

– **The story**

THE FINAL ACT - FLAUBERT

I borrowed two characters from Flaubert (Bouvard and Pécuchet) and moved them to our times. They're now two Internet junkies, voluntarily secluded in some unspecified hideout, searching the Net – instead of books, like the original characters – to answer their desperate need for meaning in life. With keyboards hanging from their necks, they spend tens of years relentlessly probing Google, looking for a spark of hope... but all they can find is bad news: God is dead, language is dead, knowledge is just a chaotic pile of incoherent notions. Everything is failure, including their attempt at taking their own lives. We follow these tragically funny characters as they wander endlessly on the web, filling the stage with “noise”, words screamed more and more confusedly to escape the horror of silence – the silence of the soul.

– **Author's biography**

MARIO PERROTTA

Actor, stage director and playwright (Lecce -1970), is considered one of the foremost figures in the new Italian theatre. He just won the Ubu Award, the most sought-after theatre award in the Country, for his “Trilogy of the Social Individual”, completed in 2011 with *Final Act - Flaubert*.

He started his career as a “soloist” with the plays *Italiani cincali* (over 500 performances, now also touring in a French language version) and *Odissey*, which won the Hystrio Award for theatre in 2009. In the same years he also wrote and played monologues for RAI, the Italian state radio/TV network (the radio show *Emigranti Espress* won – together with the English broadcaster BBC – the Special Jury Prize at the TRT International Radio Competition); he published two novels; and, in 2009, he started writing and performing his “Trilogy of the Social Individual”, composed of three original plays for multiple actors, inspired by the plays of Molière, Aristophanes and Flaubert. In 2012 he wrote his first opera booklet, that he is now preparing for the first performance in Spoleto this coming September.

– **Technical data (number of characters, number of scenes)**

Number of characters in the italian version (excluding spaces): 55.137

Number of characters in the italian version (including spaces): 64.115

The entire play is one single scene. The characters never enter or exit the stage. They've been there forever.

– **Informations on the first performance/publication**

The first performance was held in September 4th, 2011 at the Castel dei Mondi Festival in Andria (Puglia, Italy). The play hasn't been published in printed form yet.

– **List of translations**

The text hasn't yet been translated to other languages. The same author translated and played *Italiani cincali* in French.

– **Contact for royalties**

The play has been registered with Siae (the Italian Society of Authors and Editors) with code 899396A. Siae is recognized by other European organizations managing authors' royalties and

copyrights.

For copyright-related inquiries, please contact the author himself:

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– **Informations about financial backing for foreign translations.**

No active contacts at the moment.

– **A sample of the play**

Bouvard e Pécuchet – sitting on their office chairs, as ever – desperate after finding out that language is fallible, that Logic is not objective, are screaming pointlessly. More than everything, they're making noise. The Mute Man and the Mute Woman watch them, perplexed.

BOUVARD I need noise...

PECUCHET And to believe in something, anything.

BOUVARD But if Language fails me as well, if Logic kinda died, who should we ask for help?

PECUCHET We need to believe until the end, but what should we believe in?

BOUVARD Is anybody listening to my woes?

PECUCHET Who did this? God, maybe?

BOUVARD Need to believe...

PECUCHET In God?

BOUVARD But is He anywhere? Could He exist?

PECUCHET Need to rely on some kind of faith...

BOUVARD Any God, as long as He exists.

B & P *(together)* Faith!

Pécuchet mumbles something mystical, while Bouvard frenetically types on the keyboard hanging from his neck. On the screen, we can see yet another on-line search.

PECUCHET I beg you, let's look for proof that God exists. If Logic became speechless, then faith alone can save our soft minds. Let's trust ourselves to God – He certainly will give us a sign of some kind, he won't let us stumble in darkness. Let's repent, let's confess our sins. Let's cleanse our minds from Science, Language, everything that failed us, let's devote ourselves to proving God's existence!

VIDEO *Date: August 15th, 2035. Google search: "proof existence of God". Pages scroll, overlap, blend into religious imagery – until a page shows up with a link to the ontological argument of Descartes. One last click, and there it is, a portrait of Descartes and the text: "Proof of God's existence by René Descartes".*

BOUVARD There it is! René, bringing certain truth!

After this one last scream, a vast silence fills the stage.

PECUCHET René?

BOUVARD You said it, remember? (*quoting an earlier joke by Pécuchet*) “Renéwed”...

PECUCHET (*remembering*) Today I feel Renéwed... Yes, I said it.

BOUVARD I don't know why I didn't pay you attention.

PECUCHET Did I guess anything right?

BOUVARD The key, you guessed. The key of life itself...

PECUCHET René?

BOUVARD Something to believe in. It's there, in René Descartes, the true proof of the existence of God!

PECUCHET And I called his name in vain!

BOUVARD But now he'll bring light to the darkness in our meninges. Follow this line of reasoning, no need for stumbling in darkness anymore.

PECUCHET No stumbling... No tumbling... I mean, I follow you.

BOUVARD (*very focused, barely containing excitement*) So, then: do you feel imperfect? (*suddenly, everything feels dead serious. Even the Mutes intently follow the reasoning*)

PECUCHET (*in a whining tone*) Can't you see?

BOUVARD Do you feel your own boundaries?

PECUCHET Heck if I don't...

BOUVARD All of them?

PECUCHET I'm a miserable wreck!

BOUVARD Me, too. And that's fact. (*turning to the Mute Man and Woman*) Don't you feel like miserable wrecks? (*they nod*) See?

PECUCHET (*joining Bouvard's line of reasoning, excitedly*) All men are miserable wrecks!

BOUVARD Well, let's say imperfect.

PECUCHET Imperfect! Let's go on.

BOUVARD Now: does anything exist in nature - anything, an animal, a plant, an artifact, that you think is perfect, instead? Or infinite?

PECUCHET Nope: everything is doomed to rot! Second law of thermodynamics, also known as the Law of Entropy!

BOUVARD Great, that's what I call scientific rigour! Everything is disorder, chaos, death!

PECUCHET The world is a bar of soap, and we use it to wash our hands clean!

BOUVARD That was beautiful!

PECUCHET Nothing is perfect and/or infinite! Everything will eventually die! Even the two of us, this place, (*to the Mute Man and the Mute Woman*) these thingies, and that is all very sad really, it makes you feel like taking your own life before it happens, and yet so it is, by logical reasoning and by faith in God!

BOUVARD (*happy and surprised for the insight*) Logics and faith together!

PECUCHET (*getting more and more excited*) Let's go on!

BOUVARD Let's go on. Now: do you by chance possess, inside yourself, an idea of God?

PECUCHET While you're talking about it... Yep, that idea is in me, indeed!

BOUVARD Great. And that idea, is it perchance the idea of a fallible God, one who gets all confused, who has to die sooner or later, like all men and things?

PECUCHET That would be a lame God indeed.

BOUVARD Let's say "imperfect".

PECUCHET Imperfect.

BOUVARD Instead – is it the idea of a perfect God, one who won't ever die, and as such infinite?

PECUCHET He is, in my mind, perfection and infiniteness themselves!

BOUVARD *(to the Dumb Man and Woman)* Do we all agree? *(they nod again, in the exact same way as they already did)* Now give me your full attention, we're getting to the end of our reasoning.
Could that idea of perfection and infiniteness that we possess – could it have ever derived from experience, from our own senses, from observing natural things or artifacts, all of those things that we know are themselves imperfect?

PECUCHET No! *(the Dumb Man and the Dumb woman also gesture to say “no”)*

BOUVARD *(visionary, mystical)* And then, who? Who put this idea of perfection and infiniteness into this very imperfect intellects of ours?

PECUCHET *(screaming, almost as if swearing)* Gaaaaaawd! *(the Dumb Man and Woman scream without making a sound)*

BOUVARD Ah! *(exhausted by the reasoning and after a mystical silence)* So He does exist! Something to believe in...

PECUCHET *(also exhausted, ecstatic)* I can't believe it.

BOUVARD You have to believe...

PECUCHET I do believe! I can't believe it.

BOUVARD Logic is not dead, then!

PECUCHET And not even God!

BOUVARD And if He did die, then He's born again, Ren ewed!

PECUCHET *(to the image on the screen)* It was Ren e! He brought Logic back for us. And God!

BOUVARD Together in him, forever!

They go back to the Internet looking for more proofs. They spend a few more tens of years doing that...