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Orchestrating Flaubert

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The article discusses the problem of homogenizing and hegemonizing (philosophical) discourse by analysing the protocols of interpretation in postcolonial criticism (Edward Said), literary theory (Jacques Rancière) and musicology (Theodor Adorno) on two instances of novelistic literature/music: *Mme Bovary* of Gustave Flaubert and *Symphony no.3* of Gustav Mahler. The analysis, based on the concept of *mortlavia* (Derrida) is centered on the (troubled) relation between the author (his life and death) and the text (his work).

Fast könnte man sagen, daß vom Tempo, der Geduld und Ausdauer des Verweilens beim Einzelnen, Wahrheit selber abhängt: was darüber hinausgeht, ohne sich erst ganz verloren zu haben, was zum Urteil fortschreitet, ohne der Ungerechtigkeit der Anschauung erst sich schuldig gemacht zu haben, verliert sich am Ende im Leeren.

Theodor Adorno, *Minima moralia*, 48.

One might almost say that truth itself depends on the tempo, the patience and perseverance of lingering with the particular: what passes beyond it without having first entirely lost itself, what proceeds to judge without having first been guilty of the injustice of contemplation, loses itself at last in emptiness.

Theodor Adorno, *Minima moralia*, 48.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the imperial agent who comes to a peaceful border town of an unknown empire is wearing sunglasses. He is a bearer of orders. The strange object, rectangular and opaque, covers his eyes and makes his commands difficult to understand. It suggests that there is something uncomfortably inscrutable about him. His eyes can see everything but you cannot see them: at the same time he is an effective presence and an ineffective absence (*cf.* Derrida 1993: 72): a spectre of the empire.





To question discourses and provide answers is a usual and time honoured critical manner from Alexandrian times. It is not perhaps irrelevant that the term was first used in relation to Homeric text, that Bible, or poetic master-narrative of ancient times. The copulating correspondence between questions and answers is lodged in a structure: a structure of command, hegemony and homogeneity. It is difficult to command a discourse on command.

When we think about communication between cultures, we are irresistibly drawn to distant lands and high seas, to *Foe* and *Defoe*, to Kipling's *Kim* and Conrad's *Nostromo*, to empires and the empirical. The empirical, not unlike the empires, invites the proliferation of concepts (Deleuze 1968: 3); novels maintain a loving relationship with the empirical in addition to a more covert one with empires so the pun seems to the point. It is not my purpose to dwell on seas, commands, and empires. The surface research has been done *ad nauseam*. You get sea-sick on high seas. I want to dwell instead, succinctly alas, on spaces, distances and subjects, a completely arbitrary choice. In physical but also in epistemological sense, the distance of colonized lands became reflected in the distancing view of colonizing culture or cultures: the colonizing visualised the colonized as distant and conceptualized them accordingly. Simultaneously, the measure of distance of faraway spaces impinged on the measuring instances, distancing the colonizing. What was lumped together from a distancing point of view in India or Africa went along with a lumping together of the so-called metropolitan culture. In postcolonial criticism, France became as distant as Africa. It is distancing that makes postcolonial criticism possible. Distance, though, is not a thing, it is perhaps a relationship, shared by both the imperial and the empirical, by empires and their subjects (the *sujets* and the *assujettis*). It is a relation of distance that makes empires empires and subjects subjects: they refer to each other while simultaneously differing from each other: the relation is possible only as a duel productive of differences (I follow Nancy 2001: 22 in a different context). The duel is here neither historical nor political, although it was and, of course, still is that; it is a void, a possibility of questioning differences. Can postcolonial criticism be questioned with respect to voids created by distancing, where duels resonate, in W.H.Auden's words, "like vibrations of a bell" when "Every farthing of the cost,/All the dreaded cards foretell,/ Shall be paid..."?





Writing or speaking of or on culture and empires almost always tends to be hegemonic and homogenizing. Empires think themselves as limitless and it is this limitlessness, this absence of borders that sets their limits and commands the imperial. Something similar can be said of novels: they present themselves as worlds, infinite in their finitude, and their infinity constitutes their finitude, sets limits to their use (the same can be predicated about sexual act and sexuality also: the question-answer correspondence is an act of copulation). I want to explore, albeit tentatively and on a minuscule field (so minuscule that it cannot be seen from a distance, except, so to speak, with a magnifying glass and a pricked ear) some consequences of hegemonizing and of homogenizing distantation: I will work through a limit (or passage) of a novel (not surprisingly, because it was a privileged form in postcolonial criticism and is, albeit in fragmentary form, an avatar of the Homeric text in our times), through empty spaces of music (not opera: I am sick of *Celeste Aida* posing as a symbol of colonization), I want to wander through resonating labyrinths of some philosophical and critical texts, all belonging to, broadly speaking, post-modernity. My purpose is not to clear the space for a new vantage point, to set the newest fashion in sunglasses, or to get a firmer commanding grip, just to pose a question upon a void productive of differences. What happens when a novel, that grand other of the culture, is appropriated as a being of a colonial culture, as its *sujet* and *assujetti* (I follow, *longo sed proximo intervallo*, the argument of Derrida 1972: xiii-xiv), when a proper name becomes a *propre* of the culture?

I want to question some presuppositions of the critical question, the institution and its protocols, the laws of its procedures, and the aspiration to hegemony and homogeneity. My voice is muted and I am standing *wie nachhorchend*, longing to hear a *vibrato* of minuscule fragments, of self-reflexive gestures involving life, death, difference, space, and otherness (cf. Derrida's gesture of *écriture auto-bio-thanato-hétéro-graphique*: Derrida 2005: 39). I am tempted to add *topic* to *hétéro* but it will perhaps be too much. I am well aware that I might be just exchanging one distance for another, playing like a child with dreaded cards (they foretell my costs and ultimately declare my insolvency too) but it is a risk well worth taking if the structure of command is to be, in the etymological sense, (a)





voided. A gesture then: not a prescription (like a medical prescription, which will procure glasses, and improve your vision), nor a description, a set of commands to execute, but a Derridean-Deleuzean accord, a titillation of the sense(s). Although a discourse on cultures and empires as a relation of non-invasive connection (*cf.* Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 232, their definition of *amour* concluding the thread of my argument: copulation, *rapport sexuel, amour*), may not be possible politically and historically without cultures and empires always appropriating their subject, their *sujets* and *assujettis*, as their being, one is tempted by the abysmal structure (Derrida 1978: 96), the impropriety of the proper.

“Nevertheless [Said was describing the rise of Moslem nationalism], historians have not so readily read the development of French culture and history in terms of Napoleonic Egyptian expedition. [...] Yet what later scholars and critics say about the European texts literally made possible by the *Descriptions*'s consolidation of the conquest of the Orient is also, interestingly, a somewhat attenuated and highly implicit function of that earlier contest. To write today about Nerval and Flaubert, whose work depended so massively upon the Orient, is to work in territory originally charted by the French imperial victory, to follow in its steps, and to extend them into 150 years of the European experience, although in saying this one once again highlights the symbolic discrepancy between Jabarti ad Fourier” [Said was contrasting the text of Jabarti with the *Description* of Fourier] (Said 1993:39). It is a sweeping statement and a veiled injunction, contrasting with a historical voice given to sequels to Jabarti. The fragment contextualizes Flaubert in the wished for narrative of French imperial conquest: in a desperate attempt at equipoise, everything happens as if Flaubert is chastized for failing to produce European counterparts to Moslem fundamentalists. The European scholars, too, are described by what they didn't do: pay attention to French imperialism (however, it has been done subsequently) in interpreting the *oeuvre* of Flaubert. But Flaubert didn't write much about Egypt (he had devised a plan to write an Egyptian novel but didn't do it); he wrote, in *Salammbô*, about ancient Carthage. Strangely, the relation of *Salammbô* to French colonial aspirations in Maghreb is not envisaged. So far, I sketched the problem in negative terms, responding to the logic of implication (infolding and





involvement in the etymological sense of Latin *implico*) commanded by Said's discourse. In positive terms, in terms of the logic of explication (in the etymological sense of unfolding or spreading out of the Latin *explico*), what exactly is conjured by my apparently innocent statement *Flaubert wrote* when I am speaking about the fragment of Said's text speaking about those who write today about Flaubert? Said is careful and uses the noun *work* and the verb *working* throughout: "Flaubert's work", "Conrad and Flaubert, writers who worked..." (Said 1993: 197): are we supposed to think that while those from the 90's write, Flaubert only worked? I note, also, the obsession with space in Said's text: the *territory originally charted* as a space where distantiation occurs and work gets done.

Contrary to Jabarti, whose work is profusely cited and commented upon, Flaubert makes only a cameo appearance in Said's narrative: he is cited briefly as Kipling's peer, as an analogue of Butler (Said 1993: 188), for his use of history (Said 1993: 92-93), mainly because his *Tentation* takes place in the Middle East, and for "being implicitly involved with imperialism", depicting ironically "imperialists who attempt self-redemption" and suffer distractions (Said 1993: 197). What makes possible and justifies the connection between Flaubert's writing and his implicit involvement with imperialism beyond the historical juncture (Flaubert wrote in imperialist times), the facts of the Roman Empire and the desert of ancient Thebaide? First, particular instances of Flaubert's writing are subordinated to regional, general and fundamental instances (France, Middle East, colonization, imperialism) producing a hierarchic and internally hegemonic discourse. Second, the whole (of imperialism) seems implied in every part of human production, in the broadest sense: implicitly if not always explicitly, imperialism saturates every particle of culture, including novels, especially novels with their loving relation to the empirical, producing a homogeneous subject, a *sujet* who is also an *assujetti*. It is not important whether someone is felling trees or writing novels: it is a question of degree, not of quality. To take the Foucauldian route of escape, to transform this *assujettissement* into the source of freedom would be *de rigueur* here; I am not tempted. *Flaubert wrote*, which is a complicated and multifaceted process without warranty, is transformed into a solid product (of work, like in the factory), with, so to speak, clear conditions of warranty, into Flaubert an ironist,





but still an imperialist ironist, at the same time subject of imperialism and subject to it. *Flaubert wrote* solidifies into an effective and stable presence of *Flaubert* who *worked*, like the imperial agent in Coetzee's novel who was sent from the capital to get things done on the border. The solidification is also an acquisition: only as *Flaubert worked*, can *Flaubert wrote* be acquired as the presence of European imperialist culture, a stable object to be written about: in a way, what was acquired by the historical juncture and a homogenizing discourse (if the whole saturates every particle, than it is not important if Flaubert wrote or worked because it amounts to the same; potential disruptive tendencies of writing are neutralized), becomes in a postcolonial narrative, because it happened on the territory charted by the Napoleonic conquest, inherent in his novels (*cf.* Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 410), a *propre* of a culture, its being, its native soil.

History clearly wouldn't do here. This stabilizing solidification, impeccable in critical and argumentative terms, looks like a play of hide and seek, or like an exorcism: something seems to be exorcized by this clinking of argumentative chains and stylistic variations, notably the act of writing and the writing itself: *Flaubert wrote*. Flaubert is dead, he wrote in the past, he is absent and only as an absence Flaubert can be construed as a cultural presence. In postcolonial criticism, the *propre* of the (imperialist) culture is death; imperialist culture is made of cadavers; paradoxically, and contrary to postcolonialism, imperialist cultural cemetery is not populated only by overworked victims of imperialism from both sides. This movement, resembling self-sacrifice (or sacrifice of the self) constitutes *in nuce* the *tour de force* of postcolonial criticism, of any appropriating argumentation. The other must be put to death to be heard: the dead don't speak and somebody is here to speak for them.

But, ventriloquism, like history, wouldn't do neither. Although Flaubert's novels might be implicitly about past imperial conquest (or when they can be read as explicitly concerned with it, like *Salammbô*, they are muted, hidden, absent), his writing is strangely present. It speaks, eloquently, now like yesterday. Like the imperial agent in Coetzee's novel, *Flaubert wrote* simultaneously declares and contradicts its own presence. In this cultural cemetery a ghost appears, clinking his chains, a spectre without vizier or sunglasses; unlike king Hamlet or the imperial agent in





Coetzee's novel, who didn't write anything, he wears his writing, or his writing wears him. We cannot see him but he can see us. The impeccable historical and critical argumentation is haunted by the spectre conjured by *Flaubert wrote*. It hovers on the margins, or on the limits of the post-colonial cultural cemetery inscribed with sepulchral texts, absent and present, stable and instable, effective and ineffective. Yet this spectre is also made of spectral stuff: he wears his writing or his writing wears him: *Mme Bovary c'est moi*. The spectre of *Flaubert wrote*, because of this *wrote*, is haunted by the spectre of his own writing. What happens to the culture as text and to the texts of a culture if we take seriously this sepulchral murmur, this marginal stereographic activity (cf. Derrida 1972: xix), this phono-graphy so alien to the reasonable voice of a critic and try not to lend it a voice but, literally, to orchestrate it?

Spectrality presupposes death. Spectres differ, so do deaths. *Mme Bovary c'est moi* is a famous statement supposedly uttered by Flaubert, as Mme Bosquet reported to René Descharmes. With time, it became an explicative slogan, firmly lodged in Flaubert's correspondence. Its spuriousness is symptomatic of the way the spectre wears his writing. What exactly is unfolded by *Mme Bovary*, a novel or a character in the novel; what kind of relation is set up by *is*, and finally, what is uncoiled by *moi*: Flaubert, the man, the cadaver, the skeleton in the cupboard, or the omniscient narrator who narrates the story, or Flaubert the canonical author, or the famous cryptic *nous* or *we* from the beginning of the novel (*nous étions à l'étude lorsque...*)? To affix stable meanings to parts of this statement would lead to a standstill. Instead, it is the instability, the differed reference that makes it interesting: the cadaver refers to the man, the man to the novel, the novel to the cadaver, life to death, novel to autobiography and vice versa, in all possible combinations of the *chassé-croisé*. *Alors sa situation, telle qu'un abîme, se représenta*, says the narrator about Ema just before she takes the arsenic (MB, 578): a pattern appears, a *mise en abîme* structure connecting *Flaubert* to *wrote* where everything refers to everything differing simultaneously from each other in a desperate attempt to resonate "like vibrations of a bell".

It is from one particular death that the slogan gets its power of unfolding the difference. Emma committed suicide at the end of the novel.





Elle n'existait plus, closes the chapter on her death (MB, 589). "I am Emma Bovary the character of the novel": only when I am dead can I establish identity between the self and the character in the novel. The maze uncovered by the apochryphal words points to a death certificate: as a death certificate, *Mme Bovary c'est moi* marks the advent of Flaubert the spectre who wears his writing or is worn by it. "I am the narrator of the novel": the *nous* from the beginning, taken together with the omniscient narrator of the novel, represents the *abîme* and points uncannily to the situation of absent presence, of effective ineffectiveness. But, as if death could be experienced only as the death of the other and as if the death of the other represented the constitutive moment of the self (cf. Derrida 1999: 64-65), Emma dies for Flaubert to permit him to write his own biography, his autobiography. "I am *Mme Bovary*, the novel": autobiography becomes thinkable only as a novel (the autobiographic fragments of Flaubert's *Novembre* testify to its impossibility). Simultaneously, the maze points to an obituary notice. As an obituary notice, *Mme Bovary c'est moi* mourns the impossible attempt to make biography and *oeuvre* coincide. [Coincidence is exactly what critical discourse tries to achieve with its logic of implication: by making biography and *oeuvre* coincide, it produces hierarchized homogeneous statements, thus appropriating novels as *propre* of the culture and (high, literary) culture as *propre* of, *entre autres*, colonial, imperialist life]. Death and obituary notices permit life to be told, demanding new deaths, new certificates, and new obituaries.

In the moment just before taking the poison, Emma appeared *majestueuse comme un fantôme*; when contemplating herself in the mirror just before her death, Emma shed tears (MB 578 and 588), as if she were not seeing herself. The *mise en abîme* structure bridging *Flaubert* and *wrote* is doubled by the *abîme* of Emma's situation bridged by death, the spectrality of Flaubert enacted and pre-empted in the representation of Emma becoming a spectre, from the phantasmatic appearance to the proof of the mirror. The same pattern is repeated constantly, changing spaces, conquering and relinquishing territories, producing voids productive of differences.

Like Eurydice, Flaubert's writing has been abducted from the realm of the dead. Dr Larivière, the famous philanthropic savant summoned to examine Emma on her deathbed, just after declaring that there is noth-





ing to be done for her, *sortit comme pour donner un ordre au postillon* (MB, 585). The postillion drove him from another world, the world of science, probity, real goodness, caring and kindness (MB, 584) totally opposed to the charlatanry of Emma's world. At the beginning of her marriage, postillions took part in her dreams: *Dans des chaises de poste, sous des stores de soie bleue, on monte au pas des routes escarpées, écoutant la chanson du postillon, qui se répète dans la montagne avec les clochettes des chèvres* [note the repetition, *clochettes des chèvres* repeating itself in *le sourd murmure des syllabes latines qui tintaient comme un glas de cloche* of Emma's death, 588] *et le bruit sourd de la cascade. Quand le soleil se couche, on respire au bord de golfe le parfum des citronniers; puis le soir, sur la terrasse des villas, seuls et doigts confondus, on regarde des étoiles on faisant des projets. Il lui semblait que certains lieux sur la terre devaient produire du bonheur, comme plante particulière au sol et qui pousse mal tout autre part* [note the repetition of places producing happiness in the world of Dr Larivière: the two worlds meet only to announce unequivocally Emma's death] (MB 328). [English translation: In post chaises behind blue silken curtains to ride slowly up steep road, listening to the song of the postillion re-echoed by the mountains, along with the bells of goats and the muffled sound of a waterfall; at sunset on the shores of gulfs to breathe in the perfume of lemon trees; then in the evening on the villa-terraces above, hand in hand to look at the stars, making plans for the future. It seemed to her that certain places on earth must bring happiness, as a plant peculiar to the soil, and that cannot thrive elsewhere.] Her dreams gain consistence against her life with Charles: *La conversation de Charles était plate comme un trottoir de rue, et les idées de tout le monde y défilaient, dans leur costume ordinaire, sans exciter d'émotion, de rire ou de rêverie* (MB, 328 [English translation: Charles's conversation was commonplace as a street pavement, and everyone's ideas trooped through it in their everyday garb, without exciting emotion, laughter, or thought]. It is the difference between her married life and her petty circumstances on the one hand and the world of dreamed happiness on the other that drives Emma to her death and permits her life to be told as a story, as a novel. The difference is spatial: what makes the novel possible are, literally, the spatially moving sources of sound: from the conversation of Charles to the song of the postillion re-echoed by the mountains, along with the





bells of goats and the muffled sound of a waterfall, from Emma's dying shrieks to the murmur of Latin similar to the death knoll, the marginal phono-graphy points to the abysmal void productive of differences, of remembrance and mourning turned into writing. "The sense here is the *renvoi*, the resonation, the reverberation: the echo in the given body, i.e. as that given body, moreover, i.e. as a gift to self [*soi*] of this given body" (Nancy 2002: 78 analyzing timbre): *Mme Bovary, c'est moi*, body gained through spectrality, life gained through death, *mortlavie*, the unfamiliar self clothed in the sound of familiar other.

[*Bei vielen Menschen ist es bereits eine Unverschämtheit, wenn sie Ich sagen* (In many people it is already an impertinence to say 'I', Adorno 2005, 29): who, among the many others contained in *Mme Bovary*, might sympathize with that *moi*, that 'I' who affirms *Mme Bovary c'est moi*? It might be Lestiboudois, the child who was in love with Emma, the only character in the novel who, after her funeral, cried, even if it was for a lost utensil (MB 602-603). I sympathize with the child Lestiboudois, playing myself like a child with dreaded, but marked cards.]

To Emma, Paris looked like an ocean (MB 344): irresistibly, we are driven back to long distances and nauseating high seas. The gesture of self-sacrifice of the postcolonial critic seems to repeat itself in the novel, unseen, unheeded and silenced by the *Flaubert worked*. Or is it that the critic, trying to still the echoes, silence spectres, and smother all sound, desperately securing his own birthplace, his native soil where novels thrive as plants peculiar to the soil, necessarily repeats Emma's gesture?

It is difficult to silence spectres, even by appropriating novels as a being of the culture. In terms of the logic of explication and unfolding, the structure of *mise en abîme*, lodged in the fracture of stolid solidities, in its inner margins, reappears, re-echoing the song of the postillion beyond the goat bells and the muffled sound of a waterfall. It is clothed in the familiar garb of cultural analysis, of the cultural and the trivial, the authentic and the inauthentic, the banal and the tasteful. *In the debased and vilified materials of music he [Mahler] scratches for illicit joys. He takes pity on the lost, that it should not be forgotten and should be grafted to the good form that will preserve it from sterile resemblance to itself. How ingeniously he gathers up the heteronomous, the dregs for the autonomous structure, is attested by the scan-*





*dalously audacious posthorn solo in the Third Symphony. [...] If banality is the essence of musical reification, it is both preserved and redeemed by the inspired, improvising voice that animates the concrete. Thus the music incorporates even the fracture without which the whole would disintegrate. But at the second entry of the posthorn the violins, in Mahler's score direction (wie nachhorchend) are "listening for it", as if they were shaking their heads [Beim zweiten Auftritt des Posthorns aber horchen, nach Mahlers Vorschrift, die Geigen diesem nach; als schüttelten sie den Kopf darüber]. By reflecting the rejection of music by taste as impossible, as kitsch, they affirm the possible, without which breath could not for a second be drawn" (Adorno 1976: 36-37: 1960: 54-55). Adorno's analysis of the famous Scherzo or Tierstück of Mahler's so-called Nietzschean Third Symphony can be read as an ingeniously apt phonographic orchestration of Emma's dreams, of *Mme Bovary*.*

It is of little importance that Lenau's Romantic poem *Der Postillon* (de La Grange 1983: 991) might be an (apochryphal) explication of the mood of the movement, as *Mme Bovary c'est moi* was an apochryphal source of explication of the novel; it is irrelevant that there is no trace of Mahler ever reading, let alone admiring Flaubert. Mahler cared little for realist or naturalist literature – Dostoyevsky is an exception-; he nurtured a particular fondness for the likes of Novalis, Jean-Paul, E.T.A Hoffman, Hölderlin and, above all, Goethe (Solvik 2007: 25). It is perhaps of some importance that the reception of Mahler's Third was somewhat similar to the reception of Flaubert's novel: Mahler's symphonies were judged as excessive as Flaubert's descriptions. Flaubert was denounced by a contemporary French critic for putting on the same level „the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the big and the small, the living creature and the insensible object, the soul and the matter“ (Pontmartin cited in Rancière 1998: 183). A contemporary German critic, duly astonished by Mahler's mastery of orchestration, denounced in his Third „a number of grotesque, trivial and purely exterior“ details, a mixture of „incomprehensible platitudes“ and the noble altitude of the Adagio „comparable to the highest achievements of the symphonic literature“ (Lessman cited by de La Grange 1979: 268). Flaubert and Mahler belong to the same order.

In Adorno's text Mahler's music is treated like a novel. "From a kind of basic musical existence, popular music [*Volkstümlichen*] are to be de-





rived the mediations by which alone existence is justified as meaningful. Thus, in historical philosophical terms, Mahler's form approaches that of the novel. Pedestrian the musical material, sublime the execution. No different was the configuration of content and style in the novel of novels, Flaubert's *Mme Bovary*" (Adorno 1976: 61; 1960: 83). It is of course questionable whether popular music represents the basic musical existence. The dreams of Emma, the songs of the postillion, the bells of goats and the muffled sounds of a waterfall, "manifest its own origin, unfold the sedimented powers of its own thickness" (Rancière 1998: 44, drawing on Novalis). Similarly, Mahler's musical material, *Die Post im Walde* theme for example, however debased, vilified and pedestrian, is „composed with a greatest artfulness as an image of untroubled beauty" (Franklin 1991: 63 translating Eggebrecht 2003: 196: *als einen Inbegriff unberührter Schönheit*). To infer origin from cultural value associated with Flaubert's or Mahler's "imaginary folklore" (de La Grange 1979: 90), especially in historical philosophical terms, amounts to a non sequitur: in all their banality, Emma's dreams are equally sophisticated as the explications offered by the philosophical posthorn, which contemporary critics thought absurd (Hirschfeld cited in de La Grange 1984: 453). Dreams and posthorns are always "already heard [or written] and divided between singularity and collective resonance in the encompassing symphonic [or, I would add, novelistic] environment" (Pauset 2007: 98). For all his admiration for Mahler, the conjunction of Flaubert and Mahler points to Adorno's ironic but also problematic stance.

At the beginning of the XXth century, German critic H.Kipper, alien to Mahler's aesthetic, qualified his Fifth Symphony as a "musical novel", following the term of Gustave Charpentier's (de La Grange 1983: 494). "[...] Adorno was fully aware of that curious *fin de siècle* phenomenon whereby the musicality of literature and the narrativity of music exerted mutual fascination" (Williamson 2007: 270); he applied novelistic categories to symphonic material. What enables the novel, that "zoological garden of modernity" (Certeau) to analytically accommodate a symphony? The musicality of literature, the narrativity of music and their mutual fascination belong to the same historical order of visibility (or audibility). In the XIXth century Romantic literature questioned the representative





order of *Belles Lettres* in terms of fiction, genre, convention, and actuality (Rancière 1998: 20-25), deployed a “new regime of adequation between signification of words and visibility of things” and transformed literature “in the mighty machine of auto-interpretation and re-poeticization of life, capable of transforming all waste of ordinary life into poetic bodies and signs of history” (Rancière 2007: 24 and 39). Mahler’s musical writing doesn’t transpose literary plots into music, like Schumann’s *Manfred* for example, or tell stories comparable to stories narrated in the novels. It doesn’t represent; rather, in the sense that Proust’s writing is musical (or pictorial), it “expresses”: “not the literal echo” but “the sound of nature”, «mystic and monstrous» (Mahler’s words reported by Bauer Lechner 1998: 211, 226 and 76). Like the novels which make things speak, unifying “the multiplicity of atoms of thought with things exploded in the dance of corpuscles” (Rancière 2007: 71), it makes things exhibit, *wie ein Naturlaut*, their sonorous nature. In his musical writing a symphony, a “world built with all the resources of the available techniques” where “the content, continually new and changing, determines its own form” (Bauer Lechner 1998: 46), belongs to the same order as a XIXth century novel, that “genre of what is without genre” (Rancière 1998: 29).

The heteronomous: on the one hand, popular music, pedestrian and vilified materials, dregs, the lost, sterility, the self as the same, forgetfulness like the conversation and life of Charles; on the other, all integrating whole, the good form, the autonomous structure, the sublime execution, remembrance, like the novel itself. Between them a fracture, redeemed by the sublime whole. “The formal impulse [of the Third Symphony], notes Adorno, is the spatially moving source of music” (Adorno 1996: 79), like, in *Mme Bovary*, the pavement of the street pitched against steep roads, mountains and shores of gulfs. Adorno’s irony successfully conceals his command of the discourse of command; Adorno puts questions and provides answers, securing the question-answer correspondence by the implied question-answer structure of the *Posthorn episode*, mapped onto fractured cultural space. The vulgar *Posthorn* questions, the elegant violins listen and whisper the answer; music as correspondence, or “penetration of extremes” (Adorno 2002: 603) affirms the possible, maintains the possibility of life by healing the fracture between banality and taste: *darum*





sind seine Brüche die Schrift von Wahrheit, a script of Truth (Adorno 1996: 216). But, in this second entry (cue 27 and 28 of the score; the repetition is crucial), can the violins be said to answer while listening for it? (The same question can be put to Emma: does she really listen for the song of the postillion or only acts as if she were listening?). Eggebrecht correctly notes that there is no sign of the animals 'shaking their heads' over the melody of the posthorn (*die Violinen singen in zartester, terzenseliger Geigenschönheit die schönste Stelle der Posthornweise nach*: Eggebrecht 2003: 196). In his score directions, Mahler was precise: the *ppp* of violins is described as *wie nachhorchend*, as if listening for it. Transforming the *wie*, the *as if* in the indicative (*aber horchen* in the original), and displacing the *wie* to his own commentary (*als schüttelten sie den Kopf darüber*), Adorno's text enacts the penetration, thus performing a gesture similar to the exorcism of *Flaubert wrote* in Said's text. If the whole saturates every particle, it is its sublimity of the whole that annihilates the banality of sources and spaces while maintaining them: in the end, in the perspective of hope and celestial joy, the origin of music becomes irrelevant, "a musical never-never land - a time where there were not any themes as firm possessions" (Adorno 2002a: 613).

There are no zoos in never-never land, at least not those which represent the variety of unchanging animal species. To interpret the *Scherzo* in terms of the grotesque (Revers 2007: 99-100) is, in the end, to forfeit interpretation: *grotesquerie* is at pains to elicit meaning from its dissolution because it clings to representation, even if it relinquishes anthropomorphism. Parody doesn't go far, either; it confirms the absolute mastery of the interpreter over the interpreted sense leaving, paradoxically, the charge of banality unanswered (*cf.* for the problem of banality in Mahler research, Williamson 2007: 268). «Parody supposes always somewhere some naivety, flanked by the subconscious, and the vertigo of non-mastery, the loss of knowledge» (Derrida 1978: 80). If Mahler's music is treated as a novel, as a language to be understood and mastered (there is a connection between a mastery of discourse and the structure of command), it is a language not of signs but of passwords (Adorno 2002: 606, citing horn as Mahler's key password). Instead of signifying and representing, passwords only open doors for us to peek: they give entrance to a realm





of human relations instituted in the sonorous matter (Deleuze 1988: 26, explaining Châtelet). Those relations are not personified or zoomorphic, or, more aptly, they dissolve zoomorphism they were based on. Adorno was perhaps unconsciously aware of that. In his analysis of the *Scherzo* he gradually abandoned zoomorphism, as Mahler abandoned his incipient zoomorphic programmes: what was at first interpreted in terms of *Tiersymbolik*, animals fleeing the human invasion (Adorno 1996: 8-9; 1960: 16) becomes, in the second attempt, a conflict of abstract, human values. But dissolution cannot be stopped: once passwords are used as meaningful and the entrance gained, there is no return to any possible or hoped for fixity of meaning, just the endless differing of reference. As in the famous episode of *comices agricoles* in *Mme Bovary*, where “the respiration of things liberated from the empire of significations” is opposed to “the hermeneutic murmur of the universal decipherment of signs” (Rancière 2007: 35), Mahler music opposed “a sort of face-pulling and tongue-poking on the part of all Nature” (Bauer Lechner 1998: 176) to its representative and solidifying, sonorous decipherment. For example, the abandoned programme of the 1st movement, *Pan erwacht. Die Sommer marschiert in*, points to the dissolving of the cultural and social depth of the concept of Pan – Dionysius: what is left is a trace of Pan, the syrinx, his *instrument des fuites* (S. Mallarmé, *L’Après-midi d’un faune*), embodied in its modern avatar, the posthorn, which literally transforms the respiration of things into sound: „it is the world, Nature as a whole, which is aroused from unfathomable silence to sound and resonance” (Mahler’s letter to Richard Batka, 18.11.1896, trans. in Blaukopf 2000: 120).

Resonance: Adorno’s *Motifkritik* sets dissolution in motion; motion questions hegemony and hierarchy of decipherment and undermines the very foundation of it: the possibility to affix stable meanings to themes. Mahler’s abandonment of programmes implies the repudiation of fixed, stable meanings. In never-never land, themes, which cannot be firmly possessed, have no meanings as firm possessions. Moreover, contrary to Eggebrecht who, like Adorno, maintains that the posthorn stands for the realm of Otherness in the movement (*das Andere ‘an Sich’*: Eggebrecht 2003: 195), the Other, in never-never land, has no fixed abode. It is because Mahler’s never-never land is a land of pure intensities, of constant becom-





ing: when the posthorn, poetical *instrument des fuites*, is recognized as a symphonic *ligne de fuite* (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1975: 24), humans escape into animals and animals turn humans, forms get dissolved and deformations become forms, signs turn insignificant. To resonate with Foucault speaking about Raymond Roussel (Foucault 1963: 20): every possibility of meaning is simultaneously fulfilled and ruined, filled and emptied by the possibility that there is another, this one or that one, neither this one nor that one but a third, or none.

The *Posthorn episode* is repeated twice in the *Scherzo*, formally „the more elaborate version of the Minuet’s A-B-A-B-A structure“ (Floros 2000: 100; Franklin 1991: 61). The repetition with displacements is embarrassing the order centred on return and recuperation with transformation and dissolution (cf. Boulez in Pauset 2007: 46). It points, first, to the insecurity of redemption. The healing is attempted and never secured: like in *Mme Bovary*, spaces, even fragmentary, and as if glimpsed in imaginary distance, maintain their menacing, disintegrating force. Second, it points to the whole of the Symphony: if the Symphony is to be read like a novel, than the *Posthorn episode* cannot be isolated from the whole and from its *clôture*. At the very end of the Sixth movement, generally considered as “optimistic” (de La Grange 2007: 415), celebrating “transcendent reconciliation” (Franklin 1991: 71) where “the painful interludes’ gradually dissolve into a ‘blessed confidence’” (Floros 2000: 107), the barrage of tympani, striding with bass instruments from tonic to dominant and marching towards the last, prolonged chord of D major (Franklin 1991: 76), provocatively makes the limits of the founding concepts of music vibrate by marking the imminent beginning of silence and introducing alien sounds into music of attained celestial joy and eternal love: like postcolonial criticism and the novel, the music becomes obliged to think the sound, resonance, and unfathomable silence (in Mahler’s words), to think her other in its own limit (I am following Derrida 1972: i: *coup de tympan*) and produce «something so distant from what exists that it almost cannot be called music» (Bauer Lechner 1998: 76 reporting the words of Mahler). In hindsight, the *wie nachhorchend*, the as if, becomes as if but not: violins do not listen to the posthorn, they just appear to be listening, they are just hearing the posthorn, as Mahler indicates, *in weiter Ferne* (and only just, excellently rendered by the 2002





Boulez recording). Like the song of the postillion in the novel, the posthorn is always here, to call, to invoke the presence of limits to themselves (cf. Nancy 2002: 42, definition of music), always distant in its proximity. It is this invocation or evocation, this distant nearness that maintains the structure of *mise en abîme* in Adorno's presumed fracture: like the *abîme* represented to Emma in the moment when she takes the poison, the *abîme* hinted at by the invasion of tympani into the music of celestial joy, repeats the *abîme* constituted by the cultural limits of music, reopening the interspace of phono-graphic activity (sources, sounds and scripts: Nietzsche, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* poem). Violins are not listening; as if listening, they resonate gently with the melody of the posthorn; implied in the *abîme* of communication with what they are supposed to listen and integrate but never really succeed, they mark the void productive of differences where "only music can transport us from one extreme to the other" (reported by Bauer-Lechner 1998: 175: Mahler explaining the *Scherzo*). Mahler's music is the script of truth because it maintains a void, not because it bridges it.

As far as I know, Mahler never said anything similar to *Mme Bovary c'est moi* with respect to his Third Symphony. However, in the letter to Ana von Mildenburg, written during the composition of the *Tierstück*, excusing himself for his neglecting her when composing, he wrote: "In those moments, I don't belong to myself, and it couldn't be different" (cited in de La Grange 1979: 565). I don't belong to myself: he is not forfeiting his life to "the demonic principle of art, a principle which, [as he puts it, some years later, in a letter to Alma Schindler explaining the fate of Antonia in 'The Tales of Hoffman'] once it has taken hold of the person, invariably constrains them to abandon their individuality [and] possesses them to the point of physical collapse" (Mahler 1995: 49). The "I" stands: to whom, or to what, does he belong then while composing? Who is he who does not belong to himself? Mahler is simultaneously himself (he writes letters, directs, composes, and loves, has a life) and not himself (he does not have a life): to a person he loved, he is an ineffective presence and effective absence, a spectre wearing his composing. Some years later Alma Schindler described him in her diary as "the fellow [...] made entirely of oxygen"; she "felt nearer to him from a distance than from near by" (Mahler-Werfel 1998: 443 and 449). Like Flaubert's, Mahler's spectre





is haunted by the spectre of his music which, simultaneously, affirms and annihilates his self: like Flaubert's spectre, his spectre is also worn by his composing: *Man komponiert nicht, Man wird komponiert*. "One doesn't compose; one is composed" (Bauer Lechner 1998: 212).

Mortlavie: like Euridice, says Adorno, Mahler's music has been abducted from the realm of the dead (Adorno 1976: 56; 1960: 80). That's what I meant when I said that I was playing with dreaded, but marked cards. Like Emma dying for Flaubert, the founding concepts of music must succumb under examination, must die in order to permit the music to take place. Just as Flaubert can exist only if his novels accomplish "the ruin of any stable economy of fictional enunciation and its submission to the anarchy of writing" (Rancière 1998: 86), Mahler as music can exist only when music is dead. Mahler's is this extraordinary decision, always remade and rethought, always to be remade and rethought (Deleuze 1988: 23, defining Châtelet's views on music). The *Posthorn episode* can be described as the agony of the founding concepts of music, the moment when Mahler as music, as a self who belongs to himself, can begin to exist. Yet he cannot belong to himself because as a composition, he is already dead, the other: like *Mme Bovary c'est moi, I dont belong to myself* mourns the impossible attempt to make biography and musical *oeuvre* coincide. "When I am dead [...] this [i.e. his work] must be taken as *music*, and only as that" (Bauer Lechner 1998: 227): in order to institute human relations in the sonorous matter, one must relinquish humanity: it is his composing, like Flaubert's writing, that literally embodies the *mise en abîme* structure, gives him a body, a body of music as *renvoi*: "I don't belong to myself."

No matter how potent our magnifying glass is, there always remains, banished outside its field of vision by an optical illusion, some Emma or a *Posthorn episode*, hovering on the margins, longing for projects and places which necessarily bring happiness, repeating itself compulsively in the *mortlavie* of the reader, writer or listener, producing spectres who sing, speak and write, who wear their writing or their music and are worn by them. All that phono-graphic activity of the other in the same, unseen and silenced by the „the pre-critical relation to the signified, the return to the presence of the word, the natural language, perception and visibility“ (Derrida 1978: 94), annihilated in the name of the centre





and the sameness, of science and political correctness, of the imperialist gesture of command that abolishes imperialism, glimpsed as something discomfotingly inscrutable in the reflections of the sunglasses of Coetzee's imperial agent.

Yet, "if that is correct", he said [admiral Andrea Doria speaking about Osmanli Turk or Ottoman navy: Rushdie 2008: 172], "than are they truly our enemies? Is our proper adversary not our antithesis? Can the face we see in a mirror be our foe?"

Every farthing of the cost,
All the dreaded cards foretell
Shall be paid, but from this night
Not a whisper, not a thought,
Not a kiss nor look be lost.

W.H. Auden, January 1937.

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Članak raspravlja o problemu hegemonizirajućeg i homogenizirajućeg (filozofskog) diskursa analizirajući protokole interpretacija u postkolonijalnoj kritici (Edward Said), književnoj teoriji (Jacques Rancière) i muzikologiji (Theodor Adorno) na dva primjera romaneskne književnosti/glazbe: *Mme Bovary* Gustavea Flauberta i *Trećoj simfoniji* Gustava





N. Ivić, *Orchestrating Flaubert* - SRAZ LIII, 87-107 (2008)

Mahlera. Analiza, utemeljena na konceptu *mortlavia* (Jacques Derrida), usredotočena je na (uznemiren) odnos između autora (njegova života i smrti) i teksta (njegova rada).

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