Dancing in Postcolonial Spotlights

The possibility to perceive postcolonial structures within the dance scenes in *India Song* and *Beau Travail*

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Abstract

This thesis studies the complex relationship between the concept of art cinema, dance performativity and postcolonial theories, with two dance scenes from *India Song* (Marguerite Duras, 1975) and *Beau Travail* (Claire Denis, 1999) as a point of departure. The method is to do a close reading, through the theoretical scopes by among others David Bordwell, Patrice Pavis and Richard Dyer. These scenes respectively will be analyzed and finally, there will come a comparative analysis between these scenes as well as my analysis of them. The conclusion is that these dance scenes proves that the link between the significance of memories of the individual characters and the past of a nation is post colonialism. In the final discussion, I provide some critical reflections especially about the relationship between art cinema and postcolonial theories and suggest that the next step of this step might be discussions about the relationship between art cinema, postcolonial theories and morality.

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Filip Hallbäck

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

No other nation, with the exception of the United States of America, has had such a position of being an authority on cinematic development in a global context than France. Historically, Europe overall and France in particular have had fraught, yet creative tensions with its rival Hollywood. The aesthetic definition of the European film has resulted in *realism*, which in practice means distancing European culture from Hollywood. France has the largest film industry in Europe: extensive state protection measures, a rich, diverse cultural history and a robust "realist" tradition.[1] The historiography of cinema usually begins with the Lumière brothers and their efforts towards the end of the 19th century in France. During the 1910s and 1920s, the style of impressionism had a significant impact on the art of cinema, with names such as Abel Gance, Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac and Jean Epstein. During the rise of WWII in the 1930s came the era of "poetic realism", with names such as Jean Vigo, Jean Renoir and Marcel Carné who had a great influence on cinematic aesthetics. Later during the postwar era (in the 1960s), the French new wave revolutionized cinema with its experimental approach, with names like Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Éric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol. During the 1970s, French cinema returned to more conventional forms, yet had traces of the experimental trends from French New Wave. Notable film includes *Le Charme discret de la Bourgeoise* (Luis Buñuel, 1972), *La Nuit Américaine* (Truffaut, 1973), *La vie devant soi* (Moché Mizrahi, 1977) and *Préparez vos Mouchoirs* (Bertrand Blier, 1978). All of these films won the Academy Award for Best Picture in a Non-English Language.

In general, there were not many films during the 1980s in parity with previous groundbreaking films from the new wave era, possibly with the exception of *Diva* (Jean-Jacques Beineix, 1981). However, several "New Wave"-directors was faithful to their

[1] Chaudhuri, Shohini, *Contemporary World Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p 14-15

artistic integrity and offered the audience some vital film productions, such as *Sans Soleil* (Chris Marker, 1983), *Vagabond* (Varda, 1985) and *Au Revoir, Les Enfants* (Louis Malle, 1987). After the end of the Cold War during the beginning of the 1990s, collaborations with other nations, such as Poland (*Tricolor*-trilogy, Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1993-94-94) and Vietnam (*Cyclo,* Anh Hung Tran, 1995) received widespread attention and international awards. Since the beginning of the second millennium, French cinema still offers vital films, such as *the Taste of Others* (Agnès Jaoui, 2000), *Amèlie* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001), *La vie en rose* (Olivier Dahan, 2006), *The Class* (Laurent Cantet, 2008), *The Artist* (Michel Hazanavicius, 2011), *Amour* (Michael Haneke, 2012) and *Blue is the warmest color* (Abtellatif Kechiche, 2013). and *Beau Travail* was produced.

As the film scholar Martine Beugnet points out, ever since the *French New Wave* in the late 1950ies and the beginning of the 1960ies.[2] Many within the film industry as well as in the Western academy consider France to be a film nation of progression, mostly because of the boasting of a strong counterculture. A nation that, as Beugnet formulates it, "constantly challenges a longstanding tradition of centralization."[3] French cinema provides a reflexivity that operates between cinema and the broader public, as their film contributes to current debates. For practical explanations as well as historically and cultural reasons, Paris has for a long time been regarded as an "inescapable feature of French cinema" [4] and attracted generations of filmmakers all over the world to subsidize its myth. Beugnet also states that one specific trend within French cinema during the 1980s was not only various narrative styles, but even the body representations became more diverse. Earlier, French films often used Paris for its romantic aura and for portraying people from the white middle class, but the city became more peripheral with increased diversity. These multiethnic trends resulted in a new realist tradition that took its form in the 1990s, far away from French cities and its suburbs to more unfamiliar locations for the cinematic gaze. The tradition of realism was connected to earlier time periods of European cinema, e.g. the poetic realism in France in the

[2] French New Wave (La Vague Nouvelle) was a film movement of filmmakers that became famous for their rejection of film conventions and instead created new images through editing, camera positions and visual styles. French New Wave is considered to be one of the most influential movements in film history, with names such as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Éric Rohmer, Alain Resnais, Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol and Agnès Varda.

[3] Beugnet, Martine, "French Cinema in the Margins, in European Cinema" in *European Cinema*, Ed. Ezra, Elizabeth (Oxford University Press, New York, 2004), p 297

[4] Ibid, p. 289

1930s and neo realism in Italy in the 1940s. Behind the audiovisual magnificence portrayed within the cinematic composition, there were often hidden ideological meanings.[5]

The debate about realism is recurring, at least in connection to cinematic movements with "realism" in its name. One can ask, "whose realism?" One central impact when discussing realism is with the background of war and political oppression and its phases. One of the phases in the history of cinema is to provide a reward for the nation that fought and won, and now wishes to have a glorious position in the history books. Cinema contributed to this ambition, by demonstrating "realism" through the moving images. The perceptions of these "realisms" were invented after two world wars, but the notion of cinematic realism continued to revitalize when marginalized voices and bodies came to cinematic power.[6] How have films produced in these countries related to whiteness, racism and colonialism? Perceptions are more or less always embedded in a historical understanding, and so are distinct interpretations of moving images in different national contexts. A film that is produced in France can be received one specific way in France, but in other ways in countries in Asia, Africa and South America. Powerful film nations, such as France and USA, tend to approach supposedly universalism, where there is meaning, influence and acceptance as their national culture becomes transnationally adopted and diversified with other nations cultures. In that sense, globalization is not a value-neutral concept, but rather full of implicit national discourses. What if one uses the word "Americanization" or "Europeanization"? Something happens to the analysis, making it clear that the term connects with geographical continents and their claim to be a cultural power on the global arena. The same with the concept of colonialism or postcolonialism. Cinema contributed to this ambition, by demonstrating the realism through the moving images. The perceptions of realism were invented after two world wars, but the notion of cinematic realism continued to revitalize when marginalized voices and bodies came to cinematic power.[7] The former colonized voices and bodies enter the world of the progressive city, and challenges the naturalized ideals of whiteness.[8] These multiethnic trends result in a new realist tradition that takes its form in the 1990s, away from France and

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[5] Ibid, P 293

[6] Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, "From neorealism to realism", in *Theorizing world cinema* (ed. Nagib, L, Perriam, C. and Dudrah, R. I.B. Lauris, London, 2012) p. 151

[7] Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, "From neorealism to realism", in *Theorizing world cinema* (ed. Nagib, L, Perriam, C. and Dudrah, R. I.B. Lauris, London, 2012) p. 151

[8] Beugnet, Martine, "French Cinema in the Margins, in European Cinema" in *European Cinema*, Ed. Ezra, Elizabeth (Oxford University Press, New York, 2004), p 284-285

its suburbs to more unfamiliar locations for the cinematic gaze. However, the tradition of realism did connect to earlier epochs of European cinema, for instance poetic realism in France during the 1930s and neorealism in Italy during the 1940s. Behind visual beauty in the composition, there were often hidden political meanings,[9] but not only that. The relationship and connection to other nations became more prominent, for example in films such as *Indochine* (Régis Wargnier, 1992) and *The Double Life of Veronique* (Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1991). The topics of ethnicity and identity in French film created the umbrella term "cinema de banlieue". This cinematic trend helped marginalized ethnic groups from being portrayed as stereotypes by the white majority society to reclaim their rights to their own stories and cultures. With this background in mind, *India Song* and *Beau Travail* becomes even more fascinating to watch, since both of these films are written and directed by women directors and that both of these films also seem to reach a white intellectual middle-class audience. The characters are operating in an early post-colonial era, where they somehow need to "find a way" to integrate within this new epoch through the dances.

With this thesis, I want to raise a discussion about the topics of cinematic imagery and the phenomenon of postcolonialism. Given that France was one of the former colonial powers in the world, I would like to raise questions about the image of French cinema when scrutinizing two French produced films that approach the colonial past of this nation. The relationship between audiovisual media and postcolonial theory is interesting, as it uncovers layers of hidden power structures of various levels. The structures of postcolonialism tell something about human relationships and civilization, in which race and ethnicity plays a significant role. It connects to the gaze of the audiences and to the frames of social and cultural references as we watch stories on the silver screen. The connection between these fields also raises vital questions. For instance, whose bodies are being portrayed? What is the narrative of the story and how is it visualized? Does the audiovisual story contain traces of colonial notions? Are these colonial traces being reproduced in a film? Do the structures of postcolonialism always need to be visualized in order to be "seen"?

One essential question that I have been interested in for a long time is about the development of methods to decolonize the gaze, when watching films. I am interested in this topic, because it raises the question of whether to strengthen or weaken power structures

[9] Ibid, P 293

through what we watch, and how we can create methods that avoid reproducing what we criticize. I have found two dance scenes in two different films with postcolonial motifs that I will look into. It is *India Song* (Marguerite Duras, 1975) and *Beau Travail* (Claire Denis, 1999). The selected scenes have both similarities and differences, which makes it interesting to do an analysis. But not only that. It becomes even more interesting when mentioning that Denis had a connection to Duras in real life, stating the following in an interview in *The Guardian* back in 2010:

> "Marguerite Duras was a very good friend of mine and an intellectual hero. She was also a sort of mother figure. Of course, she was an influence. We had a lot in common in our backgrounds. But you have to remember, too, that French colonialism was not just the same experience all over the world. In Algeria the *pieds noirs* [French settlers] thought that they actually lived in a country called French Algeria and that this was their homeland, even if it was only a fantasy. For people like Marguerite and me, in Indochina or black Africa, we grew up somehow with the sense that we didn't belong, that we were outsiders. So, yes, there are things about that way of growing up that never leave you. There is a sense of marginality perhaps. That is definitely so."[10]

Duras was born in French Indochina (now Vietnam)[11]. During the 1930s, she moved to Paris, where she stayed until her death in 1996. In her career, she has presented her films in festivals, in New York, Berlin and Cannes. Among her films are *Nathalie Granger* (1972), *India Song* (1975), *Le Camion* (1977) and *Les Enfants* (1984). Denis was born in Paris, but raised in colonial French Africa (Burkina Faso, French Somaliland and Senegal) where her father worked as a civil servant.[12]. In the 1970s, she took her exam from the film school IDHEC. She then worked with short film productions and as a director assistant. During the 1980s, she succeeded to get funding for her feature film debut, *Chocolat*, which had its premiere in 1988. She has continued with writing and directing her own films, e.g. *S'en fout la mort* (1990), *J'ai pas sommeil* (1994), *Beau travail* (1999), *The Intruder* (2004), *White Material* (2009), *Let the sunshine in* (2017) and *High Life* (2019). Duras and Denis, who were raised in ex-colonized areas, have their audiovisual references related to their experiences as white people walking around places that used to be colonized by France. They

[10] The Guardian https://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/jul/04/claire-denis-white-material-interview (2019-05-23)

[11] New York Times Archive (1996) https://www.nytimes.com/1996/03/04/nyregion/marguerite-duras-81-author-who-explored-love-andsex.html (2019-02-15)

[12] Prospect Magazine (2010) https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/loving-the-lost-and-monstrous (2019-02-15)

seem to have taken their phenomenological references and transformed them into personal and distinctive cinematic languages. Two languages where not the narration itself is necessarily central, but rather the images that seem to be inspired by their visual experiences. The characters in the two films that I have selected seem to represent the former French colonialism.

1.2. **Purpose and method**

My purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate how postcolonial structures can be revealed in scenes in which the protagonists are dancing. Nevertheless, the purpose is not a complete mapping of *India Song* nor *Beau Travail*, but rather a reflective text with scenes from these films as illustrative examples.

Based on postcolonial theories, the method when uncover the postcolonial structures within the scenes will be to do a discursive close reading[13] of the selected scenes. The definition of the concept of *discourse* in this thesis will connect to the tradition that has been established by Michel Foucault.[14] There will be three steps within the analysis disposition: first a study of *India Song*, second a study of *Beau Travail* and third (and last), a comparative analysis of both the scenes from these films. All three chapters will include the aspects of the concept of art cinema, dance performativity and postcolonial theories.

1.3. **Delimitations**

India Song and *Beau Travail* open up many interesting ideas and perspectives for extensive analyzes, not at least in technical aspects e.g. the camera position, sound editing and mise-en-scène as well as the film aesthetic historical references. However, this thesis is not at all the right place to give such a comprehensive picture. Instead, this paper will only deepen on the content of the two separate scenes, which are sufficiently within the framework

[13] The method of close reading originally comes from the field of literature studies. Close reading is an interpretation of brief passages in a text. In the field of film studies, it is rather usually used as a interpretation of brief passages in an imagery

[14] An exact definition of the concept of discourse is difficult to formulate, as Foucault himself is not rigorous in his own use of the term. A common definition of the concept of discourse is what linguist Malcolm Coulthard more or less describes as a complex process when thought or utterance leads to an action. In this thesis, the concept of discourse can be regarded as a specific perspective – e.g. postcolonial theory – that highlights the scenes. Coulthards studies can be found in e.g. *Advances in spoken discourse analysis* (Routledge, 1992)

of a master thesis. There are numerous dance scenes in *India Song*, but I have only selected one (that appears during the time of 01:09:05-01:20:45 in the film). It would be interesting to analyze more dance scenes, but since this is a comparative analysis, I have to delimit the number of selected scenes. In *Beau Travail*, there are only one[15] and it appears in the final scene.

These are scenes, whose forthcoming analysis mainly intends to focus on representation, the theory of postcolonialism and cinematic expression, in accordance with the purpose of the thesis. Even though Duras and Denis are filmmakers with distinguished cinematic artistry, this thesis will not to concentrate on them as *auteurs*[16] nor compare the selected films with other work they have written and directed. To the extent that other film titles – either of these directors or other directors – might be mentioned, it is only done for supporting the analysis of the scenes, not to involve a film historical approach.

1.4. Previous research

Since French cinema has a central place in historiography of world cinema, there have of course been much research upon its field. One of the internationally most renowned scholars of European cinema in general and French cinema in particular is David Bordwell, who have scrutinized the characteristics of *art cinema*. His recurring methodology is to compare European cinema to Hollywood film and find dissimilarities between these cultures and their aesthetics and artistic influences. Bordwell will be necessary when writing about French films that do not relate to traditional dramaturgy in its narration, but is rather experimental in its storytelling. There are also studies on French cinema from postcolonial viewpoints available, among others the anthology *Cinema, Colonialism, Postcolonialism* (1995) that provides essays with critical perceptions on French cinema and its relationship to colonialism. Numerous of them have a poststructuralist approach to the moving images of the

[15] Actually, in the beginning [00:00:40] there is also a dance scene in a nightclub to the song of *Kiss Kiss* (by Şımarık). White French soldiers dance together with these women, but is not a traditional dance scene; meaning that the dance itself is integrated with the story from the protagonist's subjective point of view, unlike the final scene.

[16] Auteur is a film director, who has a recognizable style in their films that can be identified. A simple historical overlook: the term was coined in the late 1940:ies by André Bazin and Alexander Astruc and dubbed into a theory by American critic Andrew Sarris. Later, it was launched by François Truffaut in 1955 articles. The term itself is controversial: on one hand, it highlights the personal signature of the filmmaker, on the other hand, a film production is a collective process, involving many competences that together creates an entirety.

past and the present, trying to identify the underlying assumptions behind the film products and their cultural and historical facts.

The relationship between film and postcolonial theory have otherwise been a gaudy progression since the 1970:ies, but has been various in different continents. In Europe, cultural expressions have been viewed based on postcolonial motives, given that Great Britain, France, Spain and Portugal were strongholds of colonialism and whose colonial heritage still lives on today. Throughout history, Europe has had a claim to be a leading authority in the world, in terms of knowledge and standard. Europe attempts to make a claim to be in central, something that came to coin the concept of Eurocentrism.[17] In America, postcolonial theories have been strongly linked to the history of the transatlantic slave trade and its abysmal impact on the emergence of "the land of dreams", in the form of racial segregation and discrimination perpetuated through legislation. Postcolonial theories have marked a paradigm shift in film studies, as it not only aims to scrutinize the body representations, but the gaze as well. The impact of the theories in research within humanities has in practice meant that several film scholars have begun to look backwards and began to develop various methodological inputs to decolonize the cinematic gaze, in order to thereby observe hidden layers of power orders. In this process, it is not just about a few film productions, but largely the whole of Western film history.

When it comes to film studies, several influential theories of postcolonialism have often begun its implementation in other areas than just film studies. For example, psychiatrist Franz Fanon[18], literature scholar Edward Said[19] and culture theoretician Gayatri Spivak[20] have scrutinized the Western gaze within humanities and since the 1970s, their critical perspectives have expanded and included other types of media, among other the film medium. Postcolonial approaches have sometimes had its impact through reinterpretations of existing theories, such as feminism, marxism and psychoanalysis – for example by Laura Mulvey, who wrote about

[17] Eurocentrism: a perspective that indicates that the norm of the point of departure is rooted in a normalized European viewpoint. It is important to say that the postcolonial criticism to eurocentrism does not offer "non-Western knowledge", but rather an understanding that the notion of knowledge might partly be a product of Western structures and that there is an underlying cultural logic of the late capitalism in this "knowledge".

[18] Fanon, Franz, *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952; Pluto Press, 2017)

[19] Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, 1978; Ordfront, Stockholm, 2004

[20] Spivak, Gayatri, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstole: Macmillan, 1988)

the male gaze.[21] Mulvey's theory has widened and interpreted in postcolonial scopes, among others, by film scholars E. Ann Kaplan and Ella Shohat. Postcolonial perspectives within the area of film studies contains a wide range of critical angles, not rarely hand in hand with the intersectional dimension that have grown since the 1990s, in the development of Judith Butler's feminist theory.[22] Sandra Ponzanesi and Marguerite Waller describe the film medium as "translation".[23] In films that address postcolonial topics, cinematic tools demonstrate how mediating structures play key roles in how the narrative processes, receives and responds to the past. In that perception, there can be no comprehensive perspectives as the epistemological challenges constantly develop and reach new points of explanations. Colonial images contain commotions that earlier confirmed imperial epistemologies. When colonized voices bring criticism in response to these images, there are targets of criticism towards the logics of the Western cinematic language. Rebecca Weaver-Hightower and Peter Hulme have continued to develop the theories presented by Ponzanesi and Muller by claiming that postcolonialism is not a notion, but rather a vital perspective targeted on all areas in humanities. One of their central arguments is that postcolonialism is not confined within a particular time, space or specific, but rather fluid, yet always present, which is quite a paradox.[24] Martine Astier Loutfi points out that explicit political contemplations were absent in early cinema, the films contributed to a popular vision of colonized countries and its citizens that served French national interests.[25] This subtle colonial shadow has rested upon the development film ever since. The viewpoint in this thesis will primarily focus on the cinematic gaze and the symbolic interpretation within the multi-dimensional protagonists. Several of these films serve as remarks on colonial/postcolonial discourse: there is a subtle element of a game with mythical imagination that attempts to move the character away from an agonizing political awareness.[26]

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[21] Mulvey, Laura, *Visual pleasure and narrative cinema* (1975; Grin Publishing, 2008); the male gaze is an act within visual culture that depicts the world from a white, masculine, heterosexual perspective in which women turns into sexually objectified for the pleasure of the male viewer. The "white gaze" follows a similar pattern, but from the perspective of the representatives of the Western colonizers in which racial and ethnic minorities turn into "exciting objects".

[22] Butler, Judith, *The Gender Trouble* (1990; Routledge Classics, 2006); Butler confronted the dominating idea of gender as inherent understanding and claimed that gender is the result of acts of performativity, not phenomenology (which is a philosophy of Edmund Husserl, who concerns upon the systems and the phenomena that appears in the act of the consciousness).

[23] Ponzanesi, Sandra & Waller, Marguerite, *Postcolonial Cinema Studies* (Routledge, 2011)

[24] Weaver-Hightower, Rebecca and Hulme, Peter, *Postcolonial Film: History, Empire, Resistance* (Routledge, 2014)

[25] Astier Loutfi, Martine, "Imperial Frame: Film Industry and Colonial Representation" in ed. Sherzer, Dina, *Cinema, Colonialism, Post-colonialism: perspectives on the French and Francophone World* (University of Texas Press, Austin, 2014), p 21

[26] Astier Loutfi, Martine "Imperial Frame: Film Industry and Colonial Representation" ed Sherzer, Dina *Cinema, Colonialism, Postcolonialism: Perspectives from the French and Francophine World* (University of Texas Press, 1995), p. 28

The work of Duras has mainly been analyzed specifically within the field of literature studies. For example, literature scholar Regina F. Bartoline wrote about the way Duras formed a language of pain and concluded that Duras had to challenge the literary forms. By doing this, Duras redefined the way her readers understand feminine subjectivity, the female body, colonial structures and Western hegemony.[27] Literature scholar Sirkka Knuuttila studied how Duras fictionalized trauma and how she developed the methods to write stories that can be unleashed from the emotional memories. According to Knuuttila, the characteristic of Duras literary style is contradictive: she is telling the story and telling the absence of a story.[28] There is not much written about Duras as a filmmaker, with the exception of what has been written in particular about *Hiroshima, Mon amour* for which Duras wrote the script. Donato Totaro praises the choice of Duras to have written the film's script, for she gives the film its modern consciousness, a style that "downplayed [the] plot and action in favor of more reflexive meditations on the narrative process, language, temporality, memory, and subjectivity".[29] Sarah French is not as enthusiastic as Totaro; she problematizes the narrative structure of portraying memories of a topic that reflect broader historic events. The subjectivity of the character becomes limited, as her memories of a painful past seem to represent something bigger, which risks individualizing the trauma of a society.[30] The work of Denis has been examined in several articles, especially Beugnet, who wrote a book containing interviews and critical reflections upon the aesthetics of Denis.[31] Beugnet and Jane Sillars describe how *Beau Travail* establishes the legion as a metaphor for the French colonial project, through the camera's way of creating an idealized and mythical space of universality.[32] Film scholar Susan Hayward investigates in one of her articles how Denis' films represent effects of colonialism and post-colonialism on the psyche of the colonizer and the colonized, and how Denis reveals the diversities of colonial and post-colonial bodies.[33]

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[27] Bartolone, Regina F. *Re-thinking the Language of Pain in the Works of Marguerite Duras and Frida Kahlo* (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2006)

[28] Knuuttila, Sirkka, *Fictionalising Trauma The Aesthetics of Marguerite Duras's India Cycle* (Helsinki University, 2009)

[29] Totaro, Donato, 'Hiroshima Mon Amour', Offscreen Journal, August 31, 2003

[30] French, Sarah, 'From History to Memory: Alain Resnais' and Marguerite Duras' Hiroshima mon amour', Melbourne Art Journal, Issue 3, 2008

[31] Beugnet, Martine, *Claire Denis* (Manchester University Press, 2004)

[32] Beugnet, Martine & Sillars Jane, *Beau travail: time, space and myths of identity* (Routledge, 2014)

[33] Hayward, Susan, *Claire Denis' Films and the Postcolonial Body - with special reference to Beau travail* (1999), (Routledge, 2014)

India Song and *Beau Travail* have been subject to film studies before, also for postcolonial approaches. One article that most thoroughly deals with a comparative analysis of *India Song* and *Beau Travail*, and which is close to my upcoming analysis, is written by Laura MacMahon. She refers to a philosophy formulated by Jean-Luc Nancy[34] and among other things, writes that these films "combine an emphasis on materiality with modes of anti-representational minimalism, decoupling film from the constraints of narrative in an elaboration of the textured facticity of images and sounds".[35] MacMahons text is a contribution to the growing field of film-philosophy, with its specific focus on the conceptualization of cinematic spectatorship on film bodies. Even though her article is interesting, the choice of philosopher and his views are almost too specific, which means that it does not fit nor is relevant within this thesis.

[34] The Nancean philosophy is about deconstruction of touch, visibility and subjectivity in films, with inspiration from among others Jacques Derrida.

[35] McMahon, Laura, *Cinema and Contact: The Withdrawal of Touch in Nancy, Bresson, Duras and Denis* (Maney Publishing, Leeds, 2012)

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Composition

As mentioned in the previous chapter, postcolonial studies is a field that has grown gradually during the 20th century. The area is complex, because postcolonial processes happen gradually and are rarely linear. The definition of postcolonialism that I relate to will be the traditional one that describes the cultural legacy and the human consequences of former exploitation of colonized lands and its habitants. Since the field of postcolonial theories and studies have increased during the last decades in diverse competence within humanities, it is not possible for me to bring a total overview of its progression. Instead, I will choose those theories that have relevance to the upcoming analysis.

The three upcoming analyses of the scenes from *India Song* and *Beau Travail* will instead be based on the understanding of the European art cinema tradition, as formulated by David Bordwell. This will connect to the knowledge of dance performance theorized by Patrice Pavis and finally land in a discussion on the basis of postcolonial spotlights on these scenes with several postcolonial theorists in general and Richard Dyer in particular.

2.1. The concept of art cinema

As mentioned earlier, David Bordwell has scrutinized the characteristics of *art cinema* by comparing European cinema to Hollywood film – in which he finds dissimilarities between their artistic influences. The definition of art cinema is by two principles: *realism* and *expression that resembles writing*. The concept of art cinema defines itself as realistic, using authentic environments and reflecting on "existing" problems, such as contemporary exclusion or lack of communication between people. The most "authentic" element is that art cinema involves psychologically complex characters. In that sense, art cinema relies on psychological causes. The key is the role-players' influence on the environment. Characters within "classic cinema" have clear characteristics and goals; art cinema does not have it in the similar way. Options are vague or non-existent within art cinema. Characters can even disappear and never return, without the audience getting any explanation. The sequences of

events can lead to absolutely nothing. While Hollywood's protagonists aim for a purpose, the scenes slide from one situation to another.[36]

Trying to identify a form of production does not fully distinguish the concept of art cinema, as art cinema does not consist of formal characteristics and conventions. On the other hand, the function of the style and themes within art cinema remains extraordinarily unchanging. The stylistic principles of art cinema prescribe a logical, conditioned form of cinematic discourse. Art cinema tends instead to emphasize the intrigue, not the story itself. The audience plays with the narrator. Both the realism and the style of expression reminiscent of writing can seem like these different forms try to agree, but art cinema attempts to find solutions through sophisticated methods and is non-classical in the way that they deviate from narration norms, resulting in gaps and problems. These deviations are still stationed and thus restored as realism (i.e., nothing is predetermined) or as authoring comments. When role characters are confronted with a problem that is of causal relationship, vigilance and spatiality, the audience primarily seeks a realistic motivation within the framework of the film's story (example: is the character causing the feeling of uncertainty?). If the audience feels opposed, then the audience seeks a response to the actual meaning of the film.[37] The "classic narrative film", rooted in studio-functional creation in Hollywood since the 1920s, rests on particular assumptions about the narration construction and the cinematic expression. The logic is based on "causes that give effects", which results in a narrator component depicting his story in psychologically defined, goal-oriented characters. The narrative space, in terms of time and space, constructs as a chain representing this cause/effect logic. In conclusion, cinematic representation utilizes the fixed frame by cutting, scenography and sound effects.[38]

2.2. Dance performativity

Sociologist Helen Thomas describes dance in terms of symbolism within the body representation and its actions within specific artistic contexts. Before the rise of modernism in the 1920:ies, the dancers were supposed to follow the convention and embody, convey and

[36] Bordwell, David, *Poetics of Cinema* (Routledge, New York, 2008), p 153

[37] Ibid, p 156

[38] Bordwell, David, *Poetics of Cinema* (Routledge, New York, 2008), p 152

reproduce a sense of beauty to the audience in his/her physical movements through a strict physical schedule. With the rise of jazz during the 1920:ies, these traditional conventions were challenged and revolted in the name of modernism.[39] The historiography of the modern dance in the Western world is rather complex, but I mention this to provide an image of the dance as a multifaceted art form and it has connections to specific time periods. Otherwise, I will refer to one of the foremost experts in performativity in film, television and theater, Patrice Pavis, who claims that there is a need for a theoretical framework beyond psychology, regarding the actor and/or dancer. Pavis means that it is not certain whether it is possible to establish a comprehensive theory of the actor, because of the many dimensions and perspectives it involves, e.g. intercultural, anthropological and psychoanalytical approaches. Among other things, Pavis writes that "[e]ach historical period develops its own normative aesthetics that defines itself in contrast to those preceding it". [40]A recurring position, however, is about the human body as an instrument for artistic design. In traditional theater research, the human body is considered a systemic manifestation of emotions, or as Pavis describes it: "… In theater, it is transposed into a series of standardized and codified emotions that represents identifiable behaviors that, in turn, generate the psychological and dramatic situations that constitute the framework of the performance".[41] Nevertheless, dancers do not have to imitate an action, the same way as actors have to. The reason is that the dance is not structured into the narrative logic, but a dance movement can still integrate itself in the film and support the motif within a scene.[42]

In dance scenes in films, the conventional way of supporting the motif within situations in scenes is to turn the dancing actor into representatives of opposites that together create a dialectic that drives the course of events forward. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, for instance, in films such as *Top Hat* (Mark Sandrich, 1935) and *Swing Time* (George Stevens, 1936), represent two different gender roles in their choreography. Astaire provides spontaneous manhood, but with an elegant physical control, while Rogers is in a gender-related subordination in relation to Astaire. In *Le Bal* (Ettore Scola, 1983), people who enter one and the same ballroom in France provide different dancing styles. These dances between the different classes and generations represent a 50-year-old cultural historical

[39] Thomas, Helen, *Dance, Modernity and Culture – Explorations in the Sociology of dance* (Routledge, 1995), p. 102

[40] Pavis, Patrice, *Analyzing Performance – Theater, Dance and Film* (The University of Michigan, 2003), p. 63

[41] Ibid, p. 125-126

[42] Ibid, p. 56

development. When the dance scenes are filmed, it usually takes place in a total image from the camera in order to maintain and perpetuate the feeling that the scene intends to evoke.

2.3. Postcolonial theory and audiovisual media

Richard Dyer is one of the most influential names, when it comes to critical whiteness studies. Nevertheless, he provides perspectives on portrayal of whiteness in films, not postcolonialism, which is something different. Whiteness and decolonization have close ties and some distinctions. If one should categorize them simply, in order to make them understandable, one could say that whiteness is about the portrayal of bodies and the gaze, while decolonization is about awareness of our thoughts, feelings and knowledge, and its connection to the impact of colonial heritage. The reason Dyer will be the one I will refer to the most throughout the analysis is simply because his theories and its practical application are clearly connected to the portrayals within audiovisual media. Even though he tends to materialize the notion of whiteness, he creates a good balance between the concrete material and the more abstract elements. Critical whiteness studies have otherwise come from an American tradition (theories have been developed by names like W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, Ruth Frankenburg and David Roediger), while the notion of decolonization comes from the philosophy of indigenous people (and those theories have been developed by names like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Walter Mignolo, Vuokko Hirvonen and Linda Tuhiwai Smith).

There will be some more theoreticians in postcolonial theories to be referred to, yet more in passing. Before connecting Dyer's text to postcolonial theory in film, I will introduce Dyer. He writes that whiteness is racial imagery that structurally manifests and reproduces throughout visual culture. The explicit ideals of whiteness do not always need to be visualized to be "seen", which is a paradox. As Dyer says, "whiteness as race resides in invisible properties and whiteness as power is maintained by being unseen." [43] Whiteness is a visual marker and, at the same, a sign of what is colorless because it cannot be seen: the soul, the mind, the death, etc. The white complexion of the human body is like a shell that contains power values of purity, knowledge and beauty. In this perspective, race and gender are linked,

[43] Ibid, p 45

as white bodies in culture are locating historical, social and cultural differences of the body that have "accorded themselves a special relation to race and thus to their own and other bodies."[44] The analysis of Dyer mainly focuses on the materiality and the visual human body in particular films in Hollywood during the first half of the 20th century. It is not a remarkable point of departure, since Hollywood film productions for a long time have reproduced ideals of whiteness due to the American patriotism and imperialism.

Many researchers point out the significance of history writing, in relation to postcolonial theories. Who speaks and acts, who listens and reacts? Once again, these questions above are results of personal reflections, but also a vital part of the analyzing process. Questions raise questions, and there are – as far as I am concerned – never one answer, but rather many interpretations. With this theoretical framework above that includes the power of memories and a historical oppression, the analysis of two dance scenes will even become more fascinating as hidden layers of naturalized power structures become observable.

[44] Ibid, p 30

4. Analysis

The dance scene between Anne-Marie Settrer (Delphine Seyrig) and the vice consul of Lahore (Michael Lonsdale) in *India Song* (Marguerite Duras, 1975).

India Song (Marguerite Duras, 1975)

3.1. Description of the dance scene

India Song is about a wife named Anne-Marie Settrer (Delphine Seyrig) who is bored with life and begins new love affairs with a different man inside the French embassy of India. Anne-Marie Settrer is generally inside a magnificent building that belongs to the French Embassy. None of the characters ever speaks in dialogues, only in voice over. The slow, somewhat melancholic piano song *India Song* recurs frequently in several scenes. She dances with her husband, the ambassador, and with his friend and another character with the nickname “The Male Virgin from Lahore" (who is the vice consul from Lahore, who is portrayed by Michael Lonsdale).

[01:09:05] In this room, there is a piano, a white, little porcelain vase with roses, two table lamps a bit apart from each other, and a couch with the same color as her dress. The floor is pale, as are the walls and moldings. She walks in an elegant red evening dress as she

watches her own mirror reflection that covers the wall. In a voice over, she says “boredom is personal” and that “almost nothing is possible in India. Neither pleasure of pain, easy or hard to live in India”. The camera position is stationary as she walks from the right side to the middle of the screen and watches her own mirror reflection. The vice consul of Lahore shows up from behind her, dressed in a white tuxedo and black trousers. She turns around with her back on the mirror reflection, as the mirror illustrates how she passes by him. He stays, as she turns around to him once again, but this time behind him. He also turns to her and moves slowly towards her. Film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum described the tempo in this film as "a plausible reaction to the interplay between the sounds and images".[45] The sound in this film is the primary narration component and the images secondary.[46]

The characters never speak in verbal dialogues, only through voice-over. This type of cinematic communication might indicate that silence is a language. They share subjective yet incoherent thoughts directly with the audience, making their own voices autonomous. This non-verbally language seems to have another specific function: to portray memories. This film is like a book due to its components and circulates in memories, by using narrative and narrating voices. In a dialogue, a verbal/textual exchange of views is constructed which is conveyed to the intellect, but image memory is all the stronger than words. The reasoning can be condensed by referring to the famous proverb that "an image says more than a thousand words". The audiovisual is addressed more effectively to human minds, compared to text.[47]

The camera is constantly motionless to the mirror capturing the movements of these characters, but moves away from them by turning around with no editing. The camera shows her husband, the French ambassador, standing at the piano (where there also is a photo of her mother) in a black tuxedo and smokes a cigarette. In the same moment, he blows out the smoke from left and the smoke from incense smoke comes from the right as in a symbiosis against a black background (that is a dark room with white door frames). The camera continues to move to the right of her husband, passing a big table lamp and three empty glasses (but also windows with white frames and red curtains), but then the "real" Anne Marie

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[45] Rosenbaum, Jonathan, Sound and vision (films by Marguerite Duras), (Chicago Reader, 1995)

[46] Hallgren, Metha *India Song – Ett exempel på filmberättandets möjligheter,* (Stockholm University, 2000); in this master thesis from Sweden, Hallgren describe in detail about the use of sound in *India Song* and how it breaks with the cinematic conventions, by making the narrating voices autonomous in relation to the imageries. The actors acted upon what they heard during the shooting of these scenes. They heard the recordings of their own voices that were actually played in the background.

[47] Münsterberg, Hugo, *The photoplay: a psychological study and other writings* (1916; Routledge, New York/London, 2002), sid 99

Settrer and the vice consul from Lahore is shown and the camera stays statically and observes them. Their dance moves are intimal, but tightly controlled. They keep on dancing, moving right and leaving the screen, as her husband enters from the left side. The vice consul then moves backwards with his back turned away from her husband with his black tuxedo as he moves from the right side to the left in his white tuxedo. The camera never moves, but remains static.

3.2. The correlation to the concept of art cinema

Everyone and everything in this scene acts monotonously, which in a way could be interpreted that the monotonous tone in the sound and imagery might psychologically break down the characters. Bordwell writes, "By treating narration as the process of guiding our comprehension of the story, I don't mean to suggest that stories aim at full disclosure. Filmmakers want us to construe the story, moment by moment, in a certain way, and that way can involve a lot of diversions and blind alleys".[48] *India Song* might provide a look at characters trying to live their lives in the postcolonial world and tell the audience something implicit about the significance about memories, pain and human consciousness, but they are not "doing" philosophy. The spectator does philosophy, not the films itself.

There is no clear dramaturgical structure about the wishes of Anne-Marie Settrer, as the static camera position conveys – except that she – in the voice over – claims that she is bored. It is uncertain how she actually feels for the vice consul from Lahore. Pain and caress, at the same time, perhaps. The narrative itself could relate to the concept of art cinema, as the way David Bordwell frames it. The way this scene is portrayed could relate to art cinema, the way Bordwell formulates it. It involves multifaceted characters who come and go, without giving any (clear) explanation.[49] Dramaturgically, at first sight, the scene could be interpreted as a triangle drama, because Anne-Marie Settrer dances with another man instead of her husband. Nevertheless, once again, there is no clear conflict nor point of views of the characters in the imagery.

However, there seem to contain a psychological dimension within this scene, as the borders between reality and dream subtly erases when Anne-Marie Settrer approaches and

[48] Bordwell, David, *Poetics of Cinema* (Routledge, New York, 2008), p. 99

[49] Ibid, p 153

moves away from the mirror. During the 1960s, there was a paradigm shift in the film-theoretical discussion, related to the poststructuralist theory development inspired by psychiatrist Jacques Lacan's concept of "mirror stage".[50] In this scene, the mirror could have a symbolic purpose and function as a visual confrontation during an identity process of Anne-Marie Settrer as she meets vice consul from Lahore. The camera observes the encounter between Anne-Marie Settrer and the vice consul of Lahore. First in the mirror and then in reality. In the meantime, the camera movement raises awareness to the audience of the physical presence of her husband. It seems that the ambassador knows that his wife dances with another man, but he reacts indifferently to their interaction.

In this scene, there also seems to exist a dimension of melancholy. When Anne-Marie Settrer enters all by herself to the living room of the French embassy building, the sound of violins and wind instruments does not exist in the room itself, but within the cinematic world (*diegesis*) throughout the scene. It exists in her presence, but not in the sortie of the vice consul of Lahore. The diegetic music is somewhat composed and cold, and does not bring any emotional clarity (e.g. no sorrow nor happiness, just apathy). Therefore, the dance scene could be regarded as an experimental depiction of memory and identity, in which a sharp and rigorous use of incoherent dialogue, slow tempo and non-linear narrative is applied. The sound is essential, not to say primarily in relation to the images.

Perhaps it is there where the heart of postcolonialism lies in this film's language. The subjective voices of the characters are fluid like memories, as they come and go, just like in everyday life as the "reality" is being represented by (moving) images (which are always at the present).

3.3. Dance performativity

The Bodies of Anne-Marie Settrer and vice consul of Lahore seem to carry a symbolic representation that together create a dialectic that drives the course of events forward. Pavis describes this kind of performance in terms of dramatic spaces/stage spaces,

[50] Elsaesser, Thomas & Malte Hagener (2010) *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses, New York*: Routledge., p 74; Lacan stated that the mirror stage played a crucial role in the construction of human subjectivity. It is described as a phase in the development of infants between six to eighteen months. At that age, they cannot coordinate their body system to the extent that they can function as an autonomous subject. However, the children can recognize their mirror image, which becomes an entrance to the symbolic order maintained by language and conventions. The individual child perceives himself as complete through his mirror image and thereby at the same time objectifies and removes himself in order to become one with his own reflection.

that the fictional world and the concrete space creates a language of symbolism. In that perspective, Pavis claims “the spectator/the listener is no longer in position to distinguish what she sees with her eyes and what she perceives “in the mind’s eye, to borrow Hamlet’s phrase”.[51] In this scene in *India Song*, it is more than a dance scene. It carries other dimensions, related to power. Anne-Marie Settrer represents whiteness and womanhood, while the vice consul of Lahore represents non-whiteness and manhood. In other words, there is an intersectional[52] approach in terms of power. She has privilege as a white, but not as a woman. He has a privilege as a man, but not as a non-white. Her husband is white, wealthy man from France, for whom she becomes some sort of trophy. In that sense, he delimits her for her gender, but as a white, she can move freely. The vice consul of Lahore has patriarchal influence since he is a man towards women, but as a non-white, his possibilities of orienting freely in a “white” world is limited. When she dances with the vice consul from Lahore, the power relations change as she turns down his offer. On the one hand, certain things, such as freedom of movement, might stop her because of her gender, on the other hand, her race provides her the very privilege to choose and opt out.

The conceptualization of orientation by cultural theorist Sara Ahmed means aiming at "find way" in unknown terms, i.e. to acquire knowledge from one's life experiences in a world that is initially colored by white and thus also assigns different outcomes of the body, depending on how close they are. Bodies that passes as "non-white" do not earn the same measure of freedom of movement in this system, in relation to "white" bodies. On the contrary, it is prevented by the representatives of whiteness in a way that "white" bodies escape.[53] Since the situation takes place within the building, it could be somewhat regarded as the stronghold of whiteness in the geographical context. The dramaturgy itself is like a house: as spectators, we not only visit the rooms, but we also return to them. It is a performative act. The film title itself refers to a song called *India Song*, which is about the longing for India to find true love.

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[51] Pavis, Patrice, *Analyzing Performance – Theater, Dance and Film* (The University of Michigan, 2003), p. 153

[52] Intersectionality = a theoretical framework that combines several identity dimensions (such as sex/gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, etc.) and creates a mode of privileges and discrimination.

[53] Pavis, Patrice, *Analyzing Performance – Theater, Dance and Film* (The University of Michigan, 2003), p. 63

3.4. The postcolonial spotlight

Anne-Marie Settrer and the French ambassador are representatives of the whiteness, while the vice consul from Lahore represents “the other" (the non-European, who has no name). In this scene, Anne-Marie Settrer and the vice consul from Lahore embodies a global configuration of supremacy, colored by colonial heritage and reflected by the mirror wall. She passes around anywhere around the world, as she likes, while he is dependent on her to move freely – which could be the reason why he wears a white tuxedo. He dresses in white in order to incorporate in the "white" environment, but still have geographical origin that passes him as "non-white". The dancing scene itself takes place within a racial, heterosexual discourse that Richard Dyer interconnects with the necessity of reproducing the differences of the concept of race. Whiteness is about racial imagery that structurally manifests and reproduces throughout visual culture. The explicit ideals of whiteness do not always need to be visualized to be “seen”, which is in itself a paradox.[54] The color of her red dress can be symbolic of passion, but it can also be a symbol of danger and warning. The red color can also symbolize the part of the tricolor that stands for fraternity.

The scene is an experimental depiction of memory and identity, in which a sharp, rigorous use of incoherent dialogue, slow recordings and non-linear narrative is applied. Catherine Portuges describes how the topic of memory became essential during the 1970ies, when women directors in France, which coined the term "cinema of memories". Duras and Agnès Varda, for instance, wrote and directed their own films, in which they often confronted structures of gender, race and ethnic structures of mainstream French cinema. "Female" topics, such as privacy, family, desire and sexuality, were often narrated against the backdrop of the historical crisis of France. Female characters represented subjectivity mostly through their sexuality and usually was someone's wife, daughter, friend, lover, sister, etc. Portuges describe female directorship from this time period as *colonial feminin*, as the film's female characters represent colonial memories of French nation as they cross several borders in the mise-en-scène and female directors appeals to the female part of the Western gendered audience. David Melville reflects upon the popularity of *India Song* as a whole. Among other things, he writes the following: "If the fate of Anne-Marie is emblematic in any way, it is as memorial for France’s (and, by extension, the whole of Europe’s) doomed and misbegotten dreams of colonial empire."[55]

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[54] Dyer, Richard, *White* (Routledge, London, 1997), p 20

[55] Melville, David, 'The Ghosts of Parties Past: Exorcising India Song' (Senses of Cinema, Issue 51, 2009)

In other words, and in summary, Anne-Marie Settrer is a woman voice and body with a symbolic representation. A person who enjoys wealth and privileges, yet she is uninterested in the place and has the prospect to move wherever she wants to. The dance scene contains complexity when illustrating her white privilege as an individual and a kind of symbol for France's colonial past trying to integrate within a new postcolonial world. This symbolic language takes place in concrete place, where structure of power is being observable through the symbolic representation of the white and non-white bodies dancing.

Beau Travail

Galoup dances solo in the final scene in *Beau Travail* (1999)

3.5. Description of the dance scene

Beau Travail is about an ex-Legion officer named Galoup (Denis Lavant), who recalls when he was leading troops somewhere in the African continent. The story is loosely based on the short story *Billy Budd* (1888) written by Herman Melville. The film title itself can be heard in one of speaking lines within the film, when a group of men works hard under the sun. The story is about Sergeant Galoup, who recalls his days in the army travelling through the African continent. Due to a clash between Sergeant Galoup and a younger soldier, Galoup is fired and returns to France.

Before the final scene [01:27:30], Galoup is in his hygienic room and considers committing suicide by shooting his head with a pistol (that is under his pillow). He points his gun on his head, but he does not pull the trigger. Instead, the song *Rhythm of the night* by Corona begins to play and the volume quickly escalates. It works as a passage to the next

scene, which is a dance hall where he is alone, smokes and begins to dance to the music with movements that reminds of training in the army.

3.6. The correlation to the concept of art cinema

According to Bordwell, the film narration circulates around the “film's agent” (protagonist), but also around dialectics, that affects the narrative by dealing with some kind of resistance; the world divides into three dimensions: the story world, the plot narration and the narration itself.[56] Within a film production, Bordwell designates cinematic language as sentences in structures and structures in sentences, using the quote "the poem is commentary on human values and thereby an interpretation of human life".[57]

To bring context, after 1968, an analytic, anthropological perspective began to replace the individual that seized additional dimensions, thus provided reflective interpretations. The semantic fields gave access to a totality and a film's specificity, where desire replaced love, dualistic power replaced fate, subjects/objects replaced the individual and class conflicts as well as cultural struggles became more dominating.[58] Ian Aitken has a similar depiction as Bordwell, as he claims French film generally combines realism with senses of lyricism and means that it is quite noticeable that impressionism comes from the Romantic tradition.[59] Nevertheless, it is not definite whether impressionism should be regarded as either progressive or reactionary. The bourgeoisie class established the Romantic tradition (at least within paintings), but within the context of cinema, there is a subversive control and power with impressionism.[60] Bordwell states that poetics in cinema is able to “reveal both change and continuity within the cinematic tradition” [61] and that the cinema of poetics includes two intertwined disciplines: one is analytical poetry (which aesthetic principles apply?); the other is historical poetry (how is the outcome of the external context affected?). In the final scene of *Beau Travail*, a man who lost his top position in the French army dances all by himself to a contemporary pop song.

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[56] Bordwell, David,, *Poetics of Cinema* (Routledge, New York 2008), p 90-91

[57] Bordwell, David,, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Harvard University Press, 1991), p 108-109

[58] Ibid, p 114

[59] Aitken, Ian, *European Film Theory and Cinema. An Introduction* (Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 69

[60] Ibid, p 88

[61] Bordwell David, *Poetics of Cinema* (Routledge, New York 2008), p 22-23

3.7. Dance performativity

Claire Denis herself has said that dance scenes can reveal very much beauty and about the dance scene in *Beau Travail*, that it was taken by one shot. Once again, Denis speaks through the power of images and seems to leave the imagination to the spectators.

> "But we never rehearsed the dance scene at the end of *Beau Travail*. I told him it's the dance between life and death. It was written like that in the script, and he said, "What do you mean by 'the dance between life and death'?" So, I let him hear that great disco music [*laughs*], and he said, "This is it." So, we didn't need to rehearse. I would be there, and I would let it go. He said, "You don't want us to fix some of it?" I thought it was better to keep the energy inside, because if we started fixing some stuff then we would have made many takes. And we made one take. But he was exhausted at the end."[62]

Like *India Song*, a mirror is in the room. The main difference is that Galoup is dancing alone to pop music in a room that seems to be inside his own head. Throughout the film, he has been in outdoor environments among the young men in the army. There seems to be no sexual tensions in this scene, just liberation of somehow with a poetic audiovisual touch. There are no close-ups. The camera focuses on his body, as he dances in the yellow lighted, glimmering room with some black spots of shadows. There is a mirror covering the wall with flashing lights that reflects his body as it moves around the room to a contemporary pop song. The selection of the song is interesting, because it becomes a time marker in this film. Imagine if the song were by Donna Summer or Bee Gees, then the scene would give a nostalgic sense of the disco era in the 1970s. Instead, it is a popular hit by Corona from the middle of the 1990:ies. Pavis points out music is not objective, which means that music can mean anything and be re-negotiated with the spectator/the listener, depending on the scene context.[63] Thomas mentioned the traditional dance schedule versus the free dance. Galoup holds to strict military movements, yet paradoxically wants to free himself from it.

According to Bordwell, the film narration circulates around the "film's agent" (protagonist), but also around dialectics, that affects the narrative by dealing with some kind of resistance; the world divides into three dimensions: the story world, the plot narration and

[62] Interview with Claire Denis, 2009, http://sensesofcinema.com/2009/conversations-on-film/claire-denis-interview/ (2019-06-07)
[63] Pavis, Patrice, *Analyzing Performance – Theater, Dance and Film* (The University of Michigan, 2003), p. 142-143

the narration itself.[64] Within a film production, Bordwell designates cinematic language as sentences in structures and structures in sentences, using the quote "the poem is commentary on human values and thereby an interpretation of human life".[65] In this scene, a lonely man with a past in the French military who travelled in the African continent, has lost his pride and identity. His future is now insecure and for the moment, he tries to free his body from the past through the power of a solo dance. The film does not offer any direct paths out of suffering, but it portrays inner dramatic durations between the present and the past through the cinematic language.

The scene changes between the dance and memories, providing a sense of nostalgia of Galoup and an attempt to free himself physically from his past. The mirror on the wall behind only shows his back, which can indicate that he turns his back on his past and moves on, and yet he wants to return to his previous work place. He does not remember through his mind, but with his body. His memories are not expressed verbally, but rather physically.

3.8. The Postcolonial Spotlight

The relationship between whiteness and nationality is intimate. The national state and its institutions have authority to judge who belong to the nation. Sociologist Steve Garner describes this power order in terms of "frame composition", which is manifested in historical power relations and prevailing ideologies. Common to all forms of racism is that they result in discrimination and dehumanization of the majority society, something that maintains from a political point of view through the lack of rights and protection in the current legislation.[66] In a way, Galoup illustrates nationality and whiteness quite well. When he loses his position, it is not only the possibilities to make a living that goes lost, but also his identity. Who is this man, without his occupation? What is the nation of France without its colonized territories?

What is otherwise explanation why Sergeant Galoup do not commit suicide, if painful memories haunt him? Why does he keep on living? One of the answers could be that

[64] Bordwell, David,, *Poetics of Cinema* (Routledge, New York 2008), p 90-91

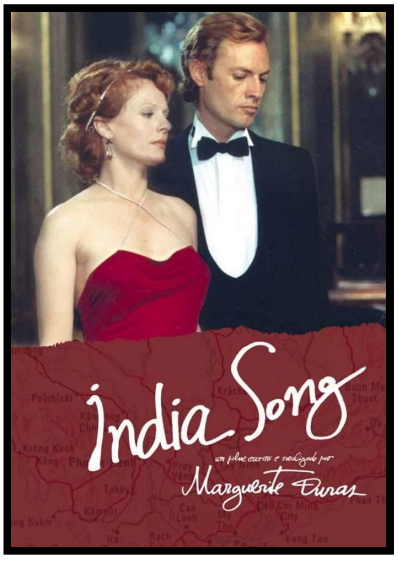
[65] Bordwell, David,, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Harvard University Press, 1991), p 108-109

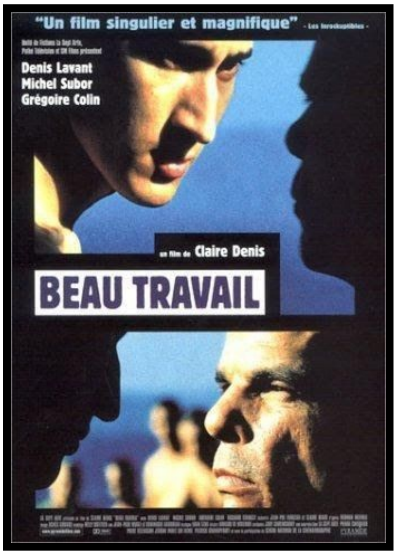
[66] Garner, Steve, *Racisms: an introduction* (Sage Publications ltd, 2010), sid 11

he wants to forget and that the power of memory seems to be an uncontrollable element, but also central when constructing a narrative. A ghost who returns and haunts, when one least expects it. In a way, Galoup embodies the combination of the concepts of nationality and whiteness quite well. The relationship between whiteness and nationality is intimate. The national state and its institutions have authority to judge who belong to the nation. Sociologist When Galoup loses his position in his previous occupation, it is not only the possibilities to make a living that goes lost, but also his identity. Who is this man, without his occupation? What is France without its colonized territories? Film scholar Thomas Elsaesser described the ideological development within the cinema in Europe after the end of cold war as two opposites: nationalism and globalization. These concepts have been redefined during the beginning of 2000s; nationalism means "returning", while globalization emphasizes the suggestion of a united continent beyond national identities.[67]

Denis' wordless image language seems to have the similar function as *India Song*: to portray memories. In the final scene of *Beau Travail*, the man who lost his top position in the French army dances all by himself to a contemporary pop song. The scene changes between the dance and memories, providing a sense of nostalgia of Galoup and an attempt to free himself physically from his past. The mirror on the wall behind only shows his back, which can indicate that he turns his back on his past and moves on, and yet he wants to return to his previous work place. He does not remember through his mind, but with his body. The memories are not verbal, but physical. His dance movements remind of the military training earlier in the film, which might indicate a sense of nostalgia; longing back to an identity associated with high status and privileges.

[67] Elsaesser, Thomas, European Cinema: Face to face with Hollywood (Amsterdam University Press, 2005), Ibid, p 58-59





India Song (Marguerite Duras, 1975) and *Beau Travail* (Claire Denis, 1999)

Comparative Analysis

3.9. The correlation to the concept of art cinema

Film scholar Joseph H. Kupfer means that audiences have references to the world and that films often reflect the interests and values, something that the narrative tends to cover. Still, he does not suggest that interpretation necessarily is only the result of one perspective, but rather that the narrative draws features and orients the audience in one way rather than broadening the perspectives.[68] This is common in Hollywood film productions, but not much in art cinema (since characteristics in art cinema emphasizes audiovisual components rather than story telling) in Europe. In Hollywood productions and in European art cinema, films tend to awake thematic questions and larger meanings about human life. The characters in *India Song* and *Beau Travail* are operating within a postcolonial era, where they need to find a

[68] Kupfer, Joseph. H, ""Film criticism and virtue theory" in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures* (ed. Carroll, N. and Choi, J. Blackwell Publishing, 2006), sid 338

way to integrate themselves within this new era. Film scholar E. Ann Kaplan praises art cinema as a concept because it offers a "challenge to the study of affect in film because of its difference from the narrative norms of Hollywood".[69] For example, Denis portrays the dance scene in *Beau Travail* wordlessly and uses the camera for framing the human emotion by contrasting colors. Galoup is dressed in black, dancing in yellow lights to a pop song. In *India Song*, the colors in the imagery also seem charged with hidden meanings. A white woman in a red dress and a non-white man in white tuxedo in a pale environment.

In European cinema, the image language is central, because it offers alternative ways of telling stories that does not necessarily have to follow the conventional steps that commercial films do and yet vitalize the notion of the film medium – in particular in French films, since the 1960s. One of the reasons that *India Song* and *Beau Travail* overall opens many doors for interpretations is because these films do not offer any clear moral clarity. These films approach postcolonial themes in fundamental distinctive ways. *India Song* uses the power of the *sound language*, while *Beau Travail* uses the power of the *image language*. Both films demonstrate a subversive power in the cinematic language and its relationship to the colonial past of the French nation by reclaiming and trying to take control of the uncontrollable and making art out of it. None of them offers direct paths out of the suffering for their respective characters, but they reveal the intense distance between the present and the past through their cinematic languages by simple means. Perhaps both want to ask the characters and the audience: what do we have to forget, in order to survive? Interestingly in these films is that *India Song* nor *Beau Travail* do not portray their protagonists as heroic, but rather disillusioned and decadent.

In text language, memories formulate in texts. In image language, memories shape audio-visually. Historian Beverley Southgate categorizes memories within the context of facts or fiction, meaning that fiction addresses human emotions since fiction romanticizes the past.[70] To construct a positioning of the present of today and for example the ancient days, the differences between these periods becomes clearer mostly in the materiality. What remains from the past is human sexuality, which is something that anyone can relate to.

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[69] Kaplan, E. Ann, "European Art Cinema, Affect, and Post colonialism: Herzog, Denis and the Dardenne Brothers" in *New Theories and Histories: Global Art Cinema* (ed. Galt, R. and Shoonover, K. Oxford University Press 2010) p. 287

[70] Southgate, Beverly, *History meets fiction: history, concepts, theories and practice* (Harlow, Longman, 2009), p. 72-73

Sexuality does not necessarily mean intercourse, but rather identity.[71] Alternatively, materiality and concrete properties could function as markers in the fiction, in order to create a sense in the staging of a specific, bygone era. The dramatic nerve emphasizes instead in human relations, while materiality builds with the external atmosphere.[72] In this way, a romanticized image of the past constructs, which is supposed to convey a sense of escapism. In *India Song* and *Beau Travail,* both protagonists want to escape and yet their bodies are stuck in the rooms and in the present.

One of Bordwell's terminations was that art cinema represents the domestication of modernist filmmaking. In that sense, *India Song* and *Beau Travail* relate to an audiovisual style that reminds of the montage theory[73] by Sergey Eisenstein; the scenes bring a meaning within the scenes that do not necessarily exist there from the beginning and this is produced within a postcolonial framing of the story's events. The dances can have different symbolic meanings or add specific functions to the imagery, but it reflects the emotional nerve of the narrative. The music, the camera moves, the dramatic use of colors, the mirrors etc. together creates an atmosphere that reflects the mental processes of all the characters and their communications within the relatively new era of a bygone oppression that continues to live through the memories. *India Song* and *Beau Travail* are not "national films", but possibly French films with postcolonial emblems. The scenes where they dance also include different cultural audiovisual references, all from the music to the materiality in the mise-en-scène, but also the narrative style is not inevitably related to a conventional way of telling an audiovisual story. Instead, the dances offer something else, but it is up to the spectator to draw their own conclusions.

Film scholar Timothy Corrigan states that the film medium always includes epistemological challenges of ideas of knowing. He reflects about film as an audiovisual form of essay, since film can provoke and depict a public thought. During the postwar era, essay films came more into historical views with subjective voices, erasing boundaries between

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[71] Melotti, Marxiano, *Plastic Venus's: Archaeological Tourism in Postmodern Society Newcastle* Cambridge Scholars, 2011), p 102

[72] de Groot, Jerôme, *Remaking history: the past in contemporary historical fictions* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), p 152

[73] Eisenstein argues that montage is a cinematic practice, driven by a dialectical imagery; a thesis and antithesis together become a synthesis. The montage theory originated in the Soviet film industry from the 1920s and has had a wide influence around the world, with director names such as Lev Kuleshov, Dziga Vertov and Vsevolod Pudovkin.

documentaries and other genres.[74] The interpretations of cinematic language change, depending on research progress. Postcolonialism and nationalism do not always have the same meaning, but changes depending on the political discourses. Nationalism has diverse meanings whether it comes from the colonizers or people from the colonized territories. Ex-colonial countries use nationalism to mobilize, unify and defend their culture from the west, while west countries use nationalism as a discourse to strengthen their national identities, interests and values. Within a postcolonial discourse, a clear effect from cultural and political activities is that the concept of national cinema have changed, from being self-evident to be more challenged and questioned.[75] In French cinema, the films of new wave movement can be seen as a force that radicalized cinematic language, but it is also a point of understanding the various points of nationhood, and its relation to identity. One of the main effects of the movement is that it offered a distinct and privileged position in the postwar world in Europe, an idea that mirrored in the rhetoric of former president Charles de Gaulle. The cinematic revolution positioned France as a creative, leading force in cinematic culture in Europe, that helped the nation to distance themselves from its past.[76] Dudley Andrews problematizes the concept of art cinema, He claims that this concept gives the impression of being egalitarian and value neutral. Anyone can create art in cinema, but one needs knowledge and information to understand the cinematic language – which makes the concept somewhat elitist. Like Bordwell, Andrews points out that the concept of art cinema also changes through time and does not necessarily have the same static meaning for all time, but somewhere the concept has a critical approach towards commercial cinema. The new aesthetics in the postwar era were both national and international at the same time, often related to underground or avant-garde tradition.[77]

Andrew gives an interesting criticism of art cinema as he emphasizes the importance of the word itself and its context. Art cinema could be regarded as fluid as in a playing game of the spectatorship with the idea of being "intellectual" within the framework of cinema and frequently correlates to other media forms, such as literature, music and visual art. Films of art cinema challenge spectators, in which the individual interpretations reveal one's cultural

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[74] Corrigan, Timothy, "The Essay Film as a cinema of ideas", in *New Theories and Histories: Global Art Cinema* (ed. Galt, R. and Shoonover, K. Oxford University Press 2010), p. 222-223

[75] Eleftheriotis, Dimitris, *Popular Cinemas of Europé: Studies of texts, contexts and frameworks* (Continuum, New York, 2001). P. 31

[76] Ibid. P. 42

[77] Andrews, Dudley, "Towards an inclusive, exclusive approach to art cinema" in *New Theories and Histories: Global Art Cinema* (ed. Galt, R. and Shoonover, K. Oxford University Press 2010), p 62-63

reference framework and thereby confirms the theory of Pierre Bourdieu on cultural capital (habitus).[78] Intellectuality could be seen as one form of capital, as it is exposed when trying to understand the cinematic narrative. In this perspective, art cinema is paradoxical; the concept is inclusive in the sense that it offers alternative narration styles; still this concept becomes exclusive when understanding of the audiovisual narrative requires an intellectual preparation. Above all, the idea of art cinema especially strengthens the authority of the director position by telling stories on their own aesthetic conditions. Thereby, the concept places new demands of understanding the cinematic language. Some will, depending on their previous knowledge and referential frames. Other parts might feel excluded, due to the lack of knowledge. In Hollywood cinema, the demands of the audience have a central influence on what are being produced and therefore, the producers are essential. In European cinema, the director (the auteur) is traditionally more central within the discussion of films.

3.10. Dance performativity

In the dance scenes, the mirror reflections are there around these characters, as the audience can see it, something that might not be described audio-visually. The mirror in the scene and the camera transition from the mirror to "reality" in *India Song*, for instance, might reflect a colonial/postcolonial discourse, even the mentality of Anne-Marie Settrer and Galoup, and their commemorations. The scenes from *India Song* as well as *Beau Travail* where they dance are including different cultural visual references, all from the music to the materiality, but also the narrative style is not inevitably related to a way of telling a story. The bodies become a symbolic representation of the nation of France, its relationship to their colonial past and its efforts to try to live in a postcolonial presence. The dances can have different symbolic meanings or add specific functions to the imagery, but it reflects the emotional nerve of the narrative. The music, the non-verbal language, the static camera, the scenography, the dramatic use of colors, light, darkness and its combinations, the mirrors etc. together creates an atmosphere that mirrors the mentality of all the characters and their communications within the relatively new era of a bygone oppression that continues to live through the memories.

[78] Bourdieu, Pierre, *Kultur och Kritik* (1984; Daidalos Förlag, Göteborg, 1997), sid 225; in sociology, the notion of habitus is a form of capital, not only in terms of social economy, but also in social and cultural assets. Habitus comprises socially ingrained habits and dispositions with these forms of capital in mind and creates a mental scheme of perception, classification and appreciation.

The dances in both *India Song* and *Beau Travail* take place in a context that could be, as Pavis points out, a reflection of the narrative structure, but also an ideological structure.[79] The physical movements of the bodies of Anne-Marie Settrer and Galoup do not only points where the story directs, but also it also indicates the positions of the contradictions between the colonizers and the colonized (*India Song*) or the colonial past versus the post-colonial present (*Beau Travail*) in a cinematic constructed situation that is colored by the colonial structures. A structure that is observable through supposedly objective point of view of the camera position that with its lenses captures the movement patterns of the characters.

3.11. The Postcolonial Spotlight

The fact that both *India Song* and *Beau Travail* take place in former French colonies might say something about the postcolonial identity of France. There are white protagonists living in decadence during the wake of France's ongoing decolonization process. This long historical procedure is used as a background, in which the stories develop, and the characters are portrayed. These films can be philosophical at a personal level of the directors and contribute to a philosophical discussion about symbolic representation. However, Bordwell describes it in terms of narrative norms. The most common one is that imagery is based on the idea that the viewer himself has to draw his own conclusions, in relation to the cinematic events. This is done through plantations that give clues that lead to the climax.[80] In this perspective, films do not philosophize, but provide methodologies and audio-visual expressions connected to the narration and the narration could always contain elements of morality.

With the background of reality-based events, an authenticity contract between the construction and the spectator is assembled. *India Song* takes place in parts of India that used to be colonized by France, while *Beau Travail* takes place on the African continent. Several of these approaches risk neglecting oppression in favor of the spectator's enjoyment of satisfying a visual story that was played long ago. This applies not least to several of the violent acts that

[79] Pavis, Patrice, *Analyzing Performance – Theater, Dance and Film* (The University of Michigan, 2003), p. 256-257
[80] Bordwell, David, *Poetics of Cinema* (Routledge, 2008), p. 137-138

were sanctioned earlier, which are often presented as something exciting for today's audience.[81] In this perspective, *India Song* and *Beau Travail* do not become a play with the form, but they also play with whiteness. Dyer usually emphasizes the concrete material as tools to maintain whiteness ideals, combined with the story from the white person's perspective. Dyer is right, but there is another way to look at the design of the narrative. The subversive potential. If it is a film that conveyed postcolonial issues, then it can also be a film that can answer them as well. Regarding these particular films, the directors seem to submit the questions to the audience rather than to give unambiguous answers themselves. In this perspective, the dances might provide an emotional response. The result is that the moral clarity disappears, but the story gets more and more complex as time goes by. The postcolonialism becomes like an echo in these films and in these dance scenes, as the characters dance in the shadow of historical breakpoints. The subtle colonial structures are in the background, as the narration goes on – determined by two "white" protagonists. In *India Song*, it depicts the decadence of Anne Marie Settrer. *Beau Travail* describes nostalgic escapism from reality for Galoup. The effect of these portrayals is that the boundaries between dream and reality are slowly blurred. Both narrations touch a surreal element through their images in the dance scenes.

The portrayals of Anne-Marie Settrer nor Galoup do not address emotions and do not evoke sympathy, but rather illustrate something else since both represent whiteness, in relation to the geographical areas and the colonial past of their nations. *India Song* and *Beau Travail* provide a similar approach to the postcolonial discourse in their narratives, an approach filled with paradoxes. At one hand, the structures of power are already there, even before they begin to act. There is one reality and one wall mirror that might reflect something else. One the other hand the dance scene is open for interpretation, from a wide range of different perspectives. From a postcolonial approach, these scenes not only mirror the characters, the colonial past of France nor the audiovisual style of the art cinema tradition. In a way, these scenes seem to mirror each other, since both films deal with similar topics and similarities in the mise-en-scene. A room, a dance, a mirror and at least one representative of the colonizers. What does the dance moves have for impact on the characters and the narrative? Anne-Marie Settrer and Galoup are not only protagonists of the narration, but also

[81] Ibid, p 179

representatives of a Western nation within the postcolonial discourse in which they are disillusioned.

3.12. Summary

Both *India Song* and *Beau Travail* provide a similar approach to the postcolonial discourse in their narratives, an approach filled with paradoxes. At one hand, the structures of power are already there in the room, even before they begin to act. There is one reality and one wall mirror that might reflect something else. One the other hand the dance scene is open for interpretation, from a wide range of different perspectives. From a postcolonial approach, these scenes not only mirror the characters, the colonial past of France or the audiovisual style of the art cinema tradition. These scenes also seem to mirror each other, since both of the films deal with similar topics. A room, a dance, a mirror and a representative of the colonizers. What does the dance moves have for impact on the characters and the narrative? Settrer and Galoup are not only protagonists of the narration, but also representatives of a Western nation within the postcolonial discourse in which they are disillusioned. They are not heroes nor malevolent, but they only act without reflecting upon the decadence within a new mental morning in the name of post colonialism.

The analysis of the dance scenes in *India Song* and *Beau Travail* proves that the link between the significance of memories of the individual characters and the past of a nation is post colonialism. The audiovisual imagery in these selected scenes/films shows in what ways this complex combination of memory and past can be done. Both films seem to demonstrate a subversive potential in art by seeking control of the colonial shadow over the presence, through their phenomenological influenced perspectives. In a way, their aesthetic approach reminds of the argument about the importance of decolonization, but somewhere and somehow, they have been faithful to their cinematic visions. They reclaim the power over their own stories and tell it audio-visually on their own terms. In this respect, there comes an insight for me. Postcolonial perspectives also lay the foundation for new norms for the narrative and thus a new cinematic tradition. The directors Duras and Denis seem to be aware of it and respect that tradition but refuse to be governed by it. They are portraying a "new" era of post colonialism where power structures are implicit. Duras and Denis demonstrates the subversive power of art when creating a dance scene that correlates to the colonial past of a

nation. By doing decolonizing close-reading of these dance scenes, the structures become "observable" through the consciousness.

This insight could benefit the area of post colonialism within film studies, because the interpretation possibilities have not yet been empty. On the contrary, there is still potential to broaden and deepen the discussion, especially when analyzing films from earlier and separate decades. Such an analysis can generate new insights and explanations about creativity of individual artists or a team who fictionalizes the past in their artistic work, insights that might benefit other areas besides film studies. The dance scenes in these films are great examples of how subtle post colonialism can be. I regard the dance scenes in *India Song* and *Beau Travail* as an audiovisual expression of human bodies dancing in postcolonial echoes. The rooms could be considered a kind of free zone for the characters, but the postcolonial echoes are constantly present, yet not visible on the screen. In the beginning, I asked whether post-colonial structures always have to be explicit in order to be “seen” in audiovisual media. The answer is no, the structures of post colonialism does not always have to be visible to be “seen” in film, because post-colonial structures are a result of a historical development that rests uncommented in the background, which the dance scenes in *India Song* and *Beau Travail* illustrates.

6. Final Discussion

4.1. Reflections

The thesis has accomplished its purpose with providing a postcolonial scope on two dance scenes. The dance scenes relate to a historical phenomenon (colonialism), but through the artistic dimension, it demonstrates diverse expressions that enable diverse interpretations, depending on discursive inputs. The characters are more than just two subjects within different stories. Both of them are representative of the French colonial past and are trying to integrate in a new time of postcolonialism. The concept of art cinema gives freedom to the director to create a cinematic as well as freedom to the spectator to interpret the scenes, the dance scenes express emotions of the symbolic representation of the characters and the postcolonial scope enlight the naturalized inequalities based on race and ethnicity.

Nevertheless, I would argue that a film itself or a single scene can never be “postcolonial”, but there are always possibilities to do postcolonial analysis on films and single scenes in diverse ways. It is the same with the name of “feminist films”, which I think is a problematic description. A film product itself cannot be “feminist”, but a feminist analysis is more or less always possible. This is because postcolonialism and feminism are tools to make compositions of power related to identity dimensions observable. This thesis illustrates that these dance scenes in diverse ways address topics related to postcolonial surroundings audiovisual. Neither colonialism or postcolonialism are static and homogenous as concepts, as it provides variation depending on the context. The art of cinema could conserve structures of powers, but also demonstrate the subversive power of art and by individual artists when portraying narrations that have a postcolonial background. Media scholar Janet Staiger describes the research of memory studies as something that has expanded in arts and humanities, a subject that earlier was mostly associated with sociology and psychology. It has been vital for several established methodologies, since memories are a central part in viewing. Among other things, she writes; “social and collective memories are public” and “personal memories are functional and operate in the service of the present". She adds “personal memories may be couched in general or specific language of recollection”. On individual as

well as collective levels, cultural memories are essentially shaped by media images.[82] From a postcolonial point of view, it is interesting to know about the image of the heritage of colonial oppression through media perception. What *India Song* and *Beau Travail* does is to connect to the postcolonial condition. I would describe the selected dance scenes like a spiderweb; through the dance scenes, the characters illuminate the colonial threads through their presence, while at the same time realizing that they are stuck in these threads and that they cannot free themselves from their role in the postcolonial state.

4.2. Suggestions for further research

How many films about World War II as a background for the stories, for instance, have not been produced? *The Bridge over the River Kwai* (David Lean, 1957), *Das Boot* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1981) and *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998) are only a few examples. Or the Vietnam war, with films like *Deer Hunter* (Michael Cimino, 1978), *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979) and *The Platoon* (Oliver Stone, 1986)? I mention this not because of the audiovisual examples of how the explicit repression is embodied in the commercial film, but more how films portray the context after the time of the historical repression. This thesis has not circulated about facts of historical events, but rather exploring the phenomenon of creating audiovisual art out of a colonial oppression that formally on the paper ceased to exist. Or to be correct, how Western characters both act and integrate within the new era of postcolonialism and how do the films correlate to their aesthetic time periods? As film scholar Leo Braudy once stated, all films, regardless of genre, have connections of earlier aesthetic works, but the new film production renews the aesthetics by designing a complex approach between the attachment to the past's work and the present moment of artistic freedom.[83] I mention his argumentation just once for an applicable point: I think it is not only about individual films as such, but also cinematic paradigm shifts in national film historiographies. There is more or less always an interaction between the audiovisual medium (film) and society (in this case in France), during different progresses that people participate in.

With this argumentation in mind, perhaps there is a necessity of decolonizing the concept of *national cinema*? Or for that matter, develop different strategies for decolonizing

[82] Staiger, Janet, *Media reception studies* (New York University Press, 2005), p. 187-188

[83] Braudy, Leo, *From the world in a frame* (Chicago University Press, New York, 1976), p 109.

descriptions of aesthetic movements not only in French film history, but in European cinema in general. An interesting topic would be to develop methods for decolonizing methods when watching European films in general and former colonial powers in particular. It could be a sort of "anti-Bazin"[84] approach, when watching a film that does not try to mummify the past, but rather dealing with it. Germany is one example of a film nation that has dealt with its past during the later years in films as *Goodbye Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, 2003), *Downfall* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2004) and *The Lives of Other* (Florian van der Donnersmarck, 2006). Hayward describes the relationship between film and nationality as a historic investment aiming to create a modern identity based on memories of the past. These memories bound much towards concrete places. What happens with the collective memories, when the nation emerged from colonialism or postcolonialism? First, the long-term effect of creating a nation is that national cinema refuses to historicize the nation as a subject or object, but a subject or object of knowledge. "What is the territory that "national" cinema occupies", Hayward asks,[85] since cinema is never a unitary product by just one nation but rather produced within mixes of multiculturalism. Perhaps there is a necessity of decolonizing the concept of national cinema? Or for that matter, even artistic movements in French history, for instance. What are the colonial patterns in early impressionist films, the poetic realism and the new wave in the 1960s? My theory is that the ideals of whiteness does not necessarily cease to exist, but it rather changes character. It is the same pattern repeated in other national contexts in Europe, such as Russian, British, German, Spanish and Italian films.

I would urge to continue with the postcolonial track, but more about theories that the artist's responsibility, resistance and creativity during the creation of a narrative unfolding in a postcolonial context during a contemporary era, especially during and after the cold war era. Is suffering always dependent on audiovisual experiences to be proven? Such a study does not need to be applied to French film, but to the European film in general. There are a number of different inputs, such as the screenplay and moodboard sketches that can demonstrate the preliminary work for a film production. Or why not the reception of films with a postcolonial perspective? Is there anything in the critics' texts that can be viewed and see a colonial look? How do these arguments in the reception look comparatively between different nations and continents, for example on the European continent and the American?

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[84] André Bazin (1918-58) was a French film theoretician who stated that the film medium have potential of "mummifying" images like paintings throughout history in order to conserve a picture, for instance, rulers of nations.

[85] Hayward, Susan, "Faming national cinemas" in *Cinema and Nation* (ed. Hjort, M. and Mackenzie, S, Routledge, 2000) p. 101

How is whiteness and colonialism constructed, and how does its connections look to aesthetic currents and to the supposed reality?

I think it would be very interesting if further research within cinema scholarship is about the moral dimension. When the concrete evidence is presented, a society and a nation can take the next step to discuss morality. This is an important piece of the puzzle, when discussing the relationship between cinema and post colonialism. One can ask: “whose morality”? How does a nation define morality from theoretical and methodological points of views? Is it a morality of the auteurs for what they write, direct and produce? Is it a national morality to support cinematic productions, which deals with their colonial past? Is it a colonial morality or a postcolonial morality that should be mirrored in films and how will that happen? Is it about fictionalizing the past or maybe demonstrating the past within the present through family ties? A study of morality of the individual artist related to postcolonialism would be interesting as a continuity to this thesis. Not only French film directors, but directors from other European countries as well.

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