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Flaubert: A Life

Geoffrey Wall



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Flaubert: A Life

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Flaubert: A Life Geoffrey Wall *The life and times of the great French novelist*

A blond giant of a man with green eyes and a resonant actor's voice, Gustave Flaubert, perhaps the finest French writer of the nineteenth century, lived quietly in the provinces with his widowed mother, composing his incomparable novels at a rate of five words an hour. He detested his respectable neighbors, and they, in turn, helped to ensure his infamy as a writer of immoral books. Geoffrey Wall's remarkable new biography weaves together the inner dramas of Flaubert's provincial life with the social intrigues of his regular escapes to Paris, where he became a friend to Turgenev and was praised by the emperor, and the flamboyant excitements of his travels throughout the Mediterranean, on which he kept company with courtesans, acrobats, gypsies, and simpletons.

Flaubert's contradictory experiences nurtured his peerless novels and stories, and Wall's dynamic interpretation of them gives us a new understanding of his sometimes pitiable, always unforgettable characters: an Egyptian hermit tormented by voluptuous visions, a melancholy doctor's wife eating arsenic to escape debt and despair, an old country woman who worships a stuffed parrot.

Wall's is the first full-fledged modern biography of this immeasurably talented and influential artist. *Flaubert* brilliantly re-creates the life and times of a writer who wrote to within an inch of his life and whose importance will never diminish.

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