

Abstract

There are some *others* whom we will never have the chance to meet because they do not exist: Emma Bovary, Anna Karenina and Nana, for instance. The reason they are something different from us may seem obvious; they are, after all, fictional entities. But what does it mean when we say that they do not exist? That they are nothing at all, or that they are simply different from us? By assuming a realist ontological perspective we will explain what sort of things fictional literary entities are, comparing them both to existing and to non-existing entities that resemble them in some respects (what is the difference between the historical Napoleon and the Napoleon in *War and Peace*? Are there similarities between fictional entities as created entities and other artifacts?). Finally, we will determine which theory gives the best account of fictional entities as things *other* than ourselves.

Introduction

Who is Emma? What is this essay about? It is not about the accusations of political immobilism expressed in March of 2011 by the then-president of Confindustria, Emma Marcegaglia, towards the government, nor is it about the appeal of the then-vice president of the Italian Senate, Emma Bonino, to suspend the treaty between Italy and Libya. The *Emma* in question here is another. It is Emma Bovary, a fictional character. Fictional characters are the *others* who, in theory, we will never meet, because they do not exist: Emma Bovary, Anna Karenina, Nana, Lady Chatterley and Juliet (we will include the latter so as to not run the risk of showing interest in only one kind of *other*).

Despite their differences, one thing can be affirmed about these women straight-away: they do not exist. But what does it mean to say that they do not exist? Does it mean that they are nothing? Or rather that they *are* in a different way than we, as real people, exist? How can we characterize the *others* that populate novels? By

assuming a realist ontological perspective, we will consider what sorts of things fictional characters are, what they have in common with other entities that exist or have existed and that might resemble them in some aspects (are the Napoleon in *War and Peace* and the historical Napoleon the same? If – as some claim – Flaubert had indeed been inspired by the real events of Delphine Couturier Delamare when writing the story of Madame Bovary, must we then conclude that Madame Bovary actually existed?), and, finally, we will decipher the most appropriate position for considering Madame Bovary and her kin as *other than us*, strictly speaking.

1. *Literary Objects*

Emma and the others are entities that populate novels: both the novels whose storylines are entirely invented by authors (though they are in some way *inspired* by reality, as in the case of *Madame Bovary*, and the incident of Delphine Couturier) and those whose individuals and events are directly *imported* from reality (as the Napoleon in *War and Peace*). The entities that populate novels are what we normally call “characters”, that are *other than us*, in many senses.

What sorts of things are characters? Who are the *others* found in literary works? Who is Madame Bovary?

We might attempt to answer this question by using the following sentences:

- (1) Madame Bovary is an unhappy woman married to a mediocre provincial doctor
- (2) Madame Bovary is the main character of a famous novel by Flaubert
- (3) Madame Bovary is the daughter of Père Rouault and she went to school in Rouen, in an Ursuline convent

Or we might want to explain who Emma Bovary is by comparing her to individuals who are in some way similar to her, such as Anna Karenina and Lady Diana in the following sentences:

- (4) Madame Bovary is more stupid than Anna Karenina
- (5) Madame Bovary is sad and disappointed with her husband, like Lady Diana

Perhaps we would prefer to explain who Madame Bovary is by making reference to her lovers or to who inspired Flaubert to write her story.

- (6) Madame Bovary is a woman who had two lovers: Rodolphe and Léon
- (7) Madame Bovary is actually Delphine Couturier

Or we might consider it more correct to say that Madame Bovary cannot possess any characteristics, seeing as though she does not exist, and therefore choose to support what is affirmed by the sentence:

(8) Madame Bovary is nothing and no one because she does not exist

It should be evident how these different sentences, having “Madame Bovary” as their object, are not all of the same kind: some are true in the story, some are true in reality, and others consist of a sort of comparison between what is true in the story and what is true in reality. It is not clear if sentence (8) is true or not as its truth value depends on how we consider the relationship between literary objects, the properties that define them and existence. In reality, depending on our theory of fictional objects, there are different ways to treat the various sentences; at this time we will deal with the final sentence, the most important to take into consideration in order to understand if and to what degree fictitious objects can be other than us, or if they are simply nothing.

2. *Objects That Do Not Exist?*

What relationship is there between the properties that characterize an object and its potential existence? Must one exist in order to be married to a provincial doctor? Must one exist in order to be more or less famous than Anna Karenina? Are the properties that an object possesses all the same or, to paraphrase Gareth Evans¹, could we postulate something such as “The varieties of properties”? Can two objects with a different metaphysical status share the same property or relationship? Or can a literary object such as Madame Bovary, for example, share certain properties with Lady Diana? Finally (even if, strictly speaking, the answer to this question conditions the answer to all of the previous questions), is it possible to have certain properties and to be a non-existent object? There have been two types of responses to this last question on behalf of philosophers: negative and affirmative.

Let us begin with the negative response and – keeping in mind that both responses are based on the assumption that in order to define the ontological status of literary objects we must first consider the definition of *object* – let us ask ourselves the question: what is an object? Do an object and existence make a whole? According to Bertrand Russell² an object and existence are synonymous, as evidenced by the analyses he proposes sentences undergo: in “There is an x such that x is...”, existence is explicitly considered part of the nature of the object. Russell claims that “Unicorns exist” and “There are unicorns” have the exact same meaning and it is no coincidence that he formalizes both by using $\exists xUx$. This is clearly a formalization that already incorporates a metaphysics according to which “there is” and “exists” are both exemplified by the existential quantifier “ \exists ”, which amounts to saying that that which exists completes that which there is. According to this sort of position, fictitious objects – which surely do not exist – constitute a

¹ Evans 1982.

² Russell 1905a.

problem and, consequently, are to be eliminated. Through paraphrasing, Russell's analysis eliminates all of the expressions which, like "the unicorn", appear to be terms, and, therefore, denote individuals, when in reality, as demonstrated by the profound logical structure that has emerged through the analysis, this is not so. It is an interesting approach in that it is certainly not an ontologically binding one, even if one of its consequences is that every sentence which features the term "Madame Bovary" must first be considered false, which may appear to be an excessive result.

The weighty consequences of this position, which is defined as "eliminative", have rendered the persuasive charge of a diametrically opposed theoretical proposal such as that of Alexius Meinong³ a noteworthy one. Characterized by an unparalleled ontological generosity, Meinong steadfastly maintains the distinction between object and existence by arguing that an object can be characterized by certain properties independently of the fact that it exists (spatio-temporally), subsists (ideally) or even simply does not exist. This is made possible by the postulation that the *is* of the predication is distinct from the *is* of the being. According to this perspective, then, the circumstance in which an object enjoys certain properties does not necessarily imply that an object with such properties exists: something can be without existing. The chimera is an animal with the head of a lion, the body of a goat and the tail of a snake, and the fact that it is a non-existent object does not constitute a problem. A sentence such as, "Madame Bovary is an unhappy woman" is a normal sentence with a subject-predicate form, just as the sentence "Carla Bruni is a former model", and it does not require paraphrasing or particular analyses in order to be understood.

These two opposing positions, along with their variations, remain at the heart of the debate on literary objects and, more generally, on fictitious entities. In fact, the theories discussed today can be divided into two groups, according to their answer to the question, "are there things like literary objects?": those who answer negatively adopt an eliminative position, while those who answer affirmatively take on a realist position. We will now consider some realist positions – the only ones according to which, strictly speaking, literary objects are something and can, therefore, also be *others* – in order to clarify what sorts of things fictitious characters are and how they distinguish themselves from us (that is to say, in what sense they are *others*).

3. *Emma And The Others Are Objects*

Let us attempt to examine the realist positions according to which Emma Bovary and her kin are to be admitted to our ontological inventory (which is the list of all that there is) insofar as objects in the strict sense, which are not reducible to mere appearances derived from improper usages of language. What sorts of objects are literary objects?

³Meinong 1904.

According to some neo-Meinongian thinkers, such as Edward Zalta⁴, Madame Bovary is indeed a woman, but not in the same way as one can consider Carla Bruni a woman (and it is not just a matter of beauty): in fact, while the former is limited to *internally possessing or codifying* the property of being a woman, the latter not only codifies this property but she *exemplifies* it, that is, she *externally possesses* it, in the world, and not simply by definition (as is the case when properties are possessed internally). Assuming that objects do not all enjoy the properties that characterize them in the same way, this position calls for a *double predication*, two different ways that objects can possess the properties they possess (internally/externally; codification/exemplification). From this point of view, then, the property of being a confused and unhappy woman (and of having studied with the Ursulines, of having a daughter named Berthe, etc.) is internally predicated within Madame Bovary, while the property of being a character created by Flaubert (or of being as famous as Anna Karenina, of being the symbol of feminine stupidity, etc.) is predicated externally. In this case, the difference between us and Emma and the others is that, unlike in their case, we enjoy our properties in an exclusively external fashion.

According to other neo-Meinongian thinkers such as Terence Parsons⁵, there is only one *way* an object can possess its properties, and these properties are of *two* different *kinds*: *nuclear* or *extra-nuclear*. The difference is that while nuclear properties constitute the essence and the nature of the object, extra-nuclear properties simply concern the *way* the object is (if it exists in space and time, if it exists only in time, and so on). In the case of literary objects, the nuclear properties are those attributed by the author to the object within the narration, while the extra-nuclear properties are those attributed by adopting an external point of view regarding the story. Emma is, therefore, an object characterized on the one hand by nuclear (or constitutive) properties such as being a woman, having a husband and two lovers and, on the other hand, by extra-nuclear (or non-constitutive) properties such as being the protagonist of one of the first examples of a realist novel and expressing the dissatisfaction of the bourgeoisie through her anxieties. According to this position, Madame Bovary is a woman who is exactly the same as Carla Bruni: both have the internal property of being a woman, even if the latter exists and is a complete object (that is, one that is determined with regard to all of the properties) while the former is not. Clearly, from this perspective, fictitious objects as well as real objects are defined as corresponding to properties or groups of properties.

Both neo-Meinongian positions present an immediate advantage by making it possible to establish the conditions of truth of sentences featuring terms that refer to literary objects. A sentence such as, “Madame Bovary is a woman,” is true if and only if the individual designated by the name “Madame Bovary” has

⁴Zalta 1983.

⁵Parsons 1980.

the property of being a woman (and here, according to the position adopted, we could either say that the literary object in question codifies that property or that the property falls under its nuclear properties). Of the two positions, the one that distinguishes between two modes of predication seems to be better than the one that admits two different kinds of properties⁶, especially because the latter does not appear to be able to provide a good criterion for differentiating nuclear properties from extra-nuclear properties (unless we make do with the criterion that nuclear properties are only and exclusively those directly attributed to the literary object by the author).

Alongside these positions is another branch of realist thought – which recalls the theory of Roman Ingarden⁷ and takes the name *artifactualism* – according to which fictional entities in literature, such as Emma Bovary, exist and are objects for all intents and purposes, despite their having nothing in common (metaphysically speaking) with Carla Bruni and with us in general, on the one hand because they are more similar to objects such as tables and chairs – that is, artifacts – and on the other hand because they have many characteristics in common with numbers and ideas, that is to say with abstract objects⁸. This is the reason for which fictitious entities, together with games and laws, are defined as *abstract artifacts* which, after being created (the act of creation is fundamental), become public objects that are accepted by the community of critics and readers. Emma Bovary, therefore, is an abstract artifact created by Gustave Flaubert and a literary object created by the community of critics and readers. According to this theory, the readers are those who, through their beliefs and practices, determine the ontological status of such entities. In this case, the difference between us, mere mortals, and Emma and her kin is that we are not abstract artifacts, but rather people – concrete natural objects; simply put, we are quite the contrary. The artifactualist position is particularly interesting because, while it does not promote excessive requests from an ontological point of view, it is accountable for many sentences that contain terms referring to literary entities.

It is evident that, from an ontological point of view, the neo-Meinongian proposals are decidedly more daring than the artifactualist ones: it is one thing to say that Madame Bovary is a woman just like Carla Bruni or that she codifies certain properties that real people exemplify, but it is another thing to say that Madame Bovary is an object similar to a game or a law. In this last case, the kind of object admitted is metaphysically less demanding in that it is similar to other objects that are already included in our inventory. Though it is less demanding it is not without a cost, as Stephen Yablo⁹ rightly observes when highlighting how, despite being “light”, the fictitious object of the artifactualists is not exempt

⁶Voltolini 2010: 70.

⁷Ingarden 1931.

⁸Van Inwagen 1977, Thomasson 1999.

⁹Yablo 1999.

from confusion (metaphysical-existential): one day she lives, has children, eats and has lovers and the next she is a literary figure who, as such, cannot eat or have lovers more than the number 7 can part its hair to the side. This happens because, according to the artifactualists, even if in the homonymous novel *Emma Bovary* is described as a person, in reality she is not a person, but rather an abstract artifact that *passes* for a person. From this perspective, the novel *Madame Bovary* assumes the traits of a surreal story in which certain entities with the vivacity of a number or of a theorem come to life and spend their days among thousands of vicissitudes until reaching death. Finally, by failing to refer to the properties that constitute the characters within a story (since they would be properties that the characters do not truly possess) the artifactualist theories fail to strictly specify the identity conditions of the characters¹⁰.

Yet, neo-Meinongian and artifactual theories are not necessarily incompatible: one need only consider the convincing syncretic theoretical proposals made by Edward Zalta¹¹ and Alberto Voltolini¹².

Other realist positions are those defended by proponents of possible¹³ and impossible¹⁴ worlds, according to which fictional entities exist in flesh and blood, albeit in spatio-temporal worlds that are causally separate from ours. According to this perspective, while she does not exist in the real world, Emma Bovary exists as a woman in the flesh in other worlds. This is a very plausible position at an intuitive level: it would seem reasonable to acknowledge that Madame Bovary is what she is in her world, the world created by Flaubert. In this case, the difference between us and creatures like Emma is simply that, while we live in the real world, they live in other worlds, though all are equally women in the flesh. However, this theoretical perspective is not exempt from problems either: in fact, despite the fact that it accounts for *internal* sentences (those which state that Madame Bovary is a woman, has a husband and a daughter) with great facility, it encounters grave difficulties when attempting to explain *mixed* sentences (those which compare one fiction with other fictions or one fiction with reality, such as, “Madame Bovary and Lady Diana are both unhappy, but Madame Bovary is more stupid”). In fact, a comparison between various objects of fiction or between objects of fiction and real objects would be admissible only provided that all of the individuals involved belonged to the same world, a condition that is not initially respected by these theories which admit literary objects and place them in their respective worlds.

Generally speaking, non-Meinongian realist theories present a solid plausibility and resolve various problems, yet they all have the defect of being rather

¹⁰ Voltolini 2010: 84.

¹¹ Zalta 2000.

¹² Voltolini 2006.

¹³ Lewis 1978.

¹⁴ Priest 2005, Berto 2010.

ontologically demanding (despite what they may have initially appeared as, but still in a different way than the Meinongian theories) in that they admit either a multiplicity of worlds, or that abstract objects marry, betray each other and then cause us to feel emotions through their misadventures.

In summarizing the four realist positions presented, we find that the neo-Meinongians of the two modes of predication distinguish an internal predication (codification) from an external predication (exemplification); the neo-Meinongians of the two kinds of properties differentiate nuclear (or constitutive) properties from extra-nuclear (or non-constitutive) properties; the artifactualists sustain that literary objects are abstract objects which historically and rigidly depend on their authors and constantly and generically depend on literary works; lastly, for theorists of possible and impossible worlds, fictitious objects exist, albeit in worlds that are spatio-temporally and causally separate from our own.

4. *Fictional Objects, Real Problems*

Let us now briefly examine certain obstacles that realist positions must face.

4.a Identity. One classic problem concerns the criteria of identity of characters (certainly not a trivial question, if we think of Quine's motto, "no entity without identity"). Both neo-Meinongians and artifactualists relativize the identity of a character to the work or to the series of works written by a certain author in which said character appears. Yet, how are we to consider a character appearing in two different works written by two different authors¹⁵? In other words, is the Ulysses in the *Odyssey* identical to the Ulysses in the *Divine Comedy* (so as to avoid citing the famous Menard case from Borges' tale)? It would not suffice to make reference to a core of characterizing properties that a fictitious individual must necessarily possess in order to be that same fictitious individual x, as is the practice of the neo-Meinongians of the two kinds of properties¹⁶, because in reality, according to how it is specified, the core of characterizing properties causes him to be identified either too much or too little, and the problem therefore endures. The response from the artifactualists is no more satisfactory: according to them, even if the character seems to remain the same because the properties mobilized in the respective narrations are the same, in reality, this is not the case because at the heart of the two narrations, there are two different authors¹⁷. Remaining within the artifactualist perspective, how can we truly determine the identity of fictitious literary objects if the properties they actually

¹⁵ Voltolini 2010: 74.

¹⁶ Parsons 1980: 188.

¹⁷ Thomasson 1999: 6-7, 56.

enjoy are the properties predicated outside of the narration; that is, those through which fictitious objects appear all alike¹⁸?

4.b Properties. Another point concerns the way in which properties characterize literary objects. What does it mean to say that Madame Bovary has a certain property, such as the property of being a woman? Does she have the property of being a woman the same way she has the property of having been created by Flaubert or of being less famous than Anna Karenina? According to the neo-Meinongians of the two kinds of properties, as we have seen, Madame Bovary has all of her properties in the same way, yet the properties are not all of the same kind: in fact, while the property of being a woman is an internal property possessed both by Madame Bovary and Carla Bruni, the property of being less famous than Anna Karenina is an external property, which does not have to do with the nature, or the essence, of Madame Bovary. But what is the difference between possessing a nuclear property and possessing an extra-nuclear property? The proponents of this position do not tell us, or rather, they say that there is no difference, though this is clearly not the case. We might find, then, that the proposal of the neo-Meinongians of the two modes of predication is more convenient, according to whom Madame Bovary has the property of being a woman differently from how she has the property of having been created by Flaubert, because, while she possesses internally the property of being a woman, she possesses externally, in our world, the property of having been created by Flaubert. But what does it mean to “possess internally”? Here too, the response on behalf of theorists has not been satisfactory. Might this problem be resolved more effectively by the defenders of the artifactualist position? Certainly not. In fact, compared to previous proposals, they present even more difficulties as they consider fictitious entities as abstract artifacts and, therefore, must be able to explain how it is possible for an abstract artifact to possess properties such as having black hair or a daughter named Berthe. How can they account for the properties that literary objects possess within the story if they claim that everything that is said about them in the story is false?

4c. Underdetermination and Overdetermination. Let us take the sentence:

(9) Madame Bovary has a mole on her right shoulder

This is an underdetermined sentence as there are no elements in Flaubert’s novel that lead us to consider it to be true or to be false, and it is highly improbable that further research could add something to what we already know (unless, of course, we were to find a secret document in which Flaubert had mapped out the moles of Madame Bovary). This is so because literary objects

¹⁸ Voltolini 2010: 81.

are incomplete, which means that there are certain properties which they are characterized by, and with regards to which it is neither true nor false that such objects possess them. The incompleteness of objects of fiction (and here we are dealing with the *ontological incompleteness* of things, and not the *epistemological incompleteness*, which concerns not knowing if something – which possesses or does not possess a certain property – possesses or does not possess that specific property) represents a rather grave problem in that it constitutes a violation of the principle of the excluded middle, according to which either the property P or its opposing non-P are possessed by an object, without other possibilities.

A contrary case is that of overdetermined sentences, which occurs when there are elements that lead us to consider such sentences to be both true and false, as would be the case in the aforementioned sentence if in Flaubert's novel there were evidence both of its falseness and of its truth. If Flaubert had written that Madame Bovary had a single mole and he had then described this mole once as being located on her right shoulder and again as being located on her neck, then it would be true both that the mole was on her right shoulder and that the mole was on her neck; yet, if it remains true that Madame Bovary has one single mole, then clearly we would be led to reach a contradictory conclusion. Fictitious objects can, therefore, also be contradictory and impossible objects, in many ways similar to the highly criticized square circle¹⁹.

Clearly, the fact that literary objects present characteristics such as incompleteness or contradictoriness does not work in their favor. In fact, it seems to constitute an excellent reason to side with those who claim that it is best to place a strict ban on the potential entrance of such objects into our ontology. Furthermore, it was the very violation of the principle of non-contradiction and of the excluded middle that led Russell to embrace a "robust sense of reality" and to categorically refuse similar objects²⁰. Meinong's response, on the other hand, was that only existent objects, not all objects, must not violate the aforementioned principles²¹. In any case, the problem persists.

5. *Madame Bovary: Other Than Whom?*

When we think of Madame Bovary as an *other* we have something very specific in mind. We do not mean an entity that is internally a woman and externally a character, or that has the constitutive property of being a woman and the non-constitutive property of not existing, nor do we wish to refer to an abstract artifact that passes off as a woman but in reality is not one. When we say that Madame Bovary is *other than us*, what we have in mind is closer to what Edmund Husserl would say about the experience of the other, as something we can feel a

¹⁹ Russell 1905b.

²⁰ Barbero & Raspa 2005.

²¹ Meinong 1906-1907.

sort of *Einfühlung* or empathy for, according to which the other is constituted by *appresentation*, such as an other than I myself²².

The other is *other* than me insofar as it is *similar* to me. In order for a literary entity like Madame Bovary to be *the other*, in order for her to be set against me, as *I myself*, she must exist as a woman in the flesh. It is not an insurmountable problem that she exists as a concrete individual in a world that is spatio-temporally and causally separate from my own; what is imperative is that she have the concrete modality of existence that is typical of human beings.

From the point of view of the *other*, then, the only acceptable realistic solution is that of the possible and impossible worlds, according to which Madame Bovary lives in Yonville, is embittered and disappointed by her husband (just as Lady Diana – only she lives in a different world), has an overwhelming passion for fashion and, above all, is an entity that exists as you and I do. The kind of existence in question here could be defined as “having genuine causal powers”²³, or simply as “having a spatio-temporal dimension”²⁴. As an *other* of this kind, Madame Bovary undoubtedly becomes of interest to us, even if it is a decidedly inferior interest in relation to the one she inspires in professor Kugelmass, the protagonist of a famous short story by Woody Allen²⁵.

Professor Kugelmass teaches literature at the City College of New York. Frustrated by his second marriage to a very dull woman, he wishes to partake in rigorously extramarital sentimental-sexual adventures without running the risk of being caught and having to divorce. Hence Kugelmass begins his search for “others” with whom he can be unfaithful to his wife, and who won’t give him too many problems. This is how he becomes acquainted with a sort of magician by the name of Persky who has a Chinese cabinet (any reference to J.R. Searle’s Chinese room experiment is purely coincidental: Woody Allen’s story is from 1977, while the famous Searlian experiment is from 1980) which is able to transport people into the world of novels. Indeed, nothing seems more appropriate for satisfying his needs: he must simply be catapulted into the world of fiction, find an agreeable person with whom to have an adventure, and then, at the right time, be brought back into the real world. In fact, this is precisely what happens, at least to a certain degree: Kugelmass is catapulted to Yonville where he relishes with the most coquettish and unsatisfied woman of all novels, Madame Bovary. Yet, as may be expected, entering and exiting the world of fiction changes the course of things. How could we forget the reaction of the Stanford professor who, pleasantly surprised by the reading of the novel after Kugelmass’ umpteenth trip from one world to the other, tells his students:

²² Husserl 1950.

²³ Castañeda 1989.

²⁴ Williamson 2002.

²⁵ Allen 1977.

«Well, I guess the mark of a classic is that you can reread it a thousand times and always find something new»²⁶?

Unfortunately, as in all acclaimed love stories, things between Madame Bovary and Professor Kugelmass become complicated, particularly when the Chinese cabinet is used not by the perfidious professor, but by the capricious young girl to go shopping in New York. The episode between the two is further complicated when the Chinese cabinet is unable to bring Madame Bovary back to Yonville, keeping her in the real world beyond the time permitted and risking the highly dangerous metaphysical mutation that transforms a literary object into a common lover. Things are later resolved, as in all celebrated love stories, yet the threat was substantial.

In any case, Kugelmass was able to love Madame Bovary, watch her and search for her, precisely because she was the same as a real woman in many regards, with the exception of her spatio-temporal collocation. This is why the concept of fictitious literary objects offered by the theorists of possible and impossible worlds is the most advisable in accounting for fictitious literary objects insofar as *others*: because it presents them as being metaphysically similar to us, with the only difference being that of living in different worlds. Nonetheless, as fascinating as it may be, the theory of possible and impossible worlds is very dangerous. One need only think of what happens to the poor professor who at the end of the extraordinary incident is able to send Madame Bovary back to Yonville for good, but, still in search of secure adventures in other worlds, is transported by mistake into the pages of the textbook, *Remedial Spanish*. There, he not only avoids all risks, but he experiences the thrill of living in a world of syllables and accents.

Apart from what Madame Bovary might be, what is it that we truly like about her (independently of Kugelmass)? Perhaps, deep down, it is the very fact that, whatever she may be, she can never be *other* than ourselves, strictly speaking, because a magic cabinet will never allow us to meet her and know her – for the simple reason that Madame Bovary is not someone whom one meets. In relation to us, it could be objected, she is really a *kind of different thing*.

²⁶ *Ivi*: 38.

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