The antirealism in flauberts realism critical thinkings examples

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)

\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

\n \t

\n[/toc]\n \n

Introduction

Realism is a unique philosophical belief that suggests that a person's reality (which can be characterized by his perception of life, including the things a person has and the experiences he has encountered), or a certain aspect of such reality is dependent on subjective factors and is ontologically independent from standard conceptual schemes, linguistic practices, beliefs, perceptions, and other established system . Realism is generally the view that entities, which in this are humans, have an objective reality, a reality that is completely and ontologically independent of those entities' conceptual schemes, linguistic practices, beliefs, and etc. Thus, entities including abstract concepts and universals as well as more concrete objectives have an existence independent of the act of perception, and independent of their names.

The objective of this paper is to prove that it is impossible to successfully and acceptably fuse realism and literature writing because of the high level of subjectivity involved in using language. Mainly, subjective factors such as the author's perceptions, opinions, and beliefs, defeat the purpose of creating an objective environment conducive for objectivity.

Is Flaubert's Attempt to Reflect Reality Objectively in Madame Bovary Possible taking into Account that his Obsession with Language could make his work subjective at most?

Before attempting to prove how combining the elements of realism and writing a work of literature, which in this case is a controversial novel, is almost impossible or in some cases, would be unfruitful , it would be important to know some of the key elements of the story of Madame Bovary, and even perform a brief analysis of the main characters in the story. Madame Bovary, the book, revolved around the story of Charles Bovary and his wife Emma Bovary . The analysis of realism and anti-realism will focus on these two persons only because these two fictional people's character almost perfectly embodies the thoughts and principles of both realism and anti-realism. Specifically, Charles Bovary's character can be perceived as an embodiment of realism.

In the story, he was described as a plain and common man; so common and plain that Emma, his wife, even disgusted and despised him for being the epitome or the perfect example of all that is common and dull. Charles Bovary worked as a public health officer, although people in their country looked upon him as a doctor. Despite being blessed with a stable and decently paying job, his lifestyle was not particularly luxurious. He was a family man. He loved and adored his wife so much to the point that he saw her as a faultless person despite the presence of countless evidences that would suggest she was the opposite. Charles nerve suspected and at the same time, expected that her wife would do anything bad that would ruin their relationship and family. Charles Bovary's character perfectly

symbolized realism. He knew that he had to live within his means .

Emma Bovary, on the other hand, can be perceived as the direct opposite of her husband, Charles Bovary. She can be considered as the epitome of anti-realism. I honestly do not know whether Gustave Flaubert intentionally created a contrasting relationship between these two characters in terms of being an anti-realist and a realist or not but Gustave Flaubert had been perceived as a notorious perfectionist—so notorious a perfectionist that he allegedly could not lay to rest and or proceed to the next part of his work until he had found the right word or term that would be perfect for explaining what he was trying to say. Many claimed that he had always been in search for le mot juste or the precise word . So based on the typical description of Flaubert as a writer, it can be argued that he intentionally made Emma Bovary and Charles Bovary's character contrast each other. Despite the fact that the story began and ended with the story of Charles Bovary, Emma is still generally considered as the novel's protagonist. Emma had an extremely romanticized and unrealistic view of the world. He craved and longed for beauty, passion, wealth, and an elite status in society. If we are going to trace Emma's early life experiences and childhood history, it would turn out that she was a person who did not have the opportunity to have a good life when she was a child. And as a result of that, she yearned for those things when she grew up to be Charles' wife.

Basically, Emma's actions can be interpreted as desperate efforts to break away from reality. Now what we would like to point out is the fact that despite the obscenity of Emma's actions such as her involvement in adulterous acts, her extramarital affairs with two persons, her reckless

actions that eventually plunged her and Charlie into poverty, and his ultimate decision to commit suicide, the author still focused to focus the novel's spotlight on her. At least three quarters of the story were dedicated to the description and rationalization of Emma's actions and the outcomes of those actions. It is the anti-realist sentiments of Emma that fueled the story. And most likely, it is also the same element that made it win several awards and the recognition it still receives today as one of the top stories about realism.

Most literary critics would agree to the idea that Flaubert did the right decision to point the spotlight towards Emma instead of Charles because otherwise, the novel would not have sold a lot of copies. It can be remembered that Emma described Charles, her husband, as the epitome of common and dull. In a way, the way how Emma characterized her husband can be interpreted as the author's way of saying that realism and literature writing, specifically novel and fictional writing can never get along together; that realism is common and dull; and that people would most likely hate the content and the outcome of the novel if it would be even at the slightest bit too much about realism.

What we can see from Madame Bovary, which was the debut novel written by Gustave Flaubert, an author who was notoriously known for his meticulous and perfectionist-inclined qualities, is that it is full of Emma's ideals, romanticism, and subjectivity. It can also be said that the story was all about Emma's ambitions—ambitions that are almost always significantly deviated from reality.

Contrary to what most literary realists such as Henry Fielding, Daniel Defoe,

and Samuel Richardson proposed (they proposed that books and other literary works should be about the common everyday experience of men and should be written in language and terms that a common man would be able to understand) , Gustave Flaubert strategized his writing based on realism but evidently, his attempt only showed how impossible it is to fuse realism and literature writing. He did not focus on the aristocracy, royalty, and other themes common prior to the emergence of literary realism. Instead, he focused on fantasies, ideals, and romantic events that are typically out of the reach of common people. The author used Emma and Charles' persona to depict those things.

All in all, I think that Flaubert's attempt to reflect on reality objectively was possible. In fact, he did it with fashion. He reflected on reality objectively by using Charles Bovary's character to portray realism. Of course, that character was antagonized, multiple times in the story, by Emma Bovary's character, which on the other hand embodied anti-realism. Flaubert knew for a fact that if he focused too much on realism-based premises, his book would not sell a lot of copies, because of its common and dull characteristics, at least based on how he used Madam Bovary's character to describe it in the novel. So, what he did was to antagonize realism with its counterpart, anti-realism. I can say that he is one of the few authors who was able to think about doing that. Often, authors would only focus on one theme in writing their novels but in this case, there were two antagonizing themes used, realism and anti-realism. So to answer the first question, yes, Flaubert's attempt to reflect on realism objectively in his work was possible. In fact, the outcome was magnificent because the antagonizing ideas of Charles' realism

and Emma's anti-realism added twist to the story. But then of course, the possibility of reflecting on realism objectively may only be applicable within the context of Charles' life as a person that believes in or embodies realism. It cannot be applied to Emma's life per se because as known, she had been swallowed by her own anti-realism sentiments.

The question only asks whether it is possible to objectively reflect on realism in Flaubert's work, Madame Bovary. Yes, it is possible. The question now would be, would the outcome be successful and acceptable. This is an entirely different question because clearly, Flaubert made a good attempt of reflecting on reality objectively using Charles' character. But then again, there were factors in literary writing that prevented him from creating a successful and acceptable outcome. These factors will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

Can Realism Exist in Literature? The Process of Writing Itself is influenced by the Author's opinions, beliefs, perceptions, and experiences. How can it represent reality in an objective way?

The process of making representations will always be a part of the bigger process of writing a novel, or basically any other literary work. An author often does not have the luxury of time, space, and or resources to write everything that he or she wishes to write. Knowing how to make great representations is being creative and it is not an uncommon knowledge that creativity is an integral part of writing any literary piece, more so in the case writing novels. A creative representation of things is often necessary to engage the readers and to make them like the story, the characters, or even just a handful of it. At some point, it can also be said that the process of

representation is what makes every novel or literary work unique from the others. The author enjoys an unlimited level of freedom when it comes to the process of selecting the things he wants to be represented in the novel.

In making representations, the author has to make selections. Any representation is a selection. Therefore, it can be inferred that a novel has to be an implicit or explicit set of inclusions, exclusions, arrangements, and elisions that the author arranged. One comic strip expert once explained that while most people would think that cameras are devices that often tell the truth, it is actually the other way around. Cameras are tools that people, specifically photographers and graphic artists, use to tell a lie.

The only problem is that during the time that such decision to take a still image of his room crossed his mind some areas of his room were in a total mess. Now, what tricks would he do in order to successfully capture a still image of his messy room and still manage to impress his friends? One thing he would surely do is to make representations and selections. He could simply take a photo of the part of the room that were not messy or those that did not look too chaotic and show the resulting photo to his friends. That way, he could still manage to take the photo of his messy room and obtain the approval from his friends about how nice his room looked like. In this scenario, the protagonist had the aim showing to his friends how nice his room looked like. Therefore, it would be totally against his objective to capture photos of the ugliest and messiest parts of his room. He would of course take photos of the best parts of his room. Notice how the protagonist in that process made a selection.

Making representation and selections is comparable to the process of

manipulating the truth. In the example we gave, notice how the photographer attempted to manipulate the truth that his room did not look good and turned it into something different by merely using the process of representation and selection. The same idea can actually be applied in the field of literature, particularly in writing novels, short stories, and other works of fiction, or even biographies of some key and influential people, only that the tool used was not a camera but rather a pen, a paper, or in a modern era, a computer coupled with a keyboard. An author can easily manipulate the truth about basically any story by omitting the negative things and including only the good ones in the process of writing. This idea basically confirms that most novels, works of fiction, and other literary works, are bound to be anti-realist.

Sure, authors may be able to include everything, as in every tiny bit of truth, perhaps in an effort to make their own literary work a reliable one or simply to represent all possibly valid things about reality, but authors of literary works nonetheless have to use words to represent such details and what most people do not know is that even with the use or choice of words, the process of representation, selection, and hence, the manipulation of truth, may still be involved. Even if the author has an intention of connecting his literary work with real ideas about reality, the inherent metaphoric nature of too many words may lead to involuntary selection, representation, and hence, manipulation of truth. Words also belong to a cultural system of meaning. This means that one word may be interpreted or perceived differently across a selection of cultures. A case in point, Americans may prefer to use the term beautiful to describe a good-looking woman whereas

people from Asia may prefer to use the term pretty to describe a good-looking woman. And so when people from two cultures meet, there might be some conflict that may immediately be misinterpreted as attempts to manipulate the truth. Everything with regards to the use of words can be highly subjective. The point here is that it is so easy to misrepresent and even accidentally manipulate the truth with the use of words.

Each person has a different perception on reality. A person who is born in a poverty-stricken country may, for example, have a different perception on reality from a person who was born in a first world country. The latter may perceive reality as a life full of hardships and challenges that are all geared towards the generation of money; the former, on the other hand, may perceive reality as going to the club all night, going to spas, hanging out with friends, and enjoying the different luxuries and pleasantries that life has to offer. These are just two examples of the different possible perceptions on reality. Each of the over seven billion people living in the planet may have a unique perception on reality.

In that case, it can be said that there can be over seven million possible perceptions on reality too. In the novel Madame Bovary, for example, it is quite obvious how Emma and Charles' perception on reality different from one another. The question now would be how these two behaved. Did they show behaviors and or reactions that symbolized the traits of an anti-realist or a realist? In the novel's case, Emma was the one who showed great tendencies to be an anti-realist. She wanted so bad to break away from the harsh truths about reality, having experienced them all when she was a child. She made herself, and her husband (who worked very hard as a public

health officer in their country) accrue an insurmountable amount of debt; she got herself involved in two extramarital affairs without her husband knowing.

So, to answer the second question, the process of fusing realism in literary writing is still being heavily disputed. The author of this paper argues that given the main objective of literary realism (which is to objectively portray the typical occurrences in a common individual's life by means of literature), it is impossible to create a literary work that is based on objectivity because in any case, the outcome will be influenced by the author's perceptions, ideas, and opinions, all of which are considered subjective factors. This scenario certainly shows that the purposes of writing a realism-themed literary work have been directly defeated by the presence of subjective factors in literature. Some literary experts believe that literature writing can be influenced by a lot of subjective factors (the opposite of objectivity which is one of the core principles of realism) such as the author's experiences, opinions, and ideologies among others . The presence of subjectivity in writing is the main reason why the notion that suggests that realism cannot simply exist in literary works has become so popular.

Conclusions

In reference to the first question, it can be said that Flaubert's attempt to reflect to realism objectively was possible. In fact, the author of this paper wants to reiterate, his attempt was made with fashion. He showed how realism antagonizes anti-realism using Charles and Emma's character. However, the next question would be, was the outcome of such attempt

successful and acceptable?

This leads us to the next question because the issue whether realism could exist in literatures considering the number of subjective factors inherent in literature writing that can threaten the very fabric of objectivity that defines literary works. In which case, the author of this paper supports the idea that while it is possible to attempt to make realism exist in literature, it is impossible to do so successfully and in an acceptable manner. This is because the presence of subjective factors in literary writing such as the author's experiences, perceptions, opinions, predicaments, and ideas can taint the objectivity that defines literary works. In which case, we can clearly see that the purpose of making realism exist in a certain literary work getting defeated.

Works Cited

Berthoff, W. „ The Ferment of Realism: American Literature, 1884-1919." Journal of Philosphical Review (1965).

Gans, E. „ Madame Bovary: The End of Romance." Academic Directory Search Engine (1989).

Habegger, A. „ Gender, Fantasy, and Realism in American Literature." Columbia University Press (1982).

Ladenson, E. „ Dirt for Art's Sake: Books on Trial from Madame Bovary to Lolita." 2007 (The Modern Language Review).

Llosa, M. „ The Perpetual Orgy: Flaubert and Madame Bovary." (2011).

Railton, P. „ Moral Realism." Journal of Philosophical Review (1986): 95.

Thomas, B. „ American literary realism and the failed promise of contract."

Harvard University Press (1997).

Warren, K. „ Black and White Strangers: Race and American Literary

Realism." New York University Press (1994).