonial dimension of Carthage and its significance in the West. The prime example is Laouri's superb, wide-ranging analysis of the nature, scope, and implications of western historical and archeological studies of the Maghreb

- (North Africa). He argues that the history of North Africa after the fall of Carthage is written as “an integral part of the long death agony of the Roman republic” (30). He urges that ancient Carthage is ignored by Arab historians at great peril, because it is within “the study of this area of the Maghribi past that all the distortions originate,” and where all the most reliable techniques of historical investigation are forged: archeology, linguistics, and anthropology (22). Other recent Maghribi studies of the legacy of Phoenician culture in Africa include the contributions of the Tunisian historians and archeologists in *Carthage: A Mosaic of Ancient Tunisia*, ed. Aïcha Ben Ben Khader and Abed and David Soren (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1987).
- 22 Notwithstanding the enduring fame of the Roman decree, the history of Carthage occupies a relatively small place in classical antiquity, and the lack of material remains does not entirely account for this disregard. The total destruction of Carthage by Rome, perceived as a (possibly contagious) malediction, is one reason for this slight—and indeed for the incomplete appropriation of Carthage into Western traditions. Certainly geography is no hindrance, given the wholesale containment within Western culture of Ptolomaic Alexandria, Pharaonic Egypt, and even ancient Greece. Indeed, ancient civilizations are commonly accorded fluid geographies, severed from subsequent and intersecting civilizations of the same region. One consequence of this geographic “fluidity” is, paradoxically, the ease with which ancient civilizations are then relocated and firmly fixed as foundations of specific and often far-flung civilizations. This is not to say that ancient civilizations must be ascribed to their geographic heirs, nor to question the tenuous nature—given centuries of migrations, the complex processes of cultural transference, and so on—of links forged between ancient civilizations and modern nations.
 - 23 An illustration of this ambiguity is the case of the Lebanese Phalangists, whose claims to a Phoenician ancestry are meant to disconnect them from Arab-Islamic culture and link them to the European. In a variety of ways, their bizarre mythology was abetted by the history of Capitulations that dates back to the seventeenth century, through which the French protected Catholic communities (and particularly the Lebanese Maronites).
 - 24 Serge Lancel, *Carthage* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1992), 458; chap. 8.
 - 25 For example, Ptolomaic Alexandria, Pharaonic Egypt, and ancient Greece are consigned to an exclusively Western genealogy. Arguably, the Mediterranean culture of ancient Greece has more in common with that of the Near East than with Western Europe (and in terms of geography it could go either way). Indeed, the Greek tradition that became available to Medieval Europe through the Islamic world (and which shaped and was shaped by it for four centuries and beyond), was logically and incontestably hybrid. It was Arabic-Islamic-Greek (the Greek is actually the weakest element—after four centuries, it is inevitably diluted). The accepted genealogy of Western Civilization, typically traced through Greece and Rome, Europe and then America, is untenable.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, 455–57.
 - 27 The most recent manifestation of the doctrine of arrested development as it is applied to ancient Carthage would have to be the 1987 exhibition “Carthage: A Mosaic of Ancient Tunisia.” It was housed not in (say) the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but in the American Museum of Natural History, along with the other “prehistorics” and exotica—the marvels of animal and ocean life, dinosaurs, Native American and African cultural artifacts. The exhibition was a joint effort of an American team and the Tunisian government and national museums. The ambivalence of the Carthaginian heritage is evident in the layout: the catalog is divided into two parts. The first is titled “An American Overview” (which implies a scholarly and official rendering), including a penultimate section, titled “Carthaginian Twilight,” which narrates the breakdown of the Roman empire through to the period of Arab rule. The second part is titled “A Tunisian Perspective” (which implies parochial bias), and includes a section covering primarily the Arab-Islamic period, titled “Tunisia after Classical Antiquity: A Personal View”!
 - 28 B. H. Warmington, *Carthage* (London: Robert Hale, 1960), 240.
 - 29 For example, Stéphane Gsell, Charles André-Julien, Gilbert Charles Picard, Pierre Cintas, and Serge Lancel.
 - 30 Carthage of the French imagination is exteriorized in its present-day geography: the port into which Hamilcar allegedly navigated his ship is now named “Salammbô.” Whereas the

- French imaginative renditions focus on Carthage as the site of destruction and loss, other renditions focus on the story (of unrequited love) of princess Elissa or Queen Dido (by Virgil, Chaucer, Marlowe, as well as the music of Berlioz and Purcell [Ben Khader, 16])
- 31 “Carthage,” in *La Grande encyclopédie*, 9 vols. (Paris: H. Lamirault, 1886). Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.
- 32 *Itinéraire*, 436.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 437. Chateaubriand is likely referring to the ostensible cause of Saint-Louis’ death by plague. The cause of his death is, however, disputed. In an 1842 Arab account of Saint-Louis’ invasion of Tunisia, the author recounts the battles with the French forces. He notes that whereas some conjecture that he was poisoned by Soliman al-Delezi, others believed he died of plague, and others that he was shot by an arrow (*L’Artiste*, vol. 2, series 3 [Paris: Aux Bureaux d’artiste, 1842–44], 69).
- There is a long tradition of attributing crimes in the colonial context to the hot climate or glare of the “African” sun. The most obvious example is Meursault in *L’Étranger*, who explains that he shot the Arab in reaction to the heat and glare of the sun (158). In Chateaubriand, the nature of this displacement is belied by the introduction of human agents behind the natural forces of the *khamasin*.
- 34 In a contemporary account of the inauguration of the Saint-Louis chapel, for example, the author relates: “Un fait bien remarquable, et que l’on n’avait jamais vu dans la régence à pareille époque, c’est une pluie abondante qui survint tout à coup pendant les cérémonies de l’inauguration: les indigènes, qui attendaient avec impatience depuis près de dix mois cette pluie, source de richesses et de fertilité, ne manquèrent pas de l’attribuer à l’intercession de saint Louis” [A remarkable occurrence that had never been seen in the regency at a similar time is that abundant rain suddenly poured down during the inaugural ceremony. The natives, who had been patiently waiting for this rain, source of wealth and fecundity, for nearly ten months, did not miss attributing it to the agency of Saint Louis] (70). The rain is simultaneously tears from heaven mourning Saint-Louis’ death and a divine miracle (attributed to Saint-Louis) that will bring fertility. One could add to the tradition of French colonial pathos a great number of works, from Nerval’s *Voyage en Orient* to Saint-Exupéry’s *Le Petit prince* and André Gide’s *L’Immoraliste*.
- 35 *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, in *Flaubert: Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1964), 306.
- 36 He writes to Ernest Feydeau: “Peu de gens devineront combien il a fallu être triste pour entreprendre de resusciter Carthage!” [Few people will surmise how sad one had to be to undertake the resuscitation of Carthage] (*Correspondance*, 4:348). He also writes to Baude-laire of “une angoisse terrible et vague, comme lorsqu’un s’embarque pour un long voyage. . .” [a terrible and vague anguish, like when one embarks on a long voyage] (207). And yet this is not a simple expression of Romantic melancholia, but an aesthetic tool, and is therefore held in check. The nature and function of Flaubert’s pathos is suggested in a supplication he composes at the end of the account of his voyage to Carthage: “A moi, puissances de l’émotion plastique! résurrection du passé, à moi, à moi! Il faut faire, à travers le Beau, vivant et vrai quand même. Pitié pour ma volonté, Dieu des âmes! donne-moi la Force—et l’Espoir! . . .” [Save me from the power of plastic emotion! From the resurrection of the past! It must be done, nonetheless, through the living and true Beautiful. Pity for my willpower, God of souls! Give me the power—and hope!] (*Notes de voyages*, 2:347).
- 37 Stéphane Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l’Afrique du Nord* (Osnabrück, West Germany: Otto Zeller Verlag, 1972).
- 38 Gilbert Picard and Colette Charles, *La Vie quotidienne à Carthage au temps d’Hannibal* (Paris: Hachette, 1958), 263–66.
- 39 Abd al-Qader (1807–1883) is the most celebrated military leader in Algerian history. From 1837 to 1847, he fought the French invaders led by the infamous French general T. R. Bugeaud. Abdel-Qader held much of Northern Algeria until he was driven to Morocco, where he gained the Sultan’s support. Yet after the Moroccan defeat in 1844, the Sultan turned out Abd al-Qader, who was forced to surrender in 1847. Despite prior agreement that would secure his exile, he was imprisoned in France until 1852.
- 40 In fact, Bugeaud characterizes the French enterprise to date as a total failure. His assessment is that the eight years of war in Algeria have been entirely ineffectual, steeped in human and financial loss (Le CTE H. D’Ideville, *Maréchal Bugeaud: D’Après sa correspondance intime et des*

documents inédits, 1784–1849 [Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1882], 2:131). Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text. Within the tradition of colonial pathos, he pleads before the 8 June 1838 session of Parliament: “vous n’avez pas encore, sur la côte, un établissement, des magasins, des hôpitaux en quantité suffisante, et voilà pourquoi nos soldats ont beaucoup souffert!” [You still don’t have, on the coast, a settlement, stores, hospitals of a sufficient quantity, and this is why our soldiers suffered so!] (2:127). Most intriguingly, after relating a catalog of failures, he exclaims that he cannot compare himself to the Roman general who defeated Hannibal in 202 B.C.: “je n’ai pas le droit de dire comme Scipion: ‘Allons rendre grâces aux dieux de la victoire de Zama!’” [I do not have the right to say like Scipio: Let us give our thanks to God for the victory of Zama!] (2:131). In terms of future battle, he wishes to delete the words “après la victoire” [after the victory] from the Tafna treaty. He explains that he does not doubt “de la victoire avec des soldats français” [victory for the French soldiers], only that the concept of “victory” must be refigured to accommodate the mode of guerrilla warfare that he wishes to adopt (2:134).

- 41 One could here offer as reference almost any study of French nineteenth-century colonialism. The meager output on the subject is often noted but inadequately accounted for. For example, Raymond Betts attributes this deficiency to the relative (compared to the British) absence of retrospective curiosity about empire among the French, but then justifies this lack by arguing that empire was marginal and left no enduring effect on French society. He argues against an economic basis for French imperialism (and seeks to disprove the Marxist-Leninist paradigm of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism) (*Tricouleur: The French Overseas Empire* [London: Gordon and Cremonesi, 1978]). Jacques Berque argues that it is a French tendency to place blame for the failures of colonialism on marginal groups and local French administrators (*Le Maghreb entre les deux guerres* [Paris: Seuil, 1962], 451; subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text). The theme of French indifference to expansionism is perhaps the most ubiquitous. Raoul Girardet, for example, argues that a colonial consciousness did not exist until the 1870s (*L’Idée coloniale en France de 1871–1962* [Paris: La Table Rond, 1972], 3). He pushes this date up to between 1938–47 (298), and argues that there was no “France coloniale”; rather, French colonialism was created by a small pressure group. He also attributes the tenacity with which France held on to its colonial possessions to the late bloom of colonial consciousness, which in his account coincides with the rise of decolonization in mid-century. Many studies note the vanishing act of empire in French society. For example, colonialism, or “la face cachée” of French history, is presented as both the basic impetus and problematic of an important recent revisionist study (Jean Meyer et al., *Histoire de la France coloniale: des origines à 1914* [Paris: Armand Colin, 1991]). Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.
- 42 This determination is still evident in the peculiar exigency that characterizes the genre of French imperial apology. The entire second half of André Teulières’ *L’Outre-mer français: hier . . . aujourd’hui . . . demain* (Paris: Berger Levrault, 1970), for example, is devoted to a discussion of (and defense of) the island-colonies, particularly the ones still in French possession. Citing “un destin commun” [a common destiny], Teulières ends his study with his initial question: “faudra-t-il brader l’outre-mer français[?] . . . NON!” [Must we sell off France overseas . . . No!] (462). As is typical of this genre, the rhetoric remarkably carries no sense of anachronism.
- 43 Quoted in Charles-Robert Ageron, *France coloniale où part colonial?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978), 297.
- 44 J. Lingay, *La France en Afrique* (Paris, 1846).
- 45 Jugurtha was a Berber warrior, the adopted son of Masinissa who became the King of Numidia (c. 156–104 B. C. E.). He wished to found a new empire in the place of Carthage. Numidia was part of the Carthaginian Empire until its ruler, Masinissa, allied himself with Rome in the Punic wars. This alliance was reversed under Jugurtha (his successor) who brought on a fatal war with Rome, and was captured and there put to death.
- 46 Quoted in Elwood Hartman, *Three Nineteenth-Century French Writer/Artists and the Maghreb* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1994), 39.
- 47 The convergence between aestheticism and imperialism has a long and wide-ranging history. Indeed, the basic tenet of aestheticism—the separation of use and beauty—exceeds the historical limits of *l’art pour l’art* and decadence, and is central to both western aes-

- thetics and orientalism at least since Kant. The notion of the autonomy of the aesthetic coincides with its emergence as a theoretical category that is, I suspect, a phenomenon specific to western intellectual traditions. Emphasis shifts from the artifact to the conceptual. As uniformly represented in orientalist writings (including the belles-lettres), the fundamental difference between “oriental” and Western cultures is that the latter understand and perpetuate the autonomy of the aesthetic. The Orient is by no means accused of producing no art; rather, the Oriental is believed to lack a distinctive aesthetic intention, an awareness of the aesthetic as a separate category. Implicit in the aestheticist principle of autonomy is that it is attainable in the West, whereas in the colonized world and in the Orient in particular, the aesthetic is inevitably mixed with religious and other functions. The evidence provided is Oriental art itself, particularly what are considered to be repetitive, abstract designs (decorative and ornamental) on predominantly utilitarian forms (rugs, mosques, brassware, calligraphy, tapestry, and so on).
- 48 Vacant colonial space holds the promise of unmediated creativity in other traditions: for example, the aesthetic significance of the wilderness or frontier in the literature of the American Renaissance. One obvious difference is that this kind of open space in American writing is generally portrayed in unencumbered, positive terms.
- 49 Baudelaire, “La Beauté,” *Les Fleurs du mal*, ed. Jacques Crépet and George Blin (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1968).
- 50 Gautier, *Mademoiselle du Maupin* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), 50. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.
- 51 This parallels Flaubert’s expression of admiration for Arab women who, according to him, are adorned in rags, lice, and gold bracelets: “Je n’ai jamais vu dans ma vie rien de luxueux, si ce n’est en Orient. On trouve là des gens couverts de poux et de haillons, et qui ont au bras des bracelets d’or [sic]” [I have seen nothing luxurious in my life if not in the Orient. One finds there people covered in lice and rags, who have on their arms bracelets of gold]. In fact, many of Gautier’s examples of the Beautiful, like his admiration for those who smoke instead of eat, are echoed by Flaubert: “[Les Arabes] ont plus besoin de fumer que de manger” [Arabs have more need to smoke than to eat] (*Correspondance*, 4:24).
- 52 Charles Baudelaire, *Curiosités esthétiques, l’Art romantique, et œuvres critiques*, ed. Henri Lemaître (Paris: Garnier, 1990). Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.
- 53 It is not coincidental that Baudelaire’s New World pioneer analogy recalls Emerson and Thoreau. Like both, Baudelaire in this same piece stresses unmediated contact with primal nature (“la couleur du ciel, la forme du végétal, le mouvement et l’odeur de l’animalité. . .” [the color of the sky, forms of vegetation, the movement and odor of animality]) (213). This correspondence derives from direct transatlantic influence. Baudelaire was a great fan and translator of Edgar Allen Poe, whose hostility toward transcendentalism he shared. Nevertheless, Baudelaire was influenced by transcendentalism, and made use particularly of Emerson’s *Conduct of Life*. See “L’Œuvre et la vie d’Eugène Delacroix” (*Curiosités esthétiques*, 435; 442).
- 54 For discussion of Flaubert’s separation between sexuality and artistic creativity, see, for example, Edward Said, 187–92. Victor Brombert describes Flaubert’s dream of anteriority (like Chateaubriand, Flaubert liked to think of himself as one of the last of an almost extinct race [*Novels of Flaubert*, 7]). My purpose is to show how these Flaubertian tenets of aestheticism are specifically colonial.
- 55 *Correspondance*, 4:359.
- 56 The colorful Orient and the Orient of extinction are two sides of the same coin. Roland Barthes makes this point in his essay on the film *Continent perdu* (a title descriptive of French colonial space as it is conceived). He argues that “colorier le monde, c’est toujours un moyen de le nier” [to color the world is always a way of denying it]. Thus “repoussé dans la couleur, désincarné par le luxe même des ‘images,’ l’Orient est prêt pour l’opération d’escamotage que le film lui réserve” [brought into color, disincarnated by the very luxury of the images, the Orient is then ready for the work of conjuring away that the film reserves for it] (*Mythologies* [Paris: Seuil, 1957], 183). From this perspective, there is little difference in meaning between Flaubert’s portrayal of the Orient in his first and second voyages.
- 57 Maxine DuCamp, *Souvenirs littéraires* (Balland, 1984), p. 125, quoted in Gustave Flaubert,

Flaubert in Egypt: A Sensibility on Tour, ed. Francis Steegmuller (Penguin, 1996), 140. Flaubert portrays the terrain on the way to Utica as if it were in a process of evanescence. The view of the landscape is hidden; he enters “dans une plaine aride” [an arid plain] where “les montagnes disparaissent” [the mountains disappear], and where he notices “à droite, un santon abandonné” [to the right, an abandoned figure] (*Notes de voyages*, 2:309). Far from the boisterous, confused motion of the Orient of his first trip, he describes his surroundings in terms of petrified immobility, like “des nuages sur le sommet de Hammam . . . qui a l’air en bronze . . .” [the clouds at the summit of the hammam . . . that have the look of bronze] (2:315) and “les spectateurs impassibles” [the impassive onlookers at a café] (2:305). In his correspondence, he writes that he was “très chaste dans [son] voyage, mais très gai” [very chaste during his trip, but very gay] (*Correspondance*, 4:263). In a letter to Chantepeie, he writes that upon embarcation he was reminded of his first trip to the Orient, and remarks that “le cercle s’est rétréci” [the circle is redrawn]. Yet this time he is alone: “je serai seul, absolument seul” [I will be alone, entirely alone]. He compares his sense of loneliness to her own feeling upon returning alone from the theater late at night (4:252).

58 Richard Terdiman argues that there was no “oriental renaissance” for Flaubert. He rejects the argument that Flaubert’s voyage to the Orient was aesthetically rejuvenative. He cites as evidence the “empty, exhaustive text of *Voyage en Orient*” (*Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985], 153). Yet for Flaubert, as I argue throughout, it is precisely the lost, empty and futile terrain of the Orient that marks the site of aesthetic vitality and rejuvenation. See Jean Bruneau, who notes the importance (for Flaubert) of the desert in particular for aesthetic creativity (*Le “conte orientale” de Flaubert* [Paris: Denoël, 1973], 49).

59 These are the very themes of his trip to Tunisia. For example, in his correspondence he recounts several times how he traveled from Algeria to Tunis “par terre” [by land]—a trip, he insists, that is arduous and attempted by few Europeans (*Correspondance*, 4:261; 263). The importance Flaubert places on the individual, private gesture cannot be over-emphasized.

60 *Œuvres complètes* (Club de l’Honnête homme), 13:451.

61 *Correspondance*, 4:449.

62 *Œuvres complètes* (Club de l’Honnête homme), 2:396. Square brackets omitted.

63 As implied by the explicitly gendered gaze in this passage, this “manière de vivre” [way of living], of cultivating the conditions of aesthetic autonomy, Flaubert imagined as the exclusive providence of not only Westerners, but Western males. For him, women also share the putative oriental lack of an awareness of the aesthetic as a separate category. He repeats throughout his letters to Louise Colet the conviction that women cannot separate the useful and the Beautiful. He writes to her of his experience upon entering a chapel he attended as a child. He is transported to the realm of the Beautiful (which reflects the depictions of colonial space throughout), and he explains to her why she would “never” be able to follow: “Ce spectacle de tantôt a rouvert le sépulchre où dormait ma jeunesse momifiée; j’en ai ressenti les exhalaisons fanées; il m’est revenu dans l’âme quelque chose de pareil à ces mélodies oubliées que l’on retrouve au crépuscule, durant ces heures lentes où la mémoire, ainsi qu’un spectre dans les ruines, se promène dans nos souvenirs. Non, vois-tu, jamais les femmes ne sauront tout cela. Elles le diront encore moins, jamais” [The spectacle this afternoon reopened the sepulchre where slept my mummified youth; I felt there the faded exaltations. To my soul returned something similar to forgotten melodies that one recovers at dusk, during the slow hours where memory, in the manner of a ghost amongst the ruins, wanders about in our recollections. No, you see, women will never know all this. They will say it still less, never] (*Correspondance*, 1:250–51). He further assures her that women lack “un appétit désintéressé du Beau. Il faut toujours, pour elles, qu’il se rattache à quelque chose, à un bout, à une question pratique [*sic*]” [a disinterested appetite for the Beautiful. For them, it must always be attached to something, to an end, to a practical question]. He promises that “plus tard je te les développerai avec netteté. . .” [later I will elaborate on this for you with clarity] (251). In contrast, he praises himself for his disinterestedness and his ability to “admire.” In Flaubert’s words to Colet: “il n’y a que ça en moi que j’estime: j’admire. Toi, tu mêles au Beau un tas de choses étrangères, l’utile, l’agréable. . .” [there is only this in myself that I esteem: I admire. You, you mix with the Beautiful a heap of foreign things, the utilitarian, the agreeable. . .] (1:306–307). In his most pre-

- cise and cutting statement of this idea, he exclaims, “Oh, si je pouvais faire de toi ce que j’en rêve. . .” [oh, if only I could make of you what I dream of], and calls her “un poète entravé d’une femme. . .” [a poet in the shackles of a woman] (*Œuvres complètes* [Club de l’Honnête homme], 13:431–32). The import of these accusations is apparently not lost on Colet, as evident in one of Flaubert’s responses to her: “*Causer d’Art* comme avec un indifférent, dis-tu. Tu causes donc d’Art avec les indifférents?” [Discuss art as if with an indifferent person, you say. You can discuss art with indifferent persons?] (*Correspondance*, 2:64). In Flaubert as well as in the larger tradition of colonial aestheticism, women are conceived as a category of Orientals or primitives.
- 64 *Correspondance*, 3:306.
- 65 *Correspondance*, 2:345.
- 66 The criticism of both novels focuses on this difference. *Salammbô* has long been faulted for its unwieldy descriptions, untold exotic “bric-a-brac,” for being all background and no foreground, all matter and no spirit, blood and no heart (see Dennis Porter, “Flaubert and the Difficulty of Reading,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 12:3 [Spring 1984]: 372; and Sainte-Beuve, in *Œuvres complètes* [Club de l’Honnête homme], 2:436–442). In contrast, *Saint Antoine* is faulted primarily for an excess of spirit and for rhetorical and lyrical indulgences.
- 67 Henry James, “Flaubert’s *Temptation of St. Anthony*,” in *Critical Essays on Gustave Flaubert*, ed. Lawrence Porter (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986), 141.
- 68 *Correspondance*, 4:313–14.
- 69 Gustave Flaubert, *Salammbô* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1964), 30.4 Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.
- 70 Naomi Schor (in *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory, and French Fiction* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1985]) reads this criticism as part of a Western tradition that privileges the sublime over the Beautiful, the male over the female, hierarchy over the undifferentiation of the ornamental. In response, she attempts to read Flaubert’s aesthetic as a subversion of this tradition, and argues that the ornamental defies hierarchy by denying a privileged perspective. Hence she suggests that to dismiss in particular the character of *Salammbô* as inaccessible or superficial—as do, she argues, a long line of critics—is to embrace a patriarchal aesthetic (*passim*). In contrast, I demonstrate in my reading of *Salammbô* how Flaubert’s descriptions portray at once the sublime (disembodied infinitudes) and the Beautiful (ornate detail), and how his aesthetic is grounded in a French colonial tradition.